Campesinos and the State: Building and Experiencing the State in Rural Communities in

the 'Post-conflict' Transition in Montes de María, Colombia

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This research is an ethnographic study of relationships and interactions between campesino communities and the state during the escalation of the armed conflict and the ongoing 'post-conflict' transition in the mountain zone of Montes de María, Colombia. This study contributes to the understanding of state building 'from below', with a focus on rural areas in contexts of 'post-conflict' transitions.

I examine forms of political violence carried out in campesino communities by state actors during the militarization of the region and the long-term effects of that violence on campesinos and their relationships with the state. I analyze how citizen-state relationships and experiences of the state are shaped in the 'post-conflict' transition in rural areas, in the context of state processes centered on the victims of the armed conflict and the implementation of the peace agreements between the Colombian government and FARC guerrillas. I explore continuities of violence in campesino communities during the last decade. I also examine state images constructed in these territories.

I argue that state violence carried out in campesino communities as part of counterinsurgency practices constituted rural populations as subjects at the margins of the state. Practices of producing visibility and invisibility of past state violence by campesinos and state actors and the lasting effects of violence continue shaping relationships with the state.

The Law of Victims and Land Restitution created opportunities regarding the rights of the victims. However, campesinos experiences have also been shaped by the partial or slow fulfillment of reparations and a politics of waiting. As part of the peace accords, the Development Plans with a Territorial Focus created opportunities to reshape citizen-state relationships by relying on a territorial approach and a participatory process. Rural communities participated actively in the formulation of these plans but the rights of these populations have yet to materialize on the ground.

Finally, institutional efforts to reshape relationships between the state and rural inhabitants have coexisted with structural violence and the threats that social leaders continue to face in rural areas. Narratives and images of state abandonment continue being constructed and mobilized by campesinos in a context of state interventions.

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Preface

Many people have accompanied me and provided support during the processes of this dissertation. Without them, this study would not have the same meaning. This research is the result of not only an academic but also a personal journey and meaningful relationships I have built with my country, with campesino communities in Montes de María, and with other people over the years. This journey has allowed me to continue growing as a researcher and, more importantly, as a person.

I am immensely grateful to the campesinos and campesinas of Montes de María for trusting me. Many of them not only narrated their stories but also allowed me to participate in their lives, struggles and organizational processes. Their life experiences have taught me how to stay hopeful and continue the struggle even when everything seems lost or adverse circumstances are overwhelming. Through their stories and actions, I have learned more about the meaning of dignity, perseverance, and community. I especially want to thank the Asociación de Campesinos and Campesinas de la Finca La Europa and campesinos of Seis Veredas in process of collective reparation in Ovejas. I also thank victims of the arbitrary detentions who narrated their experiences even though memory-making about these experiences was painful in some cases.

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Words in Spanish throughout this document are written in italics. The only exceptions are the words campesino, campesina, campesinos. When words in Spanish appear for the first time, their translations are provided in parenthesis.

I dedicate this study to campesinos and campesinas in the mountain zone of Montes de María and to campesino leaders who have defended the rights of their communities and struggled in defense of their territory in this region.

1.0 Introduction

In November 2016, the Colombian government signed the Final Agreement with the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, or FARC guerrillas, after more than fifty years of armed conflict in the country. In the context of the negotiations with the FARC guerrillas, which started in 2012, and especially during recent years, references to '*el post-conflicto*' became commonplace in media coverage and among state offices and officials, the government, some NGOs and other sectors of society.

Despite the demobilization of the majority of FARC guerrillas, different manifestations of armed conflict have continued in the country and other forms of violence have occurred in the post-accord period. Although the violence associated with the armed conflict has decreased since the signing of the agreements, this period has also been characterized by the increasing number of murders of both social leaders and ex-combatants who were previously FARC guerrillas. At the end of 2018, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) identified the existence of five armed conflicts in the country in the post-accord context.[1]

Some scholars and organizations have alluded to the '*post-conflicto violento*' or '*post-conflicto armado*' to characterize the current situation in the country, while others even question the use of the term 'post-conflict' in the current scenario (ICRC 2018). Some scholars even prefer to use the term 'post-accords' period.

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[1] These conflicts are between the Colombian government and: 1. the Ejército de Liberación Nacional ELN, 2. the Ejército Popular de Liberación EPL, 3. the Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia AGC, 4. The old structures of the Bloque Oriental of FARC-EP that did not support the Peace Process. The fifth conflict is between the ELN and EPL, whose epicenter is the region of Catatumbo (ICRC 2018). These armed conflicts are localized in some regions of Colombia.

Montes de María is among the regions of the country affected by the armed conflict, during which paramilitary groups, several guerrilla groups, and state military forces disputed the control of territory for more than two decades. Different forms of political violence were carried out in rural communities, such as massacres perpetrated by paramilitary groups, selective assassinations by both guerrillas and paramilitaries, forced displacement resulting from the confrontation between different armed actors or the actions of one of these groups, and abandonment and dispossession of the land due to the actions of illegal armed actors, private actors, sometimes even with complicity or participation of state agents (Ilsa 2012; GMH 2010).

In this region, violence and human rights violations by state actors were also prominent. They included stigmatization, arbitrary detentions and incarceration of campesinos and other inhabitants accused of being guerrillas or collaborators, extrajudicial killings, persecution of campesino leaders, and cruel treatment mainly by the military forces but also the police. In some cases, not only members of the military or police officers but also other state officials and even politicians participated directly in these violent acts, were accomplices, or failed to protect populations from these acts.

As in the rest of the country, civilians have been the main victims of the armed conflict in the region of Montes de María, particularly campesinos, and indigenous and afro-descendant populations in rural areas (CNMH 2013).

Unlike several other regions of the country, where the FARC guerrillas laid down arms as a result of the peace agreements, Montes de María was already considered by the government to be a region free of guerrillas by around 2008 (Ilsa 2012). The significant weakening of the FARC and dismantling of other guerrilla organizations in the region were mainly the result of the military

offensive by the government in the context of the militarization of the zone promoted as part of the strategy in the fight against guerrillas during the first decade of the 21st century.

In the context of the militarization of the region, several forms of violence and human rights violations in rural communities by state agents took place. In this context, in which the national government formally denied the existence of the armed conflict, campesinos and other inhabitants also became the target of the state counterinsurgency strategy against guerrillas.

The armed conflict not only had different dynamics in different regions of the country, but the specific local trajectories of the conflict and repertories of violence have varied within regions as well. I conducted this research in campesino communities in the mountain zone, a subregion of Montes de María located in the department of Sucre. Guerrillas, including the FARC, paramilitary groups, and the state's military forces had a presence in the mountain zone. Overall, however, paramilitary groups did not settle permanently in this zone but operated in the area at times and were responsible for massacres and selective assassinations. The violation of human rights and different forms of abuse and violence by state agents in rural communities was particularly prominent in the mountain zone, which was perceived as being among the areas where guerrillas had a strong presence in Montes de María during the end of the nineteens and early 2000s.

Paramilitary groups, specifically the Bloque Heroes de Los Montes de María from the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC), demobilized in the region in 2005. However, this was followed by the emergence of post-demobilization groups, which became involved mainly with drug trafficking (Ilsa 2012; Codhes 2020). Due to this aftermath, some authors have even referred to this period in Montes de María as '*post-conflicto armado*' (Porras 2014). This phenomenon has especially affected a few municipalities of Montes de María and, to a lesser extent, the mountain zone.

In the aftermath of the dismantling of the guerrilla organizations and the significant decrease of political violence in the region, several state processes have taken place in campesino communities in rural areas aimed at establishing the institutional presence of the state, rebuilding relationships with citizens and particularly victims, and guaranteeing the rights of inhabitants. In recent years, the most important process has been the policy of individual and collective reparations and land restitution, which is part of the implementation of the Law of Victims and Land Restitution issued by the Colombian Congress in 2011. The Law not only formally recognized the existence of the armed conflict in the country and, in a more comprehensive way, the victims of all armed actors, but also aimed at the integral reparation for the victims of the conflict.[2]

As part of the implementation of the Final Agreement, other state processes began taking place in the region in 2017 and will continue during the following years. During my primary fieldwork, the main process was the formulation of the Development Plans with a Territorial Focus (PDET), which involved the active participation of rural communities. The implementation of these plans just recently started. The purpose of the PDET is to achieve structural transformation of rural areas, with the goal of guaranteeing the political, social, economic, cultural and environmental rights of the rural populations in the territories most affected by armed conflict, poverty, and institutional weakness (Final Agreement 2016).

I arrived in the mountain zone of Montes de María to conduct the primary fieldwork for this research in September 2017, ten months later after the signature of the Final Agreement with the FARC guerillas. There were many concerns regarding the difficulties of implementing the

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[2] Land restitution is also considered a form of reparation to victims of land abandonment and dispossession related to the armed conflict.

peace agreements due to several factors including the continuation of violence in the country and the opposition of right-wing political parties and other sectors of society. However, I also noticed hope and enthusiasm in rural communities, and among NGOs, officials, and other sectors of society in the region.

Montes de María is one of the sixteen regions of the country prioritized for implementing the PDET. In the context of the formulation of these plans, discourses of 'post-conflict', renewal, and welfare for rural populations circulated in the meetings between rural inhabitants and officials and other actors in the territory, creating high expectations in these communities. Given the territorial approach of the Final Agreement, the Truth Commission also arrived in Montes de María at the end of 2018 and will continue its work there until 2021.

The Law of Victims and Land Restitution and now the Final Agreement's implementation have led to the creation of bureaucratic apparatuses with offices at the national and territorial levels that interact with populations in the region, including rural communities. In the current context, these state processes and their bureaucracies are one of the main ways in which the state is present in rural areas in these territories as part of the institutional efforts in the 'post-conflict transition'.

This research is an ethnographic study of relationships and encounters between campesino communities and the state in the mountain zone of Montes de María during the escalation of armed conflict and militarization of the region and, particularly, the ongoing post-conflict transition. During this period, policies centered on victims of the armed conflict, and reparations, and state processes related to the peace accords are being implemented and unfolding in rural areas.

By focusing on these issues, this ethnography provides an account of some of the ways in which the state has been present and has been experienced by campesinos in the mountain zone in the context of armed conflict and the ongoing post-conflict transition. It examines the multiple

layers involved in relationships, encounters, and interactions of these inhabitants with state processes, institutions and officials in these territories.

I examine how some violent state practices carried out in campesino communities during the escalation of the armed conflict, and particularly the militarization of the region, have shaped and continue to shape relationships and experiences of the state in these communities. I analyze how citizen-state relationships, interactions with state actors, and related experiences are reconfigured or take place in the post-conflict transition in rural areas, in the context of policies centered on victims of the armed conflict, reparations, and the implementation of the peace accords. I also examine some of the continuities of violence as they unfold in everyday life in campesino communities in a context of greater presence of state processes and bureaucracies in rural areas in the aftermath of the intense armed conflict in the region. I also analyze some images of the state that have been constructed in this region and their meanings for governments and rural communities.

This research provides an understanding of the intersections between the long-term impact of state violence on campesino communities and their relationships with the state, the ways in which citizen-state relationships and experiences of the state are shaped in the context of current state processes, and some continuities of violence in rural communities in the post-conflict transition in the region. This research contributes to the analysis of state building from below, with a focus on rural areas, in contexts that have been affected by protracted armed conflict and where post-conflict transitions are taking place.

My ethnographic fieldwork focused on some forms of state violence carried out in communities during the armed conflict and militarization of the region and their lasting effects, with a focus on mass arbitrary detentions. I also studied an emblematic case in the region where

several forms of violence during the escalation of armed conflict and its aftermath converge with a process of land restitution, rights claiming by the community, and multiple interactions with state institutions before and during the implementation of the Law of Victims and Land Restitution. Finally, I focused on the process of the construction of the PDET in the region.

To examine the violent past, I focus mainly on forms of control and violence carried out in rural communities by state agents, especially during the militarization of everyday life in the region. However, I locate these forms of violence in relation to the presence and actions of illegal armed actors, such as paramilitary groups and guerrillas, which also carried out violence in communities that produced lasting effects. These illegal armed groups, especially the guerrillas, attempted to exercise or actually exercised practices of governance in these communities in the mountain zone.

I also provide a broader context to understand forms of state violence as part of a longer history of violence by state agents in campesino communities in the mountain zone. This violence has not been limited only to the dynamics of the armed conflict but has rather intertwined with it in complex ways. I examine this topic in the following chapter.

This study does not intend to provide a complete account of relationships between campesinos and the state or state processes in rural areas during the escalation of the armed conflict or its aftermath in the region. Instead, it offers a selective account by focusing on critical state processes that have had direct implications for rural communities and are relevant to understand the ongoing post-conflict conjuncture. These processes are recognized by rural inhabitants, who have engaged or resisted them in different ways and experienced their effects in their communities, as I demonstrate.

I argue that some forms of control, surveillance, and state violence carried out in campesino communities in the context of the fight against guerrillas and militarization in the mountain zone shaped in significant ways the experiences of the state in these communities. However, these forms of violence, their effects and the damage caused to communities became less overtly visible over time, and have been scarcely redressed in the current context where policies centered on the victims of the armed conflict and reparations have been taking place in recent years. The case of the victims of the mass arbitrary detentions illustrates this argument in concrete ways. It shows that these practices produced long-term effects in communities and have continued to shape relationships between these victims and the state.

I also argue that relationships with the state, experiences, and citizen-state relationships in rural communities have been reshaped in the context of the implementation of policies such as the Law of Victims and Land Restitution and the peace agreement, although sometimes in unexpected ways. While state processes focusing on victims and reparations created opportunities regarding the rights of the victims of the armed conflict and have led to a greater presence of state bureaucracies in rural areas, campesinos' experiences of the state have also been shaped by the limited, only partial, or very slow fulfillment of the related promises of reparations and a politics of waiting.

In the current context of the implementation of the peace agreements, new opportunities are created to reconfigure citizen-state relationships in rural communities, particularly regarding citizens' rights in rural areas. While rural communities participated actively in the formulation of the PDET, which could be seen as a breakthrough in a context where the participation of communities in decision making is often limited, the rights of these populations have yet to materialize on the ground.

Finally, I argue that institutional efforts to reshape relationships between the state and rural communities during more recent years have coexisted with structural violence as evidenced by the precarious living conditions and inequality in rural areas, and with the risks that social leaders continue facing, especially death threats. Narratives and images of state abandonment, constructed and mobilized in campesino communities in a context of state interventions, also illustrate these contradictions, and at the same time reflect the poor results of previous interventions aimed at addressing the needs of these communities in the region.

1.1 Conceptual and theoretical framework: the state, political violence, other forms violence, and the 'post-conflict' category

In this section, I present the conceptual and theoretical framework that informs this research. I unpack the category of the state, drawing on some discussions and insights in ethnographic studies of the state. I discuss the concepts of political violence, other forms of violence and the boundaries and relationships between them. Finally, I discuss the 'post-conflict' category and the relevance of examining it critically.

I also locate this research within the body of ethnographic studies of the state in contexts of political violence, armed conflict and post-conflict and post-war conjunctures. I discuss the broader and more concrete contribution of this research in the context of those studies, and the conceptual and theoretical discussions examined in this section.

This research contributes to conceptual and theoretical debates about state building in contexts of transition from armed conflict to post-conflict conjunctures. Policy and some scholarly discussions about the state in post-conflict settings often focus on political reforms that need to be

implemented. These discussions have been dominated by depictions and representations of the state as failed or weak, which is considered a problem that should be overcome in the post-conflict period. For example, in a more sophisticated version of these state images, the Final Agreement emphasizes the relevance of guaranteeing the presence and 'effective action' of the state in the regions affected by abandonment, institutional weakness, and armed conflict. The presence and effective action of the state is presented as a central axis of peace (Final Agreement, 2016).

Little attention is paid by policy makers and even scholars to the study of the everyday state, its actual workings, or how populations experience state processes in contexts that have been affected by protracted armed conflict, and especially where post-conflict transitions are taking place. In this research, I shed light on the workings of the state at the local level and how campesino communities have experienced and interacted with institutions and officials in the context of past and current state processes that are critical to the ongoing post-conflict transition.

In a more specific way, this research contributes to understanding state building in post-conflict contexts in three directions. First, by focusing on localized state processes and close encounters between populations and state institutions and actors, this research provides an understanding of state building from below in contexts of transition from armed conflict to post-conflict conjunctures. Second, by following relationships and interactions between communities and the state over time and examining the intersections between the past and present, this study provides an account of trajectories of continuity and change. Third, by examining forms of political violence carried out in campesino communities by state agents during the armed conflict and their long-term effects, this study provides insights into the workings of violent state practices in counterinsurgency contexts and how their effects continue shaping relationships with the state in the aftermath of the intense armed conflict.

In this research, I understand the state as fragmented, non-monolithic, diffuse, and contradictory (Friedman 2011), and as constituted by multiple processes, institutions, practices, images, relations, and people. I examine images, practices, and affective dimensions that have been and continue to be produced in encounters and interactions between populations and state institutions and officials in armed conflict settings and post-conflict transitions.

I discuss the concepts of political violence and other forms of violence, the boundaries and relationships between them, and the continuum of violence as a concept relevant to understanding the connections between different forms of violence and between armed conflict and post-conflict transitions. I see some forms of state violence that took place in the context of the armed conflict as part of a continuum involving extraordinary instances of violence but also connected to ordinary workings of the state and everyday practices of the use of force and violence against populations.

I also propose the concept of production of invisibility of violence to refer to the practices of denying, hiding, not-recognizing and minimizing that limit the visibility of some forms of violence, their effects on populations, and related forms of victimization. I refer specifically to the invisibility of state violence to analyze how forms of state violence carried out in rural communities and the damage caused have become less visible after the significant decline of armed conflict in the region.

Finally, I use the 'post-conflict' category, but I examine it critically. I do not use the category to allude to a period characterized by the absence of conflict or violence; rather, I understand it as a political and analytical category (Shneiderman and Snellinger, 2014). According to these authors, states' post-conflict agendas "are often political maneuvers to assert normalcy and disregard ongoing tensions." I consider the category relevant insofar as state processes and policies framed as part of the post-conflict transition take place in these contexts. Rather than

discard the category, I consider it relevant to understanding the specific ways in which it is used by different actors, the meanings for inhabitants and governments, and its effects on communities.

1.1.1 Unpacking the state: images, practices and affect and other conceptual precisions

This research is informed by some critical discussions in ethnographies of the state. In several of these analyses, there is an emphasis on the study of the state in everyday life and close encounters between individuals or groups of people and officials, institutions, and state processes (Gupta and Sharma 2006; Krohn, Hansen and Nustad 2005; Krohn Hansen 2009; Aretxaga 2005).

Krohn Hansen (2009) studied state formation 'from below' during the Trujillo and Balaguer authoritarian regimes. He argues that the "constitution and reconstitution of a particular state-system" should focus on investigations of localized processes and practices. He also points out that the study of the state should "remain solidly rooted in examinations of everyday life – especially everyday practices" (p. 9). By studying localized state processes and close encounters and interactions between campesinos and state institutions and officials, my research focuses on state building 'from below'.

Ethnographic works on the state also consider practices, images, representations of the state, and affective aspects (Linke 2006; Navaro-Yashin 2012), as being essential to understanding how it is constituted in everyday life (Gupta and Sharma 2006).

Ethnographic research has approached the idea of the state by focusing on representations (Gupta 1995; Gupta 2012), state imaginaries (Krupa and Nugent 2015; Ramirez 2015), political imagination (Friedman 2011), notions and perceptions of the state (Stolen 2005; Yan 2005), images (Hansen and Stepputat 2001; Nelson 2004; Gupta and Sharma 2006; Kay 2014; Thelen, Vetters and Benca-Beckmann 2014) and fantasies (Aretxaga 2003; 2005).

Gupta (1995) studies representations and the discursive construction of the state by focusing on discourses of corruption in India as an arena where the state is imagined within a particular historical and cultural context. In turn, Friedman (2011) proposes the concept of political imagination and uses it as a prism to study state processes. State-related political imagination refers to the "different ways people perceive and talk about, represent and construct, and experience the state" (p. 8). By focusing on political imagination, the state is located not only at the national government level but also in everyday life and at the level of experiences of ordinary people.

As part of the literature which examines the idea of the state and imaginary aspects, some works by anthropologists (Hansen and Stepputat 2001) as well as some political scientists (Migdal 2001; Migdal and Schlichte 2005), emphasize the relevance of studying the state through not only its practices but also images. Migdal and Schlichte (2005) point out that state actors and non-state actors "see the state in a particular way, they have a mental picture of it as an integral unit, a way of conceiving what it is about and in which kind of affairs it plays or should play a role" (p. 14). This is what the authors define as the 'image' of the state. In this research I use the term state images to refer to representations, depictions, and perceptions of the state by populations and governments as they are constructed and understood in specific contexts and used in specific ways, sometimes with political purposes.

References to the images of the strong or weak state are not uncommon among governments, policy makers, and even scholars (Migdal and Schlichte 2005). However, there has been little ethnographic exploration of the meanings of these categories and how ordinary people and bureaucracies or governments understand and use them in specific contexts. For example, Kosmatopoulos (2001) shows that the image of state failure in Lebanon is "the product of cultural work and construction" and has "multiple effects on various levels" (p. 120).

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Ethnographic research on the state has also studied mundane and everyday state practices (Friedman 2011; Krohn Hansen 2009; Krohn-Hansen and Nustad 2005). Research has explored the political, regulatory, and disciplinary practices that constitute the state at its margins (Das and Poole 2004), everyday practices of bureaucracies (Gupta 1995), practices of government (Ismail, 2006), writing and documentary practices (Gupta 2012), illegal practices (Heyman and Smart 1999), violent practices (Sanford, 2004, Ramirez, 2011), practices of legibility (Das 2004) and governmentality (Ferme, 2004). According to Gupta and Sharma (2006), everyday practices of state agencies help us to understand how state institutions are recognized and reproduced.

Several other scholars have also studied the subjectivity of the state (Aretxaga 2005) or its affective dimension (Linke 2006; Navaro-Yashin 2012; Krupa and Nugent 2015; Nugent 2015). Ethnographic studies have generally paid less attention to these aspects of the state, although studies focusing on emotional aspects of bureaucracies have emerged during the last decade (Graham 2002; Navaro-Yashin 2012; Cabot, 2014). For example, in her study about the state of Cyprus, Navaro-Yashin (2012) states that institutions, documents, modes of governance, and administrative and legal practices produce and are charged with affect.

In an edited volume about the state and rule in the Andean region (Krupa and Nugent 2015), several authors explore affective attachment associated with 'state effect'. These scholars propose the concept of state affect to refer to the "emotional investment people make" regarding promises "that seems to adhere to the state as an object of desire" or a form of attachment (p. 14).

Some scholars propose analyses and theories to understand the dynamic relationships between the different dimensions of the constitution of the state, particularly regarding images, representations, and state practices (Thelen et al. 2014; Gupta and Sharma 2006). For example, Gupta and Sharma (2006) propose the concept of the cultural constitution of the state to refer to

the cultural processes that shape it. These processes are located not only in the sphere of representation but also in the realm of the everyday practices of state agencies. These two dimensions are co-implicated and mutually constitutive.

Although images, practices, and affective aspects can be distinguished analytically, in some cases, I found it difficult to separate them since they appeared intertwined. For example, state abandonment can be seen as a state image but it also involves affective aspects reflected in the ways in which people talk about state abandonment in a context where state institutions and officials sometimes are perceived by inhabitants as negligent.

Scholars have analyzed the state by examining it as the result of the effects of practices that make structures appear to exist (Mitchell 1999) or have suggested studying the state by focusing on state effects. Trouillot (2001) proposes to study "the multiple sites in which state processes and practices are recognizable through their effects" (p. 126). For example, Harvey (2005) studies state effects by focusing on material effects such as roads in Peru.

In this research, I expand these discussions by examining state images on the ground and their meanings. I examine the image of state weakness during the militarization of the region and the image of state abandonment common in campesinos' narratives about the armed conflict and in the context of more recent state interventions. I also explore affective aspects, especially in the case of the victims of arbitrary detentions to understanding how these violent state practices and related experiences have shaped and continued to shape relationships with the state. Regarding state practices, I focus on control and violent state practices during the armed conflict and other governance practices in the current context, such as the provision of services and rights, including reparations.

1.1.2 Political and other forms of violence and the continuum of violence

In this project, I refer to different forms of violence: political violence, state violence, and structural violence. Some question that emerges regarding political and other forms of violence are their conceptualization, and the boundaries or the relationships between them. Concerning political violence, scholars in different disciplines often refer to terrorism, guerrilla conflict, paramilitary conflict, war, political assassinations, armed conflict between political parties, conquest, revolution, oppression, torture, and genocide (Darby 2012; Hinton, 2002).

Bourgois refers to political violence as "violence directly and purposefully administered in the name of political ideology, movement, or state such as the physical repression of dissents by the army or the police as well as its converse, popular armed struggle against a repressive regime" (Bourgois, 2001:7).

Skurski and Coronil (2006) consider political violence as an elusive phenomenon despite its tangible material effects. These authors propose examining violence in relation to the organization, legitimation, and contestation of power and a constitutive dimension of modern states and societies. The authors point out that while political violence has been identified with extreme manifestations, such as wars, state-sponsored terror, and genocidal campaigns, it is crucial to recognize the continuities between seemingly extraordinary violence and everyday practices of force and coercion. By "illuminating the links between violent ruptures and the routine maintenance of order, they expand as much as they redefine the conceptual field within which political violence is viewed" (p.3).

For several scholars, violence appears as central to the state (Das and Poole 2004; Agamben 1998; Aretxaga 2003; Spencer 2007; Nagengast 1994; Skursky and Coronil 2006). For example, Krohn-Hansen and Nustad (2005) recognize that the building of states cannot be separated from

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the deployment of state violence. Some anthropological works address state violence by focusing on sites where it is expected, for example, state actors associated with the use of violence such as the police (Auyero, Burbano and Bertie 2014; Bekk and Gopfert 2012; Jauregui 2013; Fassin 2013). Others look at unexpected sites presumed to be not violent or less violent such as bureaucracies (Graeber 2015).

State terror has also been studied in anthropological research. For example, Sluka's book (2000) presents a collection of case studies focusing on this topic, and Aretxaga's work focuses on states of terror (2005). Anthropological works have also studied state violence by focusing on the links between state armed actors and paramilitary groups (Civico 2015; Tate 2015; Hristov 2014; Gill 2016). For example, Civico (2015) finds that one characteristic of paramilitaries in Colombia is the ability of these illegal and violent groups to connect with agents and institutions of the state. Civico sees relationships between illegal actors and the state not as a sign of its erosion, absence, or failure but rather as an extension of the state's sovereignty and power.

Torres (2018) points out that social scientists "define state violence broadly, ranging from direct political violence and genocide to the redefinition of state violence as the neoliberal exit of the state from the provision of social services and the covert use of new technologies of citizen surveillance" (p. 381). The author examines scholarship that focuses on state violence as a practice of governance, political violence and repression, terror and torture, genocide, and the intersection between the rule of law and state violence.

In a context of protracted armed conflict, political and state violence could take place not only through seemingly extraordinary instances of violence (Skursky and Coronil 2005) but also through the ordinary workings of the state. I see forms of political and state violence taking place in these contexts as part of a continuum involving instances of violence seemingly extraordinary,

such as extrajudicial executions, torture, or state terror, and also ordinary workings of the state and everyday practices of force and violence.

For example, mass arbitrary detentions of campesinos involved forms of violence that can be seen as extraordinary in the context where they took place, such as large and spectacular military operations in rural communities to detain campesinos. Moreover, they were also connected to seemingly ordinary workings of the state such as those taking place within prisons, courts, and non-armed bureaucracies. However, what could be considered as extraordinary or ordinary workings of the state is shaped by the specific context, and it may change over time.

The concept of structural violence is also relevant for this research. Bourgois (2004) refers to structural violence as "chronic, historically entrenched political-economic oppression and social inequality" (p. 426). Farmer and Rylko-Bauer (2016) define structural violence as the "violence of injustice and inequity" embedded in "cultural and political-economic structures," such as neoliberalism, poverty or discrimination "by race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and migrant/refugee status." These structures are violent because they "result in avoidable deaths, illness, and injury; and they reproduce violence by marginalizing people and communities, constraining their capabilities and agency, assaulting their dignity, and sustaining inequalities." (p. 47).

Regarding the relationships between political violence and other forms of violence, Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2004) propose the concept of the continuum of violence. This notion presupposes the idea that the concept of violence is "nonlinear, productive, destructive and reproductive" and difficult to categorize. Violence cannot be understood only in terms of "physicality – force, assault, or the infliction of pain" but also involves less visible and unrecognized forms such as symbolic and everyday violence (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois,

2004:2). Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2004) also highlight the continuities between "political and criminal violence, state violence and communal violence, and the relations between social inequalities and individual and collective pathologies of power" (p. 5).

Finally, another relevant discussion for this research is how people on the ground and the researcher use categories such as violence, political violence, structural violence, and state violence. Hermez (2017), in his study of political violence in Lebanon, did not find that the category of violence was prevalent in daily conversations in the field but rather that people constantly grouped different acts of political violence under the categories of "war, battles, or the events" (2017:10). He points out that the social scientist tries to make sense of certain experiences by subsuming them under the category of violence.

Unlike Hermez's findings, my interlocutors often alluded to the violence they experienced in the region, although they also used the categories of armed conflict or war. However, with a few exceptions, campesinos did not use explicitly terms such as political violence, state violence, or structural violence. These are categories that I use for analytical purposes. It does not mean that interlocutors did not associate different forms of violence to specific armed actors. For example, the massacres were associated with paramilitary groups, mass arbitrary detentions, stigmatization, and some forms of physical and psychological abuse were associated with state agents.

In other cases, interviewees used words such as stigmatization, abuse, mistreatment, control, persecution, torture, detentions, incarceration and killings to refer to their encounters and relationships with the military and the police during the fight against the guerrillas without referring to it explicitly as state violence or even as violence. However, interviewees alluded to these actions as something tough and cruel that cause great suffering and fear among campesinos.

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In this study, I examine forms of control and state violence carried out in campesino communities in the context of the fight against guerrillas and the militarization of the region and how they have continued to shape relationships with the state in the current context. I closely examine mass arbitrary detentions of campesinos who were considered suspects of being *milicianos* or guerrilla collaborators and how this practice operated as a mechanism of state terror. However, the violence connected to the mass detentions was not limited to the detention itself and the spread of state terror that these detentions produced in rural communities, but also ran through the seemingly ordinary workings of the state involving prosecutors, prisons, judges, courts, and everyday encounters with the police.

I also expand discussions of the continuum of violence by analyzing how other forms of violence have unfolded in everyday life in campesino communities, particularly structural violence and death threats made against social leaders in the transition to the post-conflict conjuncture.

1.1.3 The 'post-conflict' category

In this research, I use the 'post-conflict' category, but I examine it critically. Some scholars in anthropology and other disciplines have also examined and questioned the appropriateness of this category (Shneiderman and Snellinger 2014; Gagnon and Brown 2014; Rojas 2008). However, as Gagnon and Brown (2014) point out, although there are many studies about post-conflict societies, the concept itself remains understudied.

Shneiderman and Snellinger (2014) explore the implications of post-conflict as an analytical and political category and the complexities of life and politics in the gray areas between war and peace. These scholars point out that the post-conflict category "frames political history as episodic, rather than as a stream of events that flow into one another in a multidirectional manner."

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This periodization does not properly capture the "complex temporalities and experiential layers of conflict" for those who have experienced it.

In an interdisciplinary book (Gagnon and Brown 2014), several authors problematize the post-conflict concept and examine how the violence of conflict is transformed in the post-conflict period. Gagnon and Brown (2014) point out that the "end" of war is often not an end at all, since "conflict takes new forms, new objects, and is often enacted by newly identified participants." According to the authors, the "end" of war "might best be viewed as primarily symbolic operations, rather than as a material state of affairs" (p. 2). The post-conflict period, rather than a rupture or a "radically new and different period," where "violence has ended and a new era has begun," could instead be seen as the continuation of "processes underway during the war-time and the pre-war period" (p. 3).

Several other works have also emphasized the continuation of violence in the aftermath of political violence and in post-conflict societies (Richards 2005; Rojas 2008). According to Rojas (2008), anthropological work on war shows that "violence has continued as a permanent, even defining feature of 'post-conflict' societies in Latin America" (Rojas 2008:254). Rojas points out that after decades of the beginning of democratic transitions in Latin America, violence has not ended. The transitions are imagined as "the exceptional moment wherein the political body leaves behind the violence and arbitrariness of the past and enters into a newly inaugurated present that is imagined as released and decontaminated from such violence and arbitrariness" (p. 254).

Rojas even wonders if 'post-conflict' is a viable category in the Latin American context. The author does not suggest that violence in war and violence in peace are the same but instead points out that focusing exclusively on the before and after scenarios "obscures the specific ways in which violence repeats, but also differentiates, itself in 'post-conflict' settings" (p.255).

The category of the continuum of violence, mentioned above, also refers to the connections between violence in 'peacetimes' and 'wartime contexts' and how violence could linger in peacetime in different ways (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, 2004; Bourgois, 2004). The blurring of categories and distinctions between wartime and peacetime violence is central to the notion of a continuum of violence. In her research examining stories of daily life shared by people living the transition to democracy in the post-civil war context in El Salvador, Moodie (2012) shows that people alluded to 'peace' as worse than the war. The 'postwar' period was characterized by violence and people often talked about stories of crimes during those years.

In this research, I do not associate the post-conflict category with the absence of conflict or violence. Although the current violence in the region of Montes de María is not the same type of political violence that took place during the period of intense armed conflict, violence has continued in different ways in its aftermath, including death threats against social leaders.

Scholars researching in contexts that are framed by governments or other actors as post-conflict scenarios could be tempted to discard or ignore the category. Even though this category could be problematic, I consider it relevant to examine how this category is used by several actors, sometimes with different meanings, and the effects it produces. It is also essential to analyze the state processes, interventions, and policies framed as part of the post-conflict transition. Even if these transitions do not imply a radical rupture with the past, it does not mean that state processes promoted as part of these transitions do not produce effects. For example, these state processes may create new opportunities for actors on the ground and promote the circulation and production of new discourses and narratives about the past, present, and future.

In the Colombian case, establishing the start of the post-conflict transition, even only as a symbolic operation, as pointed by Gagnon and Brown (2014), is not simple. The situation in all

regions of Colombia has not been the same regarding armed conflict's dynamics and intensity. While in Montes de María and a few other regions, the guerrillas were dismantled or significantly weakened in the context of the military offensive undertaken during the first decade of the 21st century, the armed conflict continued in several other regions. At the same time, post-demobilization groups emerged after the demobilization of paramilitary groups in 2005 in several regions, including Montes de María.

While the Colombian government and the FARC guerrillas signed the Final Agreement in 2016, there were no successful negotiations with the ELN guerrillas, the post-demobilization groups continued to be present in several regions in the country, and a few sectors of the FARC guerrillas did not support the peace processes and became armed dissidents. However, the signing of the Final Agreement could be seen as a symbolic operation that signifies the beginning of the post-conflict transition.

References to the post-conflict stage became common in the context of the negotiations with the FARC guerrillas and particularly the peace agreements. However, over several years the Colombian state has been implementing policies typical of post-conflict transitions, such as the Law of Victims and Land Restitution, presented as a mechanism of transitional justice and reconciliation.

Some scholars who have conducted anthropological research in the country even point out that the Colombian state began creating some policies "typically reserved for a post-peace accord moment" in the early 2000s, and which were "put into place to perform postconflictness" (Fattal, 2018:2). In contrast, I see the period mentioned by Fattal as the peak of the Colombian government's warlike approach to dealing with the armed conflict. In the case of Montes de María, those years were a period of intense political violence carried out in rural populations. Not only

the massacres but many human rights violations by state agents in the context of the militarization of the region took place during this period. Scholars also refer to policies or mechanisms being implemented in a 'pre-post-conflict' context (Theidon 2007) or pre-postconflict state (Fattal, 2018), given that the implementation has taken place in the midst of armed conflict.

In this study, I use the term 'post-conflict transition' in the context of Montes de María to refer mainly to the second decade of the 21st century and the current context of the ongoing implementation of the peace accords in the region. The last decade has seen a relative calm in the region regarding the dynamics of the armed conflict in the country, despite the persistence of post-demobilization groups involved in drug-trafficking in Montes de María.

It is also important to mention that state institutions and bureaucracies created as part of the Law of Victims and Land Restitution, and more recently, the implementation of the peace accords, have not replaced the broader existent institutions and bureaucratic apparatus of the state at the regional and local level. Instead, these new state agencies and bureaucracies were recently created to implement policies framed as part of the post-conflict transition.

Finally, the category of 'post-conflict' is also used and questioned by inhabitants and understood in specific ways. Some campesinos interviewed considered that the post-conflict period somehow began during the second decade of the 2000s when the situation became calmer in everyday life in most rural communities. However, for other campesino interlocutors, the post-conflict category is associated not only with the dismantling of the armed conflict but also with social investment and attention to the needs of communities. In the words of one community leader of the mountain zone:

> We, the leaders, in discussions and meetings talked about *el post-conflicto*. We concluded that this was not a post-conflict zone because although the armed conflict in the zone was dismantled, there was not attention [significant attention] to the communities by the government, only sporadic things that arrived through Consolidation [Territorial

Consolidation]… with *el post-conflicto* now, we have the expectations that there will be many productive projects, a lot of work regarding the solution of the needs of communities, that this will change.

1.1.4 Ethnographies of the state in contexts of political violence, armed conflict and 'post-conflict' and 'post-war' contexts

Some ethnographies of the state have analyzed issues concerning the state's imagination, subjectivity and everyday practices in contexts of political violence (Aretxaga 2005; Krohn-Hansen 2008), and specifically in contexts of armed conflict (Das and Poole 2004; Sanford 2004; Ramírez 2011; 2015; 2019; Tate 2015) and post-conflict settings (Nelson 2004; Stolen 2005; Olson 2013). However, these contexts have been rather overlooked.

Analyzing the state by focusing on its margins (Das and Poole 2004; Sanford 2004; Ferme 2013; Olson 2013; DeLugan 2013; Okubo 2013) continues being an important theoretical approach to studying contexts where the state is often characterized by governments and even scholars as 'failed', 'weak', or 'partial'. As Das and Poole (2004) point out, this approach invites us to analyze the political, regulatory and disciplinary practices that constitute the state in these contexts.

Nelson (2004) studies images of the postwar Guatemalan state from the margins by focusing on discourses of duplicity. The author points out that indigenous people see the state as two-faced: "one legitimate, the other criminal, corrupt, and murderous; one rational, the other irrational and magical" (p. 135). She points out that the image of the two faces appears in several postwar ethnographies in Guatemala as "people explain how they survived the government's counterinsurgency campaigns" (p. 121).

Stolen (2005) presents an ethnographic account of state formation from the margins by focusing on returned refugees' notions of the state in Guatemala. She examines the relationships between these peasants and the state as well as their perceptions during different stages of migration. She finds that these are not only relationships of antagonism and resistance but also of "active engagement in order to become included in the Guatemalan state" in the context of the post-peace accords (Stolen 2005:146).

Other ethnographic works examine the links between political violence and the subjectivity of the state (Aretxaga 2005) and the connections between the use of massive violence and terror by the Dominican state and the social and cultural production of legitimacy among Dominicans (Krohn-Hansen, 2008).

Aretxaga's research (2005) links the analysis of political violence with the subjectivity of the state by addressing the topic of state terror in the case of ETA terrorism and the Spanish state. She emphasizes the "state being constructed as a subject of mimetic desire" and not as a "subject of the law or a rational subject." Desire, fear, and subjectivity appear as an essential part of the state. The state is constructed as an "excitable body, a loosely connected ensemble of characters and bureaucracies held together by a phantasmatic identification with terrorism" (Aretxaga 2005:219).

Some anthropological works on the state point out that state building cannot be separated from the deployment of state violence (Krohn-Hansen and Nustad 2005). However, in his book about political authoritarianism in the Dominican Republic, Krohn-Hansen (2008) shows that although violence and terror were important for the Trujillo regime, they alone cannot explain its perdurability. The author argues that particular forms of masculinity, patronage, family, and *compadrazgo* were central in sustaining the Trujillo's authoritarian regime.

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Olson (2013) analyzes the ways in which democracy promotion, supranational institutions, and encounters at the margins of the state shape how Ixiles in Guatemala experience the state in the aftermath of war. He argues that violence in the aftermath takes place in different ways at the margins of the Guatemalan state, including through the symbolic violence of secrecy as a routine practice and the violence of the new neoliberal government that recognizes human rights and multiculturalism at the time that it exacerbates poverty.

Ethnographic works conducted in the Colombian regions affected by armed conflict have analyzed state effects (Tate 2015), images of state absence and weakness (Tate 2015), militarism (Ramírez 2019), the meanings of the state for *cocalero* campesinos in a region where the state's monopoly is contested by illegal armed actors (Ramírez 2011), and state imaginaries in frontier regions where the state is represented as absent (Ramírez 2015).

For example, in her study about the Plan Colombia, Tate points out that narratives about the absence and weakness of the state have been used to justify the 'strengthening of the state' and paramilitary forces, which were seen by some social sectors as necessary to fill the absence of the state. In practice, constructing the presence of the state "has meant the strengthening of the military apparatus," without analysis of "what qualities of the state would be strengthened" (2015: 118).

By studying the relationships between *cocalero* peasants and the Colombian central state in a region where the state's monopoly over violence is contested by guerrillas and paramilitary groups, Ramírez (2011) analyzes the intersections between the symbolic dimension and local meanings of the state and state violence. While the state treats the *cocalero* campesinos as criminals and sponsors military abuse of human rights, the state also provides "services and institutional space for citizen participation" (Ramirez 2011:181). Ramirez (2015) also shows that while frontier zones in Colombia are depicted as violent and characterized by the absence of the

state and lawlessness, state and non-state actors also employ violence in the center on an extensive scale.

Anthropological studies that focus on transitional justice question common assumptions such as the possibility of achieving reconciliation through transitional mechanisms (Hayden 2011) or critically discuss understandings and ideas regarding justice, truth commissions, and national reconciliation (Wilson 2003). Some studies examine truth commissions or reparations programs. For example, Theidon (2013) shows that the Peruvian Truth Commission brought a language of trauma that did not match local narratives of suffering in Quechua-speaking campesino communities. Ethnographic studies that examine the implications or effects of these mechanisms in terms of state-building, or how relationships between populations and specifically victims and state institutions or officials are shaped, are rather scarce.

For example, Buur (2001), in his research about the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (SATRC) examines the relationships "between the 'onstage', visible, public spectacle of the SATRC process, and the 'backstage', invisible, inside of the bureaucratic machinery of truth production" (p. 150). He suggests that the ritualized public representations emerging from the public SATRC were effective performances of the new nation-state. However, there was also the invisible daily work of bureaucracies in the SATRC. This work was not only about finding the truth but also distinguishing between the relevant and the irrelevant truth or producing a bureaucratically constructed truth.

Beyers (2018) examines how land claim forms elicit emotional responses in land restitution processes. The author focusses on land claim forms as a site for observing encounters between the "newly constituted citizen and the transitional state." Beyers points out that land restitution as a transitional program implemented in South Africa was designed to "help reconstitute the state as

a social fact and to redefine what it means to be a citizen." However, processes of restitution are seen by claimants as complicated and bureaucratic and fail to deliver on promises of redress.

My research can also be located within the body of studies discussed above. I contribute to understanding relationships and encounters between campesino communities and officials, experiences of the state, state images, citizen-state relationships, and change and continuities regarding these aspects in contexts of transition from armed conflict to post-conflict conjunctures. Most of the studies mentioned above have focused on contexts of armed conflict or political violence with less exploration of relationships between populations and bureaucracies and state processes in contexts that are framed as post-conflict settings.

My research contributes not only to analyzing experiences of the state in rural communities during the last decade of the armed conflict in the context of violent state practices carried out in these communities, but also examines the present conjuncture by analyzing relationships and interactions between campesino communities and state actors in current state processes such as policies of reparations and the formulation of the PDET.

1.2 Outline of chapters

This dissertation is comprised of seven chapters. In Chapter 2, I provide a brief overview of the relevant historical context since my questions are addressing different temporal conjunctures, although with a focus on the present. This context also helps to locate forms of state violence carried out in campesino communities as part of broader dynamics of the armed conflict and also provides an overview of more recent state processes in the region. I present some notes

on positionality and conducting fieldwork in contexts affected by violence and post-conflict transitions. I also describe the methods used in this project in detail.

In Chapter 3, I examine experiences of the state in campesino communities in the context of the militarization of everyday life during the first decade of the 2000s. I also explore how some forms of control and violent state practices carried out in these communities, and the damage produced by them have become less overtly visible after the decline of the armed conflict in the region. However, these experiences remain vivid in campesinos' memories and narratives about those years. I argue that although these state practices and abandonment shaped in important ways the experiences of these communities in everyday life in rural areas, by constituting rural inhabitants as subjects at the margins of the state, this violence and the damage produced have become less visible in the post-conflict transition.

The invisibility of some of these forms of violence and their effects on communities and the attempts of campesinos to make them visible, through memory practices and other mechanisms, still shape current encounters with the state in these communities in a context where processes centered on victims of the armed conflict and reparations have been taking place in the post-conflict transition. In this chapter, I draw on theories of the margins of the state to analyze some of these issues and explain further what I understand by the production of invisibility and visibility of violence.

In Chapter 4, I examine the effects of mass arbitrary detentions on campesino communities and the victims and the specific ways in which this state practice has continued to shape relationships with the state in the aftermath of the intense armed conflict in the region. During the period from 2002-2008, mass detentions targeted rural communities and other inhabitants who were considered suspects of being guerrilla collaborators or *milicianos*. I analyze the ways in

which mass detentions and incarceration operated as mechanisms of state terror in these communities, the lasting effects of these practices, and how they have continued shaping relationships with the state in the long term.

I explore the role of emotions and state affect in the context of these experiences and encounters between campesino victims and the state to understand some of the lasting effects on communities and relationships with the state. I suggest that mass detentions and incarceration of campesinos have worked on the emotional and affective dimensions of relationships with the state, not only through the immediate effects of these practices on the victims and communities such as the spread of fear and humiliation, but also through other long-lasting effects and by keeping some of the victims attached to state processes in the long term.

In Chapter 5, I examine some manifestations of violence in campesino communities as they unfold in everyday life after the significant decline of armed conflict in the region and during recent years. I also explore how relationships and interactions between these communities and state institutions and officials are reshaped before and in the context of the Law of Victims and Land Restitution. I argue that the continuity of violence and the institutional efforts to reshape relationships with the state in rural communities have coexisted which reflect the specific ways in which state institutions have been present in these territories in the post-conflict transition.

The Law created opportunities for the rights of the victims of armed conflict and has led to a greater state presence in rural areas and institutional processes and bureaucracies that interact with rural inhabitants. However, at the same time, experiences of the state in campesino communities have also been shaped by the partial or slow fulfillment of the state promises of reparations and the continuity of precarious living conditions among these populations. The continuum of violence has taken place mainly through death threats against social leaders and the

continuity of structural violence. I focus on the community of the Finca La Europa as a case study to illustrate these arguments.

In Chapter 6, I examine the process of the construction of the PDET to analyze citizen-state relationships and experiences of the state in campesino communities in the context of the implementation of the peace agreement and the post-conflict conjuncture. I focus on the participation of these communities in the formulation of these plans and related experiences and reactions. I also examine narratives of state abandonment and living conditions in rural areas as essential factors that have shaped encounters between rural communities and the state and citizen-state relationships in the region.

I argue that the PDET offers an opportunity to reshape citizen-state relationships and to build more trusting relationships by relying on a territorial approach and opening a space for the participation of campesinos and other rural inhabitants in the definition of what they consider central for their development. The implementation of the PDET also offers an opportunity for improving the living conditions of these communities. However, real access to these rights has not yet materialized since the plans have just begun to be implemented.

I also show that the participatory process of communities in the formulation of the PDET privileged a bottom-up approach and involved a multi-level participatory process. Despite the critiques of the participatory processes by NGOs and grassroots organizations, the active participation of rural communities and encounters with other actors in the processes of formulation of the PDET can be seen as a breakthrough in a context where the participation of communities is often limited. However, this participation does not automatically translate into a more permanent change of citizenship practices in the region, but instead creates new possibilities for change.

Finally, in Chapter 7, I present the conclusions of this research by summing up the findings and main arguments made in the previous chapters. I also examine the implications of these findings regarding some theoretical discussions related to state building in contexts that have been affected by armed conflict and post-conflict transitions. I also suggest directions for further research.

2.0 Context and Methods: Campesino Communities, Armed Conflict and State Processes in the Mountain Zone of Montes de María

2.1 Field site: the mountain zone in the region of Montes de María

Montes de María is located in the Caribbean region of Colombia and it is comprised of 15 municipalities (See Figure 1 and 2). Seven of these municipalities are in the department of Bolívar (María la Baja, San Juan Nepomuceno, El Guamo, San Jacinto, El Carmen de Bolívar, Córdoba and Zambrano) and eight in the department of Sucre (Ovejas, Chalán, Colosó, Los Palmitos, Morroa, San Onofre, Toluviejo, Palmito). In the summer of 2013, when I arrived for the first time in the region to conduct preliminary fieldwork, I became aware of the geographical and cultural diversity of the region and the necessity of focusing my research on a smaller area.

My first contacts in the region were a local NGO working with rural communities, the Corporación de Desarrollo Solidario (CDS), and the Organizaciones de Población Desplazada, Étnica y Campesina de Los Montes de Maria (OPDS), a grassroots organization comprised of campesino organizations and leaders of different municipalities. Members of these organizations facilitated my first exploratory visits to some municipalities of Montes de María during preliminary fieldwork. For my primary fieldwork, I had already established my own key contacts in the municipalities where I conducted field research.

I visited María la Baja and Carmen de Bolívar in the summer of 2013, María la Baja, Carmen de Bolívar, San Jacinto and Ovejas in the summer of 2014 and Carmen de Bolívar, Ovejas and Chalán in the summer of 2015. During preliminary fieldwork, I conducted informal conversations and some exploratory interviews with community leaders, members of NGOs and a

few state officials. I conducted the primary data collection between September 2017 and August 2018 in the mountain zone of Montes de María.
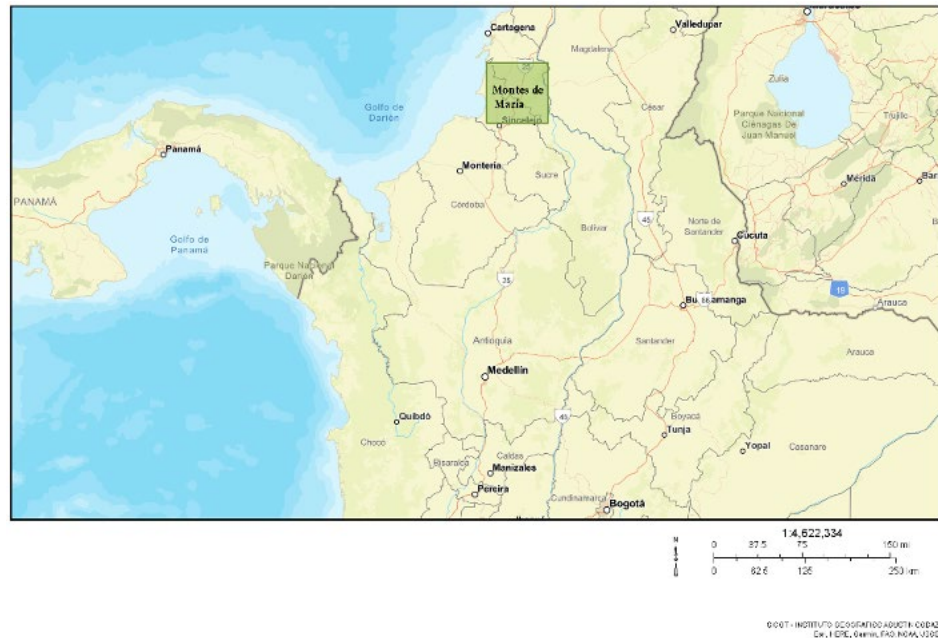
Figure 1. Map of the region of Montes de María in Colombia.

Source: SIGOT Instituto Geográfico Agustín Codazzi. Map modified by the author.

The mountain zone is comprised of 5 municipalities located in the department of Sucre: Ovejas, Chalán, Colosó, Los Palmitos, and Morroa. In this zone, most of the population is mestizo, in contrast with other municipalities where most of the population is afro-descendant, such as San Onofre and María la Baja. There is also an indigenous population in the region. My fieldwork focused on the municipality of Ovejas. I also visited communities, conducted interviews and observations in Chalán, Colosó, and Los Palmitos, especially with the victims of the arbitrary detentions.

Carmen de Bolívar shares similarities with the mountain zone in Sucre concerning campesino communities, dynamics of the armed conflict and state processes taking place more

recently. I did not include this municipality in my study since it is located in Bolívar, and regional authorities such as the governor, institutions, and bureaucracies differ from those in Sucre. However, there have been close relationships between rural communities of Ovejas, Chalán, Colosó, and Carmen de Bolívar. For example, a humanitarian visit was organized by campesinos from these four municipalities in 2006 during the militarization of Montes de María.
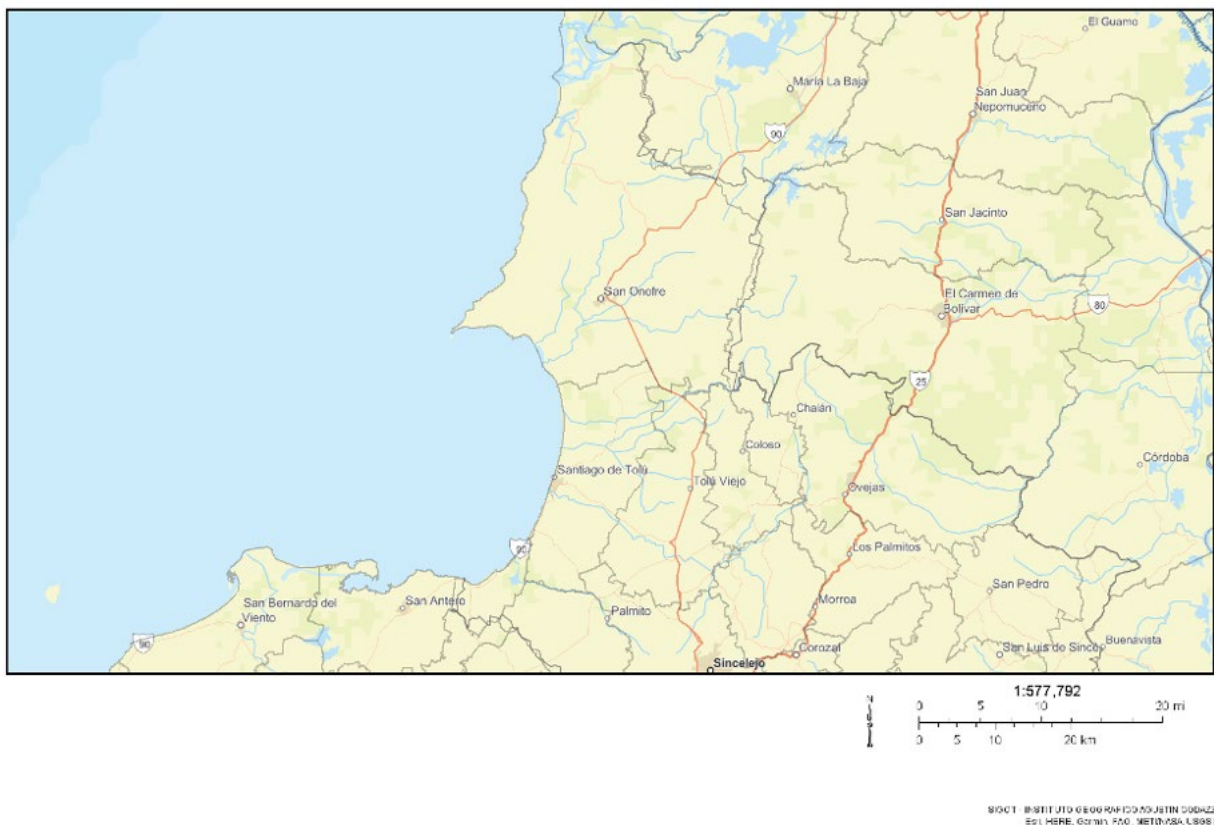
Figure 2. Map municipalities of the mountain zone and of Montes de María.

Source: SIGOT Instituto Geográfico Agustín Codazzi..

The mountain zone is a subregion with a significant part of its population living in rural areas. During the second half of the 20th century, the subregion had an essential role in the struggle for the land in Montes de María. Like the rest of Montes de María, the mountain zone was also

significantly affected by the armed conflict between guerrillas, paramilitary groups and the military forces, especially in the period 1996-2005. However, the specific instances and repertories of violence have not been the same in all municipalities of Montes de María.

The mountain zone was perceived as being among the areas where guerrillas had a strong presence in Montes de María, and at the same time, multiple forms of state violence and the actions of paramilitary groups were carried out in rural communities. After the dismantling of the FARC organization and other guerrilla organizations and the significant decrease of political violence in the region, several state processes aimed at rebuilding relationships between citizens and the state have been taking place in the mountain zone and the broader region of Montes de María. In this chapter, I provide a brief context regarding these dynamics in the mountain zone, with a focus on the municipality of Ovejas, and I also present methodological aspects of this research.

2.2 The municipalities of the mountain zone and campesino communities

Most municipalities of the mountain zone have small populations. According to the Censo Nacional de Población y Vivienda 2018, DANE, Ovejas has approximately 22.800 inhabitants, 50% of them in the rural area; Colosó 8.623, 55% in the rural area; Chalán 4.466, 36% in the rural area; Los Palmitos 22.880, 51% in the rural area; Morroa 15.061, 40% in the rural area. However, rural areas are not entirely separated from the dynamics of the urban area in these municipalities, particularly considering the effects of the armed conflict in the region. During my fieldwork, I noticed that while many rural inhabitants who were forcibly displaced returned permanently to *corregimientos* and *veredas* (divisions in rural areas), others still continue living in the urban area and travel to rural areas several times a week to take care of agricultural activities. It is also

common that campesinos have relatives in the urban area and stay there sometimes. The Troncal Highway, which connects the Caribbean region with the center of the country, crosses the municipalities of Ovejas, Los Palmitos, and Morroa.

According to the Registro Unico de Víctimas RUV (Unique Register of Victims), 18.181 inhabitants in Ovejas, 6.577 in Colosó and 3.542 in Chalán are registered as victims of the armed conflict, which represents a significant part of the population: 79% of the total population in Ovejas, 76% in Colosó and 79% in Chalán.[3] Most of these inhabitants are registered as victims of forced displacement.

In the areas outside the *cabecera municipal* (urban area), there are *corregimientos*, *veredas,* and *caseríos*, which are divisions in rural areas. Ovejas is comprised of 11 *corregimientos*, 23 *veredas* and 14 *caseríos*. Chalán is comprised of 1 *corregimiento* and 8 *veredas*. Colosó is comprised of 5 *corregimientos* and 21 *veredas*. Living conditions and infrastructure in the *corregimientos* are better than in the *veredas* and *caseríos*. However, overall socio-economic conditions are more precarious in the areas outside the *cabecera municipal*.

Small-scale agricultural production and campesino economies have been predominant in the municipalities of the mountain zone. However, during the last decade agro-industry economies have expanded in Montes de María, facilitated by the massive purchases of land that took place after the dismantling of the guerrilla organizations in the region. There are plantations of teak in the mountain zone, especially in some rural areas of Ovejas, although not in the magnitude of other municipalities of Montes de María. For example, in María la Baja many communities are surrounded by plantations of African palm (Berman 2017).

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[3] Calculated based on information of victims by location, December 2019, Unit of Victims and population of DANE, 2018. According to the RUV, 8.944.137 people are recognized and registered as victims in Colombia.

In the past, the cultivation of tobacco was particularly relevant in Ovejas and other municipalities of the mountain zone, which was exported to European countries (CNMH, 2017). Currently, women and men in rural areas plant tobacco and other crops such as yam, *ajonjolí*, *ají*, *yuca*, and corn. However, they often complain about the low prices for these agricultural products, which provide little, if any, profits to rural inhabitants.

I also heard complaints about the bad conditions of the tertiary roads that connect the *corregimientos* and *veredas* with the urban area and the Troncal Highway, making it difficult or more onerous to transport agricultural products. Motorcycles and donkeys are a common form of transportation in rural communities, although jeeps are sometimes used.

2.2.1 Land struggle and campesino communities

The struggle for the land was an important dynamic in the municipalities of the mountain zone. It is still remembered by inhabitants, especially older generations. During the seventies and eighties, Montes de María was an epicenter of land struggle by the most important campesino movement in Colombia, the Asociación Nacional de Usuarios Campesinos ANUC (National Association of Campesinos Users). In the department of Sucre, the ANUC "had more strength and organizational development" than in other regions of the country and was also a scenario of campesino mobilization (Zamosc 1986:70). The main goal of the mobilization during those years was the 'recovery and taking of land' (*recuperación y toma de tierras*) (GMH 2010).

According to my interlocutors, some *corregimientos* in Ovejas, such as Don Gabriel and Flor del Monte, were created as settlements centuries ago. These and other caseríos used to be surrounded by *fincas - haciendas* (estates) that belonged to private landowners. Campesinos used to work in these *fincas* under conditions of exploitation, paying a fee or rent since they did not

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own the land. In many cases, land struggle by these inhabitants involved deaths and repression by state actors, for example, in the case of the *finca* Mula. According to local accounts, in other cases the taking of the land did not involve struggle since the landowners agreed or even offered to sell their fincas, for example, in the cases of the *veredas* El Charcón and Santafé. In other cases, campesinos had received the land as part of collective adjudications by the Colombian Institute of Agrarian Reform (INCORA) at the end of the sixties, as the case of La Finca La Europa.

INCORA was in charge of implementing the Law of Agrarian Reform issued in 1961 and was responsible for purchasing the land and assigning it to campesinos. The ANUC played a central role in the organization of rural inhabitants participating in the struggle for land in Montes de María and other regions of the country. In the mountain zone, some *fincas* were bought by INCORA in the seventies, eighties, and even early nineties.

Fincas bought by INCORA from landowners were assigned to several campesinos *en común and proindiviso* (undivided property ownership). The number of campesinos receiving land depended on the size of the *finca*. Today, not only rural inhabitants who originally received the land live or work in their *parcelas* (plot of land given to each individual), but also other inhabitants who were forcibly displaced from other towns and settled in these areas. In some cases, campesinos who received land from INCORA abandoned it or transferred their rights to the land to other individuals during the violence in the region.

In some cases, the land assigned to campesinos has continued *proindiviso* until today. In other cases, the land was divided by INCORA into *parcelas* years later. Some rural inhabitants did not receive the deed of *parcelas* or did not sign it, and some of these adjudications were never formalized. During my fieldwork, formalization of the land was also taking place in Ovejas by the Agencia Nacional de Tierras (National Agency of Land) as a pilot case in the country.

In rural areas, informality in land tenure facilitated land dispossession by armed actors and companies and created several conflicts between women and men who were forcibly displaced and other people who arrived in rural areas and occupied land that had been abandoned.

Figure 3. Campesinos cleaning the main entrance to the community, Villa Colombia, rural area of Ovejas.

Photo by the author, November 2017.

According to interlocutors in Ovejas, each *finca* assigned to campesinos by INCORA became a community in rural areas. Current *veredas* and *caseríos* in Ovejas, such as Pedregal, El Flechal, El Palmar, San Francisco, La Coquera, Medellín, El Zapato, La Chavela, Mula, Alemania, Santafé, were *fincas* assigned to campesinos by INCORA. Shared experiences and organization during the struggle for the land shaped solidarity ties in these rural communities. During

subsequent years, the organization of these communities to request the construction of the school, the health center and the road from local and regional authorities also played a role in strengthening social ties in rural communities. The social fabric changed during the war, but inhabitants have been working on rebuilding social ties for almost a decade, sometimes with the accompaniment of NGOs or state institutions. Women and men refer to rural communities, such as the community of Chengue, Villa Colombia, and La Europa.

Women and men living in *veredas* often have their houses and crops in their *parcelas*. Other campesinos live in the *caseríos* and *corregimientos* and have their *parcelas* in other areas, often not very far away. During the armed conflict many rural inhabitants were forcibly displaced, not only to the urban area and other cities but also to *corregimientos* and *caseríos*.

2.3 Armed conflict and state violence in the mountain zone of Montes de María

Although the region of Montes de María was affected by the armed conflict, the specific local trajectories of the conflict and repertories of violence have not been the same in all municipalities. According to Codhes et al. (2020), among the actors and factors that explain the armed conflict in the region are the land, drug trafficking, the guerrillas, paramilitaries, and the state. It is outside the scope of this research and chapter to present a more comprehensive characterization of the dynamics of the armed conflict in the region, given the multiples factors involved and because these dynamics changed in different periods. Instead, in what follows, I provide an overview of the presence of different armed actors in the mountain zone and how they affected rural communities.

In the region of Montes de María, guerrillas, paramilitaries, and the *fuerza pública* (the Military Forces and the National Police) disputed the control of territory. However, in some municipalities, guerrillas exerted greater control or were zones of confrontation between legal and illegal armed actors, while in other areas, paramilitaries settled and tried to control or actually controlled populations. The mountain zone of Montes de María was perceived as being among the areas where guerrillas had a strong presence. It was also a zone of confrontation between the guerrillas and the military forces of the state. Paramilitary groups did not settle in this area permanently but made incursions to perpetrate massacres and selective assassinations.

2.3.1 The guerrillas

Several guerrilla groups had a presence in Montes de María. These included Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria Patria Libre (MIR-PL), Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (PRT), Ejército Popular de Liberación (EPL), Corriente de Renovación Socialista (CRS), Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo (ERP), and FARC guerrillas. An official report locates the presence of some of these guerrillas in the region since the late seventies and eighties (ODHDIH 2003).

The MIR-PL was a local militia that emerged in the eighties, while the EPL and the PRT were also among the first guerrillas in the region in the late seventies and eighties (CNMH 2018). The PRT had a presence in municipalities such as Chalán, Colosó, El Carmen de Bolívar, San Juan Nepomuceno, and Ovejas (Codhes et al. 2020). The CRS emerged as a dissidence inside the Union Camilista ELN at the end of the eighties, and most of its members were from the MIR-PL (El Tiempo 1993).

Some campesino interlocutors in Ovejas alluded to the MIR-PL and the PRT as political guerrillas which were mostly clandestine and did not interfere too much with the population. Some inhabitants of Ovejas and other municipalities sympathized or were even members of the MIR-PL, the PRT, and later of the CRS. According to interlocutors, these inhabitants were often involved in political rather than military work, which was not very prominent in these guerrillas.

At the beginning of the nineties, the EPL, PRT, and CRS participated in peace talks and demobilized after reaching agreements with national governments. The PRT and the CRS demobilized respectively in the *corregimientos* of Don Gabriel in 1991, and Flor del Monte in 1994, both in the municipality of Ovejas.[4]

The ELN had a presence through the Jaime Bateman Cayón front in the municipalities of Ovejas, Los Palmitos, and Colosó (ODHDIH, 2003). The ERP emerged as a dissidence of the ELN in 1996, and had a presence in Ovejas, Chalán, Colosó and El Carmen de Bolivar (ODHDIH, 2003). The ERP started to disintegrate since 2003 as a result of desertions (Codhes et al. 2020).

At the beginning of the nineties, FARC guerrillas, which were created in 1964 and had expanded to several regions of Colombia in previous decades, arrived in the area of Montes de María in Sucre. According to a FARC ex-combatant, in 1990, a commission of three FARC guerrillas was sent to Sucre to explore if there were conditions to create a guerrilla front in the area. They arrived first in Colosó and continued exploring in Ovejas, Chalán, El Carmen de Bolívar, San Onofre, and other areas. The exploration lasted almost one year. "We began analyzing that it was possible to operate a front and that our mountains would be the masses" (Interview with ex-combatant of the 35th front of FARC guerrillas, April, 2018).

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[4] PRT and the CRS were small guerrillas. Approximately, 200 men from the PRT and 650 men from the CRS demobilized. The last one also had presence in other regions of the country.

According to the ex-combatant, in 1992, around 200 men from the FARC guerrillas arrived in the region. The guerrillas went to the Mojana area, Chalán, and Colosó, in the department of Sucre. In the area of Montes de María in Bolívar, the FARC operated mainly through the 37th front, although the 35th front also had a presence. The number of guerrillas in the region increased in the following years.

FARC guerrillas expanded their presence in rural areas in the mountain zone during the nineties and remained in the area until the second half of the first decade of the 2000s. In the mountain zone, this guerrilla group expanded its presence principally in Chalán, Colosó and some rural areas of Ovejas, after police stations were removed from the first two municipalities in 1996. The armed group had a presence not only in the rural but also in the urban area in Colosó and especially Chalán. They also had a presence in Los Palmitos and Morroa. Guerrillas such as the FARC or the ELN extorted ranchers and landowners and were also involved in cattle theft and kidnappings in the region.

According to some of my interlocutors, in the beginning, some inhabitants saw in the guerrillas a solution to the problem of *cuatreros* (groups of armed men who used to steal stores, rural inhabitants, and even rape women) and common crime in rural areas, which was never controlled by the police. In this context, guerrillas began penetrating and taking control of the territory.

As guerrillas settled and moved in rural areas, where there was a limited presence of the state, encounters between these guerrillas and populations living there became common and inevitable. According to interlocutors, when the FARC guerrillas arrived in the region, they began organizing meetings with inhabitants in rural areas, which overtime became controlled and dominated by this organization. Other interlocutors mentioned that the ELN also organized

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meetings in rural areas. In the words of one campesino: "In towns or areas such as Chalán, Don Gabriel, and Pijiguay in Ovejas, when you went there, you used to find guerrillas walking on the streets, that was the government during those years in some of these towns. There was no presence of the military or the police, nothing".

Guerrillas also had a presence in other areas of these municipalities, for example, in the area of Flor del Monte in Ovejas. According to other campesino of Colosó who lived in the urban area of the town during those years: "When the state abandoned these areas, the guerrilla became stronger, and they also killed innocent people, while the paramilitaries also perpetrated massacres. The military came sporadically, stayed two or three days, and then moved to other area, because there was a strong presence of guerrillas."

Reactions of populations to the presence of the FARC in rural areas were different. According to local accounts, some inhabitants joined the guerrillas, especially young people, sometimes voluntarily, but in other cases, through recruitment. This situation happened in Chalán but also in other municipalities of the mountain zone. Inhabitants that had a relative in the guerrilla were often stigmatized and even persecuted by state agents, especially during the 2000s.

However, according to the majority of my interlocutors, interactions with guerrillas, when they took place, were seen as a strategy for survival in a challenging context where people did not have many options if they wanted to continue living or working in these areas. Sometimes inhabitants had to interact with the guerrillas as they also had to do it with the military in encounters in rural areas.

In this context, strategies for survival were different. Some rural inhabitants tried to avoid encounters with the guerrillas or resist its proposals or orders. For example, one campesino leader told me that when the FARC guerrillas arrived in Ovejas, he received a letter from the group asking

him to meet with them. He replied no because he was not part of the FARC, and he did not want to be part of them. In spite of his response, he received another letter later with a proposal to do some work for them. He rejected the offer again, and they did not bother him again. He told me that he survived because he did not insist in repudiating the guerrillas' actions but instead just stepped aside and continued with his life.

That was not the situation of all rural inhabitants. In *veredas* and *corregimientos* where the guerrillas had a more permanent presence, it was more difficult for inhabitants not to observe their regulations. According to my interlocutors, many women and men still living or working in rural areas tried to continue their lives without confronting the guerrillas or getting in trouble with them. Some inhabitants avoided attending meetings with FARC guerrillas, and others attended them since this group used to go house by house to tell people that they had to go. Sometimes inhabitants found ways to avoid this, but this was not always the case.

Sometimes guerrillas also demanded favors from rural inhabitants, such as to be allowed to cook or something else. According to several interlocutors, sometimes rural inhabitants agreed in order to avoid problems with these groups, as they also did with the military when they were asked for the same. In the words of one campesina:

> It was not our fault that we live in rural areas, to have a house here, and that an armed group arrived here. We are going to cook here, the guerrilla sometimes told us, but we need yam and yuca. How could we say no? It was almost mandatory. Did that mean that we were guerrillas? No, because that was mandatory. The military also used to come and if they wanted to stay here and cook under the tree, who was going to say no… did that mean that we were soldiers? No. We were in the middle of the conflict. There was much struggle in order to be recognized as civilian population.

Guerrilla groups also established prohibitions, especially the FARC. Rural inhabitants were not allowed to complain to state offices or receive financial aid from the state or even from other sources, for example the church. However, people sometimes did that in secret. In one community,

a group of women and men told me that some inhabitants had the *carta de desplazado* (the document people received when they reported displacement). When the guerrillas discovered it, they told inhabitants to burn these letters, or otherwise leave the area. Some people burnt the document, and others left. Meetings were also prohibited, although some inhabitants continued meeting secretly.

Some inhabitants were displaced in some cases because the guerrillas asked them to leave the town or because they did not want to continue living in that situation. Some interlocutors mentioned that guerrillas often asked the leaders who were in disagreement with them to leave the area, and several leaders left. Others remained in the area but did not oppose the guerrillas openly.

Interactions with the FARC guerrilla became more tense over time, mainly due to the selective assassinations of inhabitants and the imposition of the guerrilla group's decisions on populations. Some members of rural communities were assassinated by the FARC due to accusations of being cooperants or collaborators of the military or for other reasons. I heard the stories of three rural inhabitants killed by the FARC guerrillas in front of their communities. Inhabitants rejected the selective assassinations. According to several interlocutors, the FARC guerrillas did not accept neutrality, and they made that explicit. In the words of one campesino: "for the FARC guerrillas, neutrality did not exist, you were with one side or with the other." FARC guerrillas did not tolerate the informants of the police or the military and often killed them. According to interlocutors, the situation deteriorated with the *milicianos* of the FARC who were often from the area.

In the context of militarization of the zone during the first decade of the 2000s and the increasing military operations, the guerrilla organizations were dismantled or expelled from the territory. Some members of the guerrillas deserted, for example, the ERP guerrillas. In 2007, the

FARC commander in the region, Martín Caballero, was killed in a military operation. During those years, many other guerrillas surrendered or were captured; even in 2009 there were some captures of guerrillas. Some combatants who did not surrender or were not captured moved to the south area of the department of Bolívar.

2.3.2 The fuerza pública and state violence

State violence in campesino communities cannot be seen only as a byproduct of the armed conflict in the region. Violent state practices have rather intertwined with the dynamics of the armed conflict in complex ways. State violence in campesino populations in the mountain zone was also present in the context of the struggle for the land. During the seventies, eighties and even nineties, rural inhabitants and the campesino movement were also repressed by state agents, especially the police and the military. According to some of my interlocutors, the leaders of the ANUC became the main targets of state repression, although other rural inhabitants participating in the struggle for the land also experienced it.

The reports of human rights violations that are part of the Casa Campesina's archive in Sincelejo[5] include many letters in which ANUC's leaders in Sucre and Committees of Campesino Users at the *veredal* level (village level) complained about the abuses of landowners, the police, the military, and other state agents during the recovery of land. These letters, which are mainly from 1986-1992, refer to the abuses against rural inhabitants in municipalities such as Ovejas, Los Palmitos, San Pedro, Colosó, Morroa, and Carmen de Bolívar. The letters are addressed to different

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[5] Denuncias por violación de derechos humanos ANUC 1 y 2. Centro de Memoria Histórica.

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authorities, including the President of the Republic, other national authorities, the governor, the commander of the police, and human rights organizations.

Abuses against rural populations included burning of *ranchos* (type of rural house), physical mistreatment, cruel treatment, home searches, destruction of crops, and persecution of leaders. These abuses were often committed by landowners and by the police or the military. Landowners often counted with the support of the police and the military in repressing campesinos occupying their *fincas*. According to the complaints, these rural inhabitants were sometimes detained by the police and incarcerated for days and even a few months.

Some letters and complaints show that campesinos participating in the struggle for land were sometimes labeled as guerrillas or subversives by landowners or by the police or the military. Inhabitants rejected these accusations and complained that they were accused of belonging to subversive organizations only for living in these municipalities. There are also denunciations about cases of torture of campesinos. The abuses by the military are associated with the Battalion of Fusileros No 5 of Corozal. From the perspective of some of my interlocutors, the battalion was at the service of landowners.

Stigmatization of rural inhabitants involved in the struggle for land, especially leaders of the ANUC, began to occur even before the arrival of FARC guerrillas to the municipalities of Montes de María in Sucre, in the context of the presence of smaller guerrillas in the zone. For example, in one letter from 1987, the campesino assembly of Sucre, reported the militarization of some rural communities, particularly those with conflicts of land. Delegates of 43 Committees of Campesinos Users at the *veredal* level, and other members of the ANUC at the municipal and departmental level participated in that assembly. Among the more critical cases mentioned were the communities of El Palmar, Nueva Colombia, and Medellín in Ovejas. The letter also alluded

to the threats to leaders and mentioned that when the military and the police arrived to the communities, they were looking for guns or guerrillas, which was interpreted as a campaign to intimidate campesinos (DVDH n.d :22).

During the seventies and eighties, detention and incarceration of campesinos were related mainly to the struggle for land and the conflict with landowners. However, in a few letters of the nineties, there were also complaints about campesinos incarcerated accused of rebellion, especially members of the ANUC.

Some letters also reported the assassination of rural inhabitants and ANUC's leaders by the military. One interlocutor who was leader of the ANUC in the region told me that the first assassinations, persecutions, and repression against campesinos was by the *fuerza pública*.

Although rural inhabitants were also stigmatized during the eighties, especially leaders participating in the struggle for land, some interlocutors mentioned that the broader stigmatization of communities began with the arrival of the FARC guerrillas to the mountain zone. In the words of one leader: "[before] there was stigmatization but mainly of recognized leaders. The stigmatization of the population began with the arrival of the FARC and its expansion in the territory". According to some of my interlocutors, rural inhabitants were stigmatized of being guerrilla collaborators just for living in a zone of presence of guerrillas. During the nineties and the first decade of the 2000s, rural inhabitants were often labeled as guerrillas and collaborators by members of the military or the police, and suffered physical mistreatment and other forms of violence by state agents.

During the late eighties and first half of the nineties, the armed conflict in the mountain zone was a low intensity conflict (ODHDIH 2003). According to the database of the Observatory of Memory and Conflict del Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica CNMH, a few combats and

other warlike actions involving the military, the police, the ELN and FARC guerrillas took place during the period 1990-1995 in Colosó, Chalán, Ovejas and other municipalities of the region. After 1996 the armed conflict escalated due to the increasing confrontations between the guerrillas and the *fuerza pública*, massacres by paramilitary groups, selective assassinations of inhabitants, and the expansion of guerrillas after the removal of police stations in some municipalities.

2.3.3 Paramilitary groups and the massacres

Some campesinos, especially leaders of the ANUC, were assassinated by killers (*sicarios* known as *pájaros or matones a sueldo*) hired by landowners, or by local armed groups and paramilitaries that began operating in the region. The Casa Campesina's letters reported some assassinations of the ANUC's leaders in municipalities such as Colosó, Chalán, Morroa, Ovejas and Los Palmitos (DVDH s.f:110).

The expansion of paramilitary groups, the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC), in the region of Montes de María took place in 1997 (Porras 2004). However, between 1985 and 1996, there were smaller local armed groups and paramilitaries in the region, created by families of *hacendados* (landowners) and local elites. Among those groups were Los Méndez, Los Meza, Los Cascona, Los Encapuchados and Los Rodríguez and several Convivir (Private Security groups). Los Meza from Canutal in Ovejas operated in this municipality and came into conflict with the FARC guerrillas. These armed organizations were responsible for the assassinations of some members of the ANUC and other inhabitants in the region. Years later, some of these local armed groups with a presence in the region became part or operated under the coordination of the AUC.

The paramilitary groups, the AUC, expanded to the Montes de María at the end of the nineties and were supported by politicians and *finqueros* (owners of big *fincas*) in the region. According to Verdad Abierta (2010), paramilitarism in the region was born in 1997 in a meeting in the *finca* of a former governor of Sucre located in the rural area of Sincelejo. Some politicians, *finqueros*, paramilitary commanders and state agents participated in that meeting. Paramilitary groups were involved in counterinsurgency operations but also in drug trafficking in the region. Narcotraffickers acquired land in the region since the late eighties, mainly in the coastal area and the Magdalena river, as part of the corridor of commercialization of drugs. These drug traffickers supported the expansion of paramilitarism in the region (Codhes et al. 2020:142). Although Montes de María was not a zone of plantations of illicit crops, it has been a strategic corridor for drug trafficking towards the Gulf of Morrosquillo.

Sucre is also known for being one of the departments of the country in which the *parapolitica* (the links between politicians and paramilitaries) took place. In the 2000s, some politicians, governors, members of the assembly of deputies, and some mayors were investigated and convicted for their links with paramilitary groups in the region. A former congressman from the region was even convicted due to their participation in the massacre of Macayepo, in the rural area of El Carmen de Bolívar in 2000.

The Block Heroes of Montes de María from the AUC operated in the region during the late nineties and the first half of the first decade of the 2000s (Porras 2004). Although paramilitary groups operated in the region of Montes de María, they settled in some municipalities, mainly in San Onofre. They also had an important presence in Zambrano, El Guamo, and María la Baja. The AUC established social regulations in zones under their control, for example, in San Onofre (GMH 2011).

A report of the Historical Memory Group (GMH 2011) points out that in the zones where these armed groups established control and settled, they produced a social order by regulating the everyday lives of populations through repertories of violence different from those used in zones of armed confrontation (p. 58). In some municipalities, campesinos were dispossessed of their land by paramilitary groups. Overall, paramilitary groups did not settle permanently in the mountain zone but operated in the area at times and made incursions perpetrating massacres and selective assassinations.

A recent report presented to the Truth Commission points out that 71 massacres occurred in Montes de María during the nineties and particularly in the early 2000s (Codhes et al. 2020). Massacres were perpetrated mainly by paramilitary groups in several communities, accusing rural inhabitants of being alleged guerrillas or collaborators. The Historical Memory Group pointed out that massacres operated as techniques of terror to displace and disarticulate communities accused of being sympathizers of the guerrillas (GMH 2011:31). Among the cruelest massacres in the region are the cases of Chengue in Ovejas (2001) and El Salado in Carmen de Bolívar (2000). Seven massacres occurred in the municipality of Ovejas, producing displacement of the population and abandonment of the land. Some of these inhabitants returned to rural areas in a few months or years. Others stayed in the urban areas but continued traveling to their *parcelas* several times a week to take care of their agricultural activities, known as '*retornos laborales'*. Some inhabitants never returned to the municipality.

Investigations of massacres perpetrated by paramilitary groups in Montes de María have shown the omission, complicity or participation of some members of the *fuerza pública*, for example, by facilitating the transit of the paramilitaries, not stopping their actions or not running after them once the brutal acts of violence against campesino communities occurred. These

investigations and the versions of paramilitaries have also shown the links between some members of the military and the police or other state agents with paramilitary groups that operated in the region (Codhes et al. 2020). Rural inhabitants' memories and imaginaries of the military forces allowing the paramilitaries to act without protecting communities and even operating together during the armed conflict remain until today.

In 2005 paramilitary groups demobilized in the municipality of María La Baja in the context of the broader demobilization of these groups in the country under the Justice and Peace Law, issued by former President Alvaro Uribe Vélez (2002-2010). However, post-demobilization groups emerged in the region and other parts of Colombia, which were initially named by the government as criminal bands (*bandas criminales*) to distinguish them from the previous paramilitary groups.

In the region, these groups have been involved mainly in drug-trafficking without interfering too much with populations in most municipalities. However, in recent years rural communities in municipalities such as San Onofre have reported the presence of these armed actors and their attempts to intimate or control communities.

In my follow up visit to Montes de María in 2019, the situation had deteriorated not only in San Onofre but also in El Carmen de Bolívar due to the presence of post-demobilization armed groups in rural and urban areas. Campesinos from the last municipality reported the presence of armed men in rural areas after years of relative calm. Through the System of Early Alerts, the Defensoría del Pueblo recently reported that the civilian population and specifically some organizations and other sectors of society are at risk in the municipality of Carmen de Bolívar due to the presence of the Autodefensas Gaitanistas (Defensoría del Pueblo 2020).

2.4 State processes, interventions and the Final Agreement in the 'post-conflict' transition

Images of state absence or weakness to refer to the mountain zone have obscured the real workings of state institutions and practices in this region during the armed conflict and the post-conflict transition. The previous section illustrates some of the ways in which state actors have been present in campesino communities in previous decades. Repression and other forms of violence, particularly by the *fuerza pública* became common in these communities during the seventies, eighties, nineties and 2000s. The links between politicians, governors, other local and regional authorities, and members of the *fuerza pública* with paramilitary groups have also questioned simplistic images of the absence or weakness of the state in the region. During the first decade of the 2000s, in the context of militarization of the region, campesinos perceived the presence of the state as mainly military.

Montes de María has been a region with a high level of intervention by the state and the international cooperation during the last decade. Some of these interventions even began before the zone was declared free of guerrillas. The post-conflict transition in Montes de María has been characterized by multiple state processes and other interventions taking place in the territory.

The Development and Peace Program of Montes de María (Programa de Desarrollo y Paz de Los Montes de María) was implemented during 2004-2011. The Development and Peace of Montes de Maria Network Foundation (Fundación de Desarrollo y Paz de Los Montes de María) was in charge of implementing this program, which counted with resources from the international cooperation and also the state. However, my interlocutors did not associate this program with state presence, but rather with the foundation and the international cooperation.

The program was an initiative from the region, involving civil society, organizations, inhabitants, and other actors. The Development and Peace Program sought to pay attention to

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structural conditions related to the armed conflict and aimed to reduce social inequality and promote the reconstruction of the social fabric and human development. The program also priviledged productive projects and food security in rural communities (Promontes 2003:237-239).

The Laboratory of Peace of Montes de María, funded by the European Union (El Laboratorio de Paz de La Unión Europea), was implemented during 2006-2011. These programs were implemented in several regions of Colombia as initiatives of peace building in zones of armed conflict and counted with the participation of civil society, the economic support of the European Union and to a lesser extent of the Colombian government (De Sousa Henriques 2012).

In Montes de María, the Laboratory of Peace was implemented in all its municipalities and focused on peace and human rights, governance, and community strengthening and sustainable development to improve living conditions of the poorest populations (PODEC 2011). For example, in Ovejas, 17 projects were implemented as part of the Laboratory of Peace. However, overall these projects did not cover all rural populations but rather benefited some communities and even families, as it can be seen in the summary presented in the document PODEC (2011). My interlocutors also mentioned that.

The Plan for Territorial Consolidation in Montes de Maria (Plan de Consolidación Territorial de Los Montes de María 2009-2015), was designed at the national level, and implemented mostly by state institutions, in order to promote the social recovery of the territory after the dismantling of the guerrillas and the demobilization of the paramilitary groups in 2005. This policy was widely criticized by human rights organizations and other regional actors because it involved not only civilian but also civil-military components (PODEC 2011; Ramírez 2019).

Interinstitutional events (*jornadas*), with the participation of the military and other state institutions, became one of the strategies used for consolidation of territorial control. Through

these events, communities received different social services and assistance, such as psychological and medical consultations, other health services and delivery of food. These events also included the realization of sports and entertainment events involving kids and adults, with the participation of army clowns. In Montes de María, the civil component focused on emergency humanitarian attention, economic and social development, governance, security, justice and the organization of property. This Plan was implemented only in four municipalities of Montes de María: Ovejas, San Jacinto, Carmen de Bolívar and San Onofre. However, this intervention did not take place in all communities of Ovejas but only in some of them.

The Law of Victims and Land Restitution was issued by the Congress in 2011, under the Presidency of Juan Manuel Santos (2010-2018). The Law was presented as a mechanism of transitional justice and reconciliation focusing on the victims of the armed conflict and reparations. In this context, other state processes began taking place in the region since 2011. The Law created the Victims' Unit, the Land Restitution Unit, and the Center of Historical Memory. The Victims' Unit and Land Restitution Unit have territorial branches in Sincelejo, with their directors, offices and bureaucracies. These are the institutions and bureaucracies that have been present in rural areas during recent years. The Law of Victims recognized more comprehensively the victims of the armed conflict, in contrast with the official discourse of the government of Alvaro Uribe Vélez (2002-2010), which denied the existence of the armed conflict and its victims.

The Law of Victims promised attention and reparations to the victims of the armed conflict, including land restitution. The implementation of the law has translated into state processes and the presence of bureaucracies in rural communities since 2011.

As part of the implementation of the Law of Victims, declarations of rural and other inhabitants who did not report displacement or other forms of victimization during the armed

conflict took place between 2011 and 2015 in the region. Many campesinos and other inhabitants were included in the RUV created by the law. The declarations took place several years later after victimization since, according to my interlocutors, the guerrillas prohibited to report displacement, or in other cases, people did not trust state institutions. These victims are supposed to receive individual reparations, but the process has been very slow. Collective reparations were also established by the Law of Victims.

At the beginning of my fieldwork, there were three processes of collective reparations in Ovejas, involving nine communities: Seis Veredas (Villa Colombia, Medellín, El Palmar, La Coquera, San Francisco and Borrachera), Flor del Monte and La Peña, and Chengue. The Victims' Unit is in charge of coordinating the implementation of these processes. However, during my fieldwork a few other communities were proposed for collective reparations in Ovejas and other municipalities of the mountain zone. A few of them were recently approved by the Victims' Unit. Collective reparations seek to guarantee the collective rights that were violated during the armed conflict and contribute to building trusting relationships with the state.

As part of reparations, the Law of Victims also established the restitution of the land for those who were dispossessed or abandoned the land due to the armed conflict. Some cases involve conflicts with companies that bought the land at low prices. Other cases involve conflicts between campesinos who abandoned or transferred their rights to the land to other campesinos who resisted or arrived in the area after being displaced from other rural areas or municipalities. There are also cases of dispossession by paramilitary groups.

In 2012, the president Juan Manuel Santos began peace talks with the FARC guerrillas, which led to the signing of the Final Agreement at the end of 2016. In the context of the implementation of the agreement other state processes began taking place in the region. This has

also translated into the presence of bureaucratic apparatuses recently created that are in charge of implementing the measures established in the agreement.

The Final Agreement contains five main agreements: 1. The comprehensive rural reform; 2. Political participation; 3. Agreement on the bilateral and definitive ceasefire and cessation of hostilities and laying down of arms and on reincorporation of the FARC into civilian life; 4. The solution to the illicit drugs problem; 5. Victims agreement; 6. Implementation and verification mechanisms.

Some of these provisions have more direct implications for rural communities in areas of the country that have been affected by armed conflict, particularly the comprehensive rural reform and the victim's agreement. The implementation of the rural reform prioritizes the territories in the country most affected by armed conflict, poverty, and abandonment, through the PDET. The ART was in charge of coordinating the formulation of the PDET, and it is currently coordinating its implementation. The agreement for the victims created the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparations and Non-Recurrence. This system includes the Jurisdicción Especial para la Paz JEP (Special Jurisdiction for Peace), La Comisión para el Esclarecimiento de la Verdad, la Convivencia y la No Repetición CEV (the Truth Commission), La Unidad Especial para la Búsqueda de Personas Desaparecidas UBPD (the Special Unit for the Search for Persons deemed as Missing) and the reparation measures.

The Final Agreement points out that redress for victims is at its core and also emphasizes that "all victims of the conflict must be recognized, not only in their condition as victims but also and primarily in their capacity as citizens with rights" (Final Agreement 2016). The agreement emphasizes the relevance of the comprehensive reparation of the victims, including the rights to restitution, the collective reparations of territories, populations, and the communities most affected

by the conflict, among other aspects. However, rather than replacing the policies of reparation and land restitution being implemented in the country for almost a decade, the agreement points out that the existing mechanisms will be strengthened, and new measures will be adopted. The original expiration of the Law of Victims and Land Restitution is 2021. Congress is in charge of reforming the Law and adapting it to the peace accords, which has not taken place yet. However, the Constitutional Court already said that if the law is not reformed by the Congress before this date, the current Law of Victims will be automatically extended for another decade.

2.5 Some notes on positionality and conducting fieldwork in contexts affected by violence and 'post-conflict' transitions

I arrived in the mountain zone of Montes de María to conduct primary research in September 2017, when the peace accords signed with the FARC guerrillas began to be implemented in the territories most affected by the consequences of the armed conflict. This context created high expectations among rural inhabitants and campesino communities. For example, among these expectations were the improvement of living conditions in rural areas. I perceived that some campesinos, especially interlocutors, saw me as a resource and a person who could collaborate with rural communities in the context of the state processes taking place in the region, particularly those related to the peace accords but also other ongoing state processes.

In my visits to rural areas, some campesinos asked me about specific aspects of the peace accords and about the process of formulation of the PDET since they knew that I was also conducting research and participating in the different stages of its formulation. In one community

I was even asked to talk to a group of women about the PDET, the relevance of women participation, and the gender approach, which I did.

In the case of the victims of the mass arbitrary detentions, some of them asked me questions about legal issues. I had to clarify that I was only a researcher, and I could not provide legal advice. Some interviewees could have assumed that since I was a researcher, I probably also had some knowledge about legal issues. Several times I met in the Court in Sincelejo with a lawyer who has handled many cases of these victims in order to solve my own questions regarding legal matters related to these cases or to ask about campesinos' questions. I was under the impression that some of these victims somehow expected that I could help in any way regarding their cases, even if it was only to contribute to making their experiences more visible.

In turn, the peace accords created expectations among some of these victims regarding the possibility of knowing the truth behind the mass detentions, and achieving some justice and reparations. Some of these campesinos even thought that there was an opportunity to demonstrate the innocence of those who were convicted of rebellion. This context in which I collected narratives about past forms of violence could have shaped some campesinos' expectations and willingness to speak about these topics.

Although these expectations were present among some campesinos I interviewed during the first months of my fieldwork, in other cases, they emerged among other victims in the last months of my fieldwork when it was more explicit that the Truth Commission was arriving soon to the territory. However, there was also confusion among inhabitants about the Truth Commission's scope, especially the fact that it is only an extrajudicial body.

I also found that a few other campesinos who were detained and incarcerated did not demonstrate expectations regarding what happened to them and felt that this was somehow a

buried topic. Other campesinos knew very little about the Truth Commission or other components of the peace accords, especially ordinary campesinos. Leaders often have more access to information than the ordinary campesino. During my fieldwork, the best-known aspect of the implementation of the agreement was the PDET because its formulation was taking place in the territory and involved the participation of communities.

During most of my primary field research, the experiences of the mass detentions were not discussed at the community or public level, but mainly among victims. During the last months of fieldwork this began changing due to the expectations created by the Truth Commission among some of these victims. During this period, some organizations of victims and some NGOs had also begun talking about presenting reports to the Truth Commission concerning the dynamics of the armed conflict and the different forms of violence that took place in the region.

This context especially shaped victims' expectations and narratives regarding justice, truth, and reparations and attempts of these victims to organize themselves in order to become more visible, particularly during the last months of my fieldwork and after that. I organized two collective meetings during the last month of my fieldwork to explore further expectations concerning truth, justice, and reparations among campesinos who were arbitrarily detained and incarcerated and to facilitate a space where some of these victims and other campesinos could discuss these issues.

Memory-making has been taking place in the region for several years and has continued with the Truth Commission's work and the more recent elaboration of reports by NGOs or organizations of victims in order to present them to this commission. Campesinos' narratives about past experiences I collected in the field also became a scenario for memory-making, especially regarding experiences of state violence in rural communities.

I tried to establish equal and reciprocal relationships in my interactions with campesinos. In a context where some state officials and sometimes NGOs' members often arrive late to meetings scheduled with communities, cancel them without enough notice in advance, or sometimes do not fulfill their promises, I was very careful not to reproduce these practices. Although it seems pretty obvious, establishing equal and reciprocal relationships involves respect. For example, recognizing the value of campesinos' time or their own forms of expertise and knowledge are basic to build more equal relationships. In a meeting with a state official scheduled in a community, I and some campesinos waited more than an hour and a half before the official arrived. People were annoyed by the situation.

Being sensitive to the precarious socio-economic conditions in which communities live was also important. I was careful not to cause additional economic hardship to rural communities and to conduct my interviews in the places and times that were more convenient for campesinos. Some campesinos complained when meetings were organized in the urban area or in Sincelejo and the organizers did not reimburse transportation expenses. While most state officials and members of NGOs often arrived by car in rural communities, I always traveled by motorcycle, which is the most common way of transportation used by rural inhabitants. I did not want to accentuate our differences regarding socio-economic or other opportunities such as university education, which rural communities often lack. However, at the same time, I was able to rent an apartment in the urban area and traveled several times a week to rural communities which is not an option for most rural inhabitants.

Conducting collaborative research was a way to reciprocate with campesino communities, avoid relationships based on extracting information without giving anything in return, and establish more equal relationships. Some of my interlocutors saw as positive that I was conducting

collaborative research and that I was conducting research in their communities and accompanying their processes during a significant period. These perceptions are also mediated by campesinos's previous experiences regarding the presence of some NGOs, state actors, or even other researchers in their communities. In some cases, campesinos have felt used, or interventions have caused damage, for example, conflicts among members of communities. However, some NGOs have also conducted long-term work with some rural communities and this accompaniment has been beneficial for these communities.

However, collaboration also has limits. I conducted collaborative research with campesinos and their organizations, especially in some communities. I collaborated with reports, wrote the minutes of meetings, helped writing letters, systematized memory exercises, collected documents, and helped gather information that communities needed or collaborated in other ways. In a few other communities, I also collaborated, although to a lesser extent. In other communities, I mostly conducted interviews without directly reciprocating in other ways because it would have been impossible to keep the same level of collaboration in all communities.

In the last cases, I was concerned about being seen as some members of NGOs or institutions that visit communities briefly and do not return after their work is done. I hope that my research and participation in process that are socially and politically relevant for rural populations in the current Colombian context constitute a way of reciprocating with communities where direct collaboration was limited.

I felt welcome in campesino communities, which significantly facilitated not only my field research but also made pleasant my stay in the region. Building trusting relationships began in the summers of 2014 and 2015 during preliminary visits to some rural communities in Ovejas and Chalán and continued during primary fieldwork. However, these relationships were not the same

in all communities. I worked more closely with some communities than with others. Being open about my background also helped to build these relationships. Some campesinos asked me about my family, where I was born in Colombia, what did I do before starting my PhD studies and even my views about some topics. Trust is central in ethnographic work and could be more difficult to build in contexts that have been affected by protracted armed conflict and violence (Malthaner 2014, Chakravarty 2012).

I also conducted fieldwork in a context where traditional gender roles are still present. However, it changed during the armed conflict and has continued changing in the post-conflict transition, mainly as a result of the circulation of gender discourses brought by NGOs and also state officials. In rural communities, many women are still in charge of domestic activities and care for their children. In turn, men still play a role as providers of their families and are often more involved in organizational processes. However, I also saw women actively involved in organizational processes and playing important roles as leaders of their communities or as part of organizations of victims.

As a female researcher, I interacted with men and women during my fieldwork. I participated in many spaces where both were present such as meetings and other activities taking place in communities, the different spaces of formulation of the PDET, meetings between campesinos and state officials, or members of NGOs. However, sometimes I was in spaces where the presence and participation of men were prominent, especially concerning electoral politics and sometimes organizational processes. Even in the context of the formulation of the PDET, which explicitly incorporated the gender approach, the participation of men was more prominent, especially in the *grupo motor* (community level) and municipal level. In the *grupo motor* in

Ovejas, which was elected by rural communities in the preassemblies, approximately 70% of delegates were men.

I did not feel that my condition as a female researcher was an obstacle to participate in any of these spaces, and this was not completely unusual since women members of NGOs working with campesino communities or female community leaders also participate in spaces where participation of men is prominent. However, I was concerned about collecting many male voices to the detriment of female voices. I tried to balance it by reaching other women in other spaces such as in their houses, while developing domestic activities, or in community activities.

Several scholars have reflected on the political, ethical, and other implications of conducting research and the challenges for fieldwork in violent or repressive contexts (Nordstrom and Robben 1995; Malthaner 2014) and in post-conflict contexts (Theidon 2013). Some studies have addressed issues such as building trust, threats to the security of the researcher and interlocutors, negotiating access, difficult field relations, and other ethical challenges (Malthaner 2014; Wood 2006).

I conducted my primary fieldwork almost a decade or more after the main events of political violence during the armed conflict took place in rural communities. However, the effects of some of these forms of violence have lingered in the post-conflict transition. Violence has also continued in other ways. Explorations of memories of the violent past have taken place in recent years in the region, particularly in the context of collective reparations processes, the National Center of Historical Memory's reports, or the work on memory by NGOs. These processes have often focused on some municipalities and some campesino communities disregarding others. However, the fact that these processes have been taking place in the region for several years made it easier to ask about the violent past.

In the cases of some victims of the mass arbitrary detentions, the memories of these experiences are still painful. The detentions took place more recently in comparison with other forms of political violence in the region. The fact that these victims have been less visible and are even not recognized as victims accentuate the suffering experienced. Some scholars point out that speaking about memories of violent experiences could lead to retraumatization, while others state that some memories of violence could be unspeakable, or there could be a silence (Das 2006). While this cannot be underestimated, this should also be analyzed in the specific context in which the research takes place.

In a few cases, victims of the arbitrary detentions cried while talking about their experiences, especially women. In other cases, also involving men, there was some sadness when people remembered these violent experiences. However, I also found that overall, these victims wanted to talk about what happened to them and to be listened. Only in one case, a woman said that she did not want to talk about the detentions but rather to forget, a decision which I respected.

While talking about past violence could still be painful for some victims, their invisibility as victims, not being listened to, and the lack of recognition of what happened to them are also harmful. In these cases, the best option is to let people decide if they want to talk about violent experiences or not and how much detail they want to narrate.

In a chapter about methodological and ethical problems that emerge in contexts where mass crimes have taken place, Pouligny, Doray and Martin (2007) point out that in their field investigations a recurrent theme in many of the interviews was that "no one had ever taken the time to listen to people tell their stories. Listening to others putting their stories into words is to restore those who have suffered trauma to what makes them human and unique" (p. 26). In the context where I conducted the research, I found this to be true. Some of these victims explicitly

told me that they found some relief in being listened to. However, it does not mean to deny that in some cases, accounts of violent experiences could be unspeakable, that silence could also be present, or that some people do not want to remember violent events.

2.6 Methodology

I conducted ethnographic field research in campesino communities in the mountain zone of Montes de María over 12 months. In addition, I carried out a follow-up visit of three weeks in August 2019. This study is also informed by preliminary fieldwork conducted during three summers: in 2013 (4 weeks), in 2014 (8 weeks) and 2015 (8 weeks). I conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews and informal conversations, participant observation, and archival research.

During the year of primary fieldwork, I lived in the urban area of Carmen de Bolívar. I visited campesino communities in rural areas four or five days a week, especially in Ovejas; and to a lesser extend in Chalán, Colosó, and a few times in Los Palmitos. I always traveled from the urban area of Carmen de Bolívar to the rural area of Ovejas by motorcycle. An experienced motorcycle driver often took me to the communities and brought me back home. Most of the time I stayed in communities from morning to afternoon and sometimes until evening, and a few times I stayed overnight in rural areas in Ovejas. During that year, I visited multiple times all *corregimientos*, half of all *caseríos*, and one-third of *veredas* in Ovejas. I visited three *veredas* in Colosó, one *corregimiento* and two *veredas* in Chalán, and one *corregimiento* in Los Palmitos. In Ovejas, Colosó and Chalán I also spent time in the urban area on multiple occasions.

In these visits to communities, I conducted interviews and informal conversations with campesinos, observed community life, conducted participant observation in community's

meetings and other daily activities, and collected relevant documents. In what follows, I explain this in more detail.

2.6.1 In-depth semi-structured interviews

I conducted 83 in-depth semi-structured interviews with adult campesinos. All interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of participants. In all interviews, I explained to the participants my research, its purpose, and the consent script. I asked for consent to the individual I was going to interview or all participants in a few cases in which more than one individual participated in the interview.

I conducted two types of interviews. The first type was a general interview with 40 campesinos from Ovejas. These interlocutors were selected through chain referral sampling. I selected the seed contacts from different campesino communities, mainly women and men who are community leaders in the rural areas of Ovejas. As I made new contacts with rural inhabitants, especially in workshops and the pre-assemblies of the PDET, I continued to solicit further contacts and followed them up. The final sample included community leaders and ordinary campesinos, members of different communities in rural areas, and women and men. I interviewed rural inhabitants of different generations, although this was not a criterion for the selection of interlocutors. I did not interview the younger generations, and in consequence, these views are not represented in the interviews. However, I interacted with young adults in communities and other spaces.

In these interviews, I explored issues concerning some aspects of the history of the community, the dynamics of the armed conflict and the presence of legal and illegal armed actors in the municipality and rural communities, relationships and encounters with guerrillas, the

presence of other state institutions, and interactions between campesinos and state actors and related experiences. I particularly examined narratives regarding campesinos' experiences and encounters with the state during the militarization of the region, including different forms of violence and their effects on communities.

I explored aspects of the transitional period after the zone was declared free of guerrillas, such as the presence of state institutions and officials in rural areas during those years and state processes that began taking place in that context. I also examined manifestations of violence in campesino communities during subsequent years, and relationships between rural inhabitants and the *fuerza pública*. I asked about the meanings of the post-conflict category. I inquired about rural inhabitants' experiences and opinions regarding reparations and land restitution, the implementation of the PDETs, and other aspects of the peace accords.

The second type of interview was conducted with campesino victims of state violence, in particular, those who were detained and incarcerated in the context of the mass detentions in the municipalities of Ovejas, Chalán, Colosó, and Los Palmitos. I focused on these detentions to examine in-depth how some violent practices carried out in rural communities during the militarization of the region have shaped relationships, encounters and experiences of the state in these communities.

I conducted 43 interviews with campesinos who were detained and incarcerated during the first decade of the 2000s. I selected these interlocutors through chain referral sampling. The initial contacts were campesino leaders in Ovejas, Chalán, and Colosó. As I began conducting interviews with these victims, I was able to follow up with their subsequent contacts. The sample included community leaders and ordinary campesinos, members of different communities in rural areas, and individuals detained in different mass detentions and years. I interviewed women and men,

but women were detained to a lesser extent than men, which is reflected in my sample. I also explored the topic of mass detentions and the impact on communities in the general type of interviews with campesinos who were not direct victims of this form of violence.

Through these interviews, I gathered information concerning the context of armed conflict and militarization in which mass arbitrary detentions took place, relationships between campesinos and the military forces, the police and other state institutions, and characteristics of the detentions. I explored campesinos and families' experiences during the detention, incarceration and after returning from jail, including encounters with state agents and the community. I also explored the accompaniment by human rights organizations and lawyers, the impact and consequences of the detentions at the individual, family and community level, and regarding relationships with the state. I examined victims' experiences of trials and other legal processes, organizational processes, and current expectations and claims regarding truth, justice and reparations in the context of the peace accords.

To conduct the two types of interviews, I followed an interview guide with open-ended questions. Several of these questions invited the interlocutor to a more extended account of experiences and events, particularly those regarding the past. Responses took the form of narratives (Riessman 2008). Overall, during the interviews, the different topics were explored in chronological order, although it was not uncommon to go back and forth regarding past and present events and experiences. Campesinos talked about the open-ended questions by narrating their own experiences, and in some cases, what they had witnessed regarding relatives or other members of the community. Responses were often accompanied by detailed stories of something that happened to them, particularly concerning past events, anecdotes, descriptions, and reflections.

According to Riessman (2008), although there are different definitions of the term narrative, and it is used in various ways in different disciplines, it is often associated with stories. Narratives are also often understood as temporal sequences of events "with beginnings, middles, and ends" (Andrews et al 2004:7). Riessman (2008) points out that there is a continuum of definitions of narrative and ways in which the concept is operationalized. Some definitions refer to an extended answer by a research participant to a single question, others to an entire life story, or long sections of talk and "extended accounts of lives in context that develop over the course of a single or multiple research interviews" (p. 5-6). Narrators structure their stories and accounts of experiences temporally and spatially. Narratives not only include spoken or personal stories, but also written and visual materials.

In this research, I use the term narratives to refer to the spoken stories and accounts told by interviewees based mostly on their experiences and often involving temporal sequences of events. I also use the term to refer to extended sections of talk and accounts of experiences and events told by interviewees. Narratives could also be about the past, the present, or the future. The narratives I collected regarding the recent past were based on interlocutors' memories of past experiences and events that took place in their communities and the region. Through interviews, I gathered information not only about past events but also encounters with state actors in the context of ongoing state processes in the region. In this research I allude mainly to narratives and sometimes I use the term oral accounts.

This component of the interviews regarding past events can also be seen as oral histories. According to Ritchie (2015), "memory is the core of oral history, from which meaning can be extracted." Oral history collects "memories and personal commentaries of historical significance

through recorded interviews" (p. 1).[6] In turn, Yow (2005) points out that narrative is a relevant component of oral history, "along with description, explanation, and reflection" (p. 15). Alluding to oral histories, Yow also states that participants often answer questions in the form of stories and narratives are constructed from our memories.

I mostly conducted individual interviews. However, regarding the general type of interview, in six interviews, two, three, and more campesinos participated. In the case of the interview with the victims of the detentions, most of them were individual interviews. In a few cases, I interviewed a small group of two or three people since they were part of the same detention or same family. In total, I gathered information regarding 47 cases through 43 interviews.

Interviews with campesinos lasted between one and three hours and 30 minutes. I often met the person days before the interview and scheduled it for a different day. Meetings were almost never cancelled. Only in two cases the campesino called me early in the morning to let me know that it was raining in the *vereda*, and suggested me to reschedule the interview, since it was impossible to enter the *vereda* by motorcycle. In some cases, I entered the *vereda* by walking in the mud.

In most cases I conducted interviews in the communities and campesinos' houses in rural areas because it was often more comfortable for them and provided greater privacy. A few times interlocutors asked me to meet in their houses in the urban area. Conducting the interviews in the rural setting allowed me to observe the area where the *parcelas* are located and the places where violent acts took place; I could also ask about what I was observing. In the case of Chalán and Colosó, I conducted more interviews in the urban area since many campesinos did not return

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[6] However, Ritchie also points out that an interview "becomes an oral history only when it has been recorded, processed in some way, made available in an archive, library, or another repository, or reproduced in relatively verbatim form for publication" (p. 8). This was not the aim of this research.

permanently to the rural area, although they have continued working in agricultural activities in their *parcelas*. I also conducted some interviews in rural areas in these municipalities, particularly in the case of Chalán.

I also conducted 15 additional in-depth, semi-structured interviews with other relevant actors in the region, including state officials in Montes de Maria, members of relevant NGOs working with rural communities, and lawyers who have accompanied victims and rural communities. I traveled to Bogotá at least three times to conduct some of these interviews. I interviewed the director of the Comité de Solidaridad de los Presos Políticos CSPP, a lawyer from the Colectivo de Abogados José Alvear Restrepo CAJAR, who participated in the humanitarian visit in the region and has accompanied rural populations in Montes de María, and a former *fiscal* (prosecutor) who was in charge of making decisions regarding one of the mass detentions. I interviewed a lawyer of the Comité Permanente de Derechos Humanos CPDH, representing the Finca La Europa in the process of land restitution, a lawyer of the CSPP in Barranquilla, and a lawyer who defended several campesinos detained and incarcerated in Sincelejo.

I interviewed a state official from the Defensoría del Pueblo and several officials of the ART's team, both in Sincelejo. I interviewed four members of NGOs working with rural communities in Montes de María. I also interviewed one member of MOVICE in Sucre. I also had several informal conversations with a human rights defender in Sincelejo who has provided accompaniment to some campesinos in Ovejas.

These interviews often lasted around one hour and 30 minutes, although a few of them lasted more than two hours. I also interviewed four former members of the 35th and 37th front of the FARC, which operated in Montes de María. I traveled to Espacios Territoriales de Capacitación

y Reincorporación in the Caribbean region, where former combatants of the FARC were concentrated at the time of the interviews. I stayed there for one week.

2.6.2 Participant observation

To study encounters and relationships between campesinos and state institutions and officials in the context of current state processes taking place in the region, I relied on participant observation, although I also gathered information through the general type of interview. In addition, I selected an illustrative case study in the region, the Finca La Europa, to closely examine the continuities of violence and relationships with the state in the context of the Law of Victims and Land Restitution. In the case of La Europa, a process of land dispossession converged with the community's organization to defend the land and a process of land restitution since 2013. I conducted extended participant observation in this community in organizational meetings and interactions with officials and members of NGOs. Finally, I conducted eight additional interviews with members of this community and participated in numerous informal conversations.

Regarding the process of formulation of the PDET, in addition to the interviews, I relied on participant observation. Rural communities played a central role in the formulation of the PDET in interaction with the ART's officials, and other relevant actors in the region. I followed the formulation of the PDET in the municipality of Ovejas. I also attended public events related to this process at the regional level. These events were often organized in Carmen de Bolívar or in Sincelejo.

I conducted participant observation in several spaces where the construction of the PDET took place, such as training workshops with campesino communities, organized by CDS and the OPDS, and by the ART. I also conducted participant observation in the *pre-asambleas*

(assemblies) at the level of *veredas*, the community assembly to formulate the Pacto Comunitario (community agreement), the municipal assembly to formulate the PDET for Ovejas, and other meetings related to the construction of the PDET organized by the ART or NGOs.

I conducted more extended participant observation in several communities, such as the Finca La Europa or other communities under processes of collective reparation, such as Seis Veredas. Some campesino leaders often invited me to meetings in their communities or events in the municipality or the region in which they were invited to participate.

I attended other spaces where I also conducted observations and sometimes participated more directly. Among others, I attended some meetings of the Regional Space for Peace of Montes de Maria, some meetings organized by CDS and the OPDS, a regional event in Sincelejo about the implementation and challenges of the peace accords, and two Schools of Memory organized by MOVICE and CAJAR in which campesinos from Carmen de Bolívar and Ovejas participated.

During one year, I traveled through tertiary roads in Ovejas to reach different rural communities, and through some main roads in Chalán and Colosó. This allowed me to observe and to experience the conditions of these roads and the difficulties that rural inhabitants face regarding transportation.

The days I stayed in rural communities, I conducted participant observation in daily activities and meetings between members of the community or with state officials, sometimes with NGOs. I also had informal conversations with inhabitants while they were doing daily activities. In communities that I visited less often, in addition to the interviews, I tried to spent additional time while people showed me the crops, the school, their houses, community rooms, or other relevant places in the community. Women and men were always generous with their time and often invited me to stay longer, even when I had scheduled only an interview.

I recorded observations from participant observation in field notes. I wrote jottings and abbreviated words during interviews, while observing or participating in activities in communities, in meetings between communities and state officials, and other sites of observation. I often recorded public events and took additional brief notes. Based on jottings, short notes, and memory I constructed full fieldnotes. Sometimes I did that the same day at night or another day of the same week when I was in my house in the urban area.

2.6.3 Archival research

I also collected relevant documents related to violent state practices during the militarization of the region, including mass arbitrary detentions. Victims of the detentions and incarceration often showed me documents related to their cases, including certifications of release or completion of sentences and, in a few cases, also files of lawsuits against the state. A few campesinos had the pieces of the newspaper showing their pictures after the detention.

I reviewed a regional newspaper, *El Meridiano*, covering the period 2000-2007 and collected articles related mainly to the mass detentions and the zone of Consolidation and Rehabilitation in the region. During some months, I traveled once a week to the public library in Sincelejo to review the newspaper. A research assistant also helped me with this work. In the court of Sincelejo, I got copies of three files of lawsuits against the state in cases of arbitrary detentions. I also collected documents from campesinos' personal archives and Human rights organizations. I also had access to the file of Land Restitution of La Finca La Europa assembled by the Land Restitution Unit.

2.6.4 Data analysis

Interviews, field notes, and documents were entered and organized into qualitative research software (MAXQDA) to manage, code, and interpret the data. I transcribed half of the interviews with campesinos and coded them. The other interviews were coded directly from audio. I also coded fieldnotes and articles of newspapers. I transcribed seven interviews with other relevant actors and the others were coded from audio. Among the analytic strategies that I used for this phase of analysis were to identify codes, to reduce codes to themes, and to relate categories (Madison 2005). Some codes and themes also included subcodes and subthemes, respectively. I wrote memos in the margins of field notes, transcripts, and documents to help with the initial process of exploring the database and identifying initial emergent codes (Creswell 2007).

Emergent codes and themes were important to reflect the perspective of the research participants. For example, one theme that emerged regarding state violence was invisibility. Some victims of the arbitrary detentions often talked about being invisible victims and other interlocutors mentioned that the state does not want to recognize its victims. This theme emerged in conversations with my interlocutors and reflected their perspective regarding their experiences on the ground. Information gathered was coded based on some a priori categories relevant for this research and especially on emergent themes/categories relevant from the data gathered through the interviews, field notes, and documents.

I conducted a thematic analysis of interviews, fieldnotes, and documents collected. Through this analysis, I identified common themes, similarities, and patterns in the oral accounts and narratives of my interlocutors regarding past and present experiences. There was also some variation in the narratives which is reflected in the chapters. However, I did not rely only on it.

Riessman (2008) distinguishes between narrative data (the empirical materials) and narrative analysis. Alluding to narrative analysis as a family of methods for interpreting texts that have a storied form in common, Riessman (2008) criticizes approaches that are limited to fracturing a narrative account or a story into thematic categories and suggests to also interpret it as a whole. Drawing on this approach, I also interpreted my data considering the whole interview, particularly in the cases of the victims of arbitrary detentions and the case of the Finca La Europa. In the analysis presented in all chapters, I also relied on different sources, including interviews, participant observation and fieldnotes, and documents.

All names of campesinos used this research are pseudonymous to protect their identity. Regarding the interviews with other relevant actors, almost all of them gave me their consent to be cited with their full names. I mention the communities of La Finca La Europa or Seis Veredas under a process of collective reparation, although I protect the identity of campesinos of these communities. The case of La Europa is not only broadly known in the country, but part of the strategy to protect the community has been to make the case visible.

3.0 Militarization of Everyday Life in Campesino Communities and Invisibility of State Violence at the Margins of the State in Mountain Zone of Montes de María

3.1 Introduction

In one of my visits to Chalán I met Alejandro, a campesino leader. From Carmen de Bolívar it took me one hour and twenty minutes to reach the town by motorcycle. There are small mountains around the urban area of the town. Many campesinos stayed in the urban area after the forced displacement from the rural areas, where their *parcelas* (plots of land) are located. Nowadays, they go to *parcelas* on a daily basis to work on their agricultural activities. Some of these *parcelas* are near the urban area but others could be as far as one hour and a half, by donkey.

The leader told me that the FARC guerrillas attacked the police station in the town, with a donkey-bomb [explosives were hidden in the load carried by the donkey], in March 1996. "It was when the police station disappeared in this town, we were left alone. There was no military presence, no police, we were left at the mercy of anyone." I asked Alejandro if there was a permanent presence of the police and the military before the attack. He said that "the military were there from time to time, but the police stayed there until 1996." He told me that after the attack, the police were removed from the municipality and, almost at the same time, also from Colosó, the neighboring municipality.

He also told me that a few weeks after that, the paramilitaries entered the town and assassinated a couple [a councilman and her wife accused of being collaborators of guerrillas]. He said that there was a massive displacement in the town that year, but the displacement had started before that. Alejandro told me:

Since there was a subversive presence [guerrillas] in the area of the mountain, there was a lot of bombing [by the military]. People who lived in the rural area were gradually displaced. That was before 1996. The military used to incinerate and burn the campesino houses… they knew that there was a subversive presence, and one way of fighting them was to force the population to leave the area. They always think that people who live in rural areas are guerrilla supporters… around 1997, some selected assassinations began and the FARC guerrillas started walking through the streets in the urban area, organizing meetings. There was no presence of the soldiers. The times when soldiers of the military forces entered the town, they would kick and mistreat inhabitants […]

I asked Alejandro when the police returned to the municipality. He said it was in December 2002. "Since that time, there was the presence of police and the military in the town, but they were stationed within the urban area. The military made of Chalán a battalion. They turned us into their trenches. There were shootings and confrontation with the guerrillas." Alejandro told me that this happened during the Zone of Rehabilitation and Consolidation. I asked him if people were aware of the creation of the zone. He replied:

Yes. However, people were in that ignorance of thinking that it [the declaration of the zone of rehabilitation] would bring good things, good projects. Many people thought that social projects would come. But what happened here was the increase of the military boot … the military used to go to your house, ask your name, and register inhabitants living in the town [*empadronamiento*]… The military used to enter to the schools to talk to inhabitants, they used to meet with people in the neighborhoods, to encourage the issue of the informant, a network of informants [of the state] was established here, and after that, the detentions of inhabitants began […] (Campesino from Chalán, January 2018).

In the context of the escalation of the armed conflict between guerrillas, paramilitary groups and the military forces in Montes de María, the Zone of Rehabilitation and Consolidation was created by the national government in this region in 2002. Measures of states of exception were implemented there. Although the zone did not last more than eight months, it marked the beginning of a period of increasing militarization of everyday life in campesino communities in the mountain zone of Montes de María at the same time that guerrilla groups continued maintaining a presence in rural areas.

In this chapter, I examine campesinos' experiences of the state in the context of militarization of everyday life during the first decade of the 2000s and how some forms of control, surveillance and violent state practices carried out in these communities and their effects have become less overtly visible after the decline of the armed conflict in the region. I argue that although these state practices and abandonment shaped in important ways the experiences of these populations in everyday life in rural areas, and constituted these inhabitants as subjects at the margins of the state, some of these forms of state violence, the damage produced and related forms of victimization have become less visible in the post-conflict transition. However, these experiences remain vivid in campesinos' memories and narratives and are also made visible by communities through memory practices and other mechanisms. The invisibility of these forms of violence and the attempts to make them visible still shape current encounters with the state in these communities in the present context, where processes centered on victims of the armed conflict and reparations have been taking place in the 'post-conflict' transition.

In the first part of this chapter, I examine how Montes de María was depicted and represented by the national government as a zone in the territorial margins of the state to justify exceptional measures and militarization. In the second part, I examine experiences of the state in the context of control, surveillance and violent state practices carried out in campesino communities, as well as how they were constituted as subjects at the margins of the state. However, rather than seeing the margins as sites of practices resulting only from the actions of state agents, I see them as coproduced in the context of interactions between different actors.

In the two final sections, I analyze some aspects related to visibility and invisibility of some forms of state violence that took place during the armed conflict. I see the production of invisibility

as an extension of the margins of the state in the present through symbolic forms of violence resulting from denial, blurriness, or minimization of victimization by state actors.

3.2 Margins of the state and invisibility and visibility of state violence

Several scholars have examined the state by focusing on its margins (Das and Poole 2004; Ferme 2013; Olson 2013; DeLugan 2013; Okubo 2013). Scholars have examined the conceptual, territorial, and imaginary margins of the state to analyze the consequences, forms of resistance, and political phenomena in states experiencing historical transformations (Ferme 2013).

Das and Poole propose an anthropology of the margins to understand the political, regulatory and disciplinary practices that constitute the state in its territorial and social margins. The authors point out that "located always on the margins of what is accepted as the territory of unquestioned state control", the margins can be seen simultaneously as "sites where nature can be imagined as wild and uncontrolled and where the state is constantly refounding its modes of order and lawmaking" (Das and Poole 2004:8). Therefore, the margins refer to those sites where state law and order are continuously redefined (Asad 2004). These sites are not only territorial but also sites of practice.

Drawing on the theory of states exception by Agamben (1998), but also redefining it, Das and Poole suggest that one way in which the margins can be ethnographically explored often "settles in those practices that seem to be about the continual refounding of the law through forms of violence and authority that can be construed as both extrajudicial and outside, or prior to, the state." According to the authors, this refounding takes place through the "production of killable bodies" and through the power of figures that acting as representatives of the state are able to move

with impunity across the "divide separating legal and extralegal forms of punishment and enforcement" (Das and Poole 2004:13-14).

Relying on Das and Poole (2004), in this chapter I understand these margins as territories or peripheries that are imagined and depicted as lawless, violent, distant from central state power, inhabited by "unruly subjects" (Das and Poole 2004: 9) and where "the state has yet to penetrate" (Asad 2004: 279) or govern. The second approach of the margins understood as sites of practices where the law is refounded through forms of violence and authority constructed as extrajudicial or outside the state is also useful for this chapter. However, I do not see this refounding of the law resulting from the production of killable bodies or the power of figures capable of moving with impunity between the legal and the extralegal. Instead, I explore these margins as coproduced in the context of interactions between state agents, populations, human rights organizations and other actors. It does not imply to ignore that power relationships in this context between these different actors could be asymmetrical. I see control, surveillance and violent practices carried out in campesino communities by state agents, as an example of the second approach to the margins.

In this chapter, I propose the concept of production of invisibility of violence to refer to the practices of denying, hiding, not-recognizing, minimizing, or blurring that limit the visibility of some forms of violence, their effects on populations, and related forms of victimization.[7] I use this concept to analyze how some forms of state violence carried out in rural communities and

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[7] Other scholars examine invisibility but with a different meaning. Carter (2010) examines invisibility to refer to how specific categories of people are rendered visible or invisible through cultural and social practices. In a study about the politics of invisibility regarding the health effects in Chernobyl, Kuchinskaya defines it as the "practices of producing representations that limit public visibility of Chernobyl radiation and its health effects" (2014:2).

their effects on rural communities have become somehow invisible in the region. Here, I refer specifically to the production of invisibility of state violence.[8]

These practices of invisibility are also contested and questioned by populations, human rights organizations, and even some state officials through practices of visibility. In this sense, it is essential to consider that the invisibility and visibility of violence is produced in the context of interactions between different actors. Invisibility is never absolute and rather reflects power relationships. Invisibility can also change over time due to the presence of other actors or different circumstances and opportunities for actors on the ground.

Invisibility and visibility of violence could be produced through different practices and mechanisms. In my fieldwork, I found that practices of producing invisibility of forms of state violence carried out in communities have taken place through public representations, encounters between state officials and members of communities, and bureaucratic procedures such as state registers concerning victimization. In turn, these practices have also been contested and questioned by practices of visibility such as community's memory practices, or in encounters between campesinos and state officials.

The idea of invisibility and visibility of some violent state practices that took place in the region emerged in the context of my conversations and interviews with members of campesino communities and participant observation. Some of my interlocutors talked about being invisible victims or mentioned that the state does not want to recognize its victims. I tried to understand what my interlocutors meant by that in a context where processes centered on victims of the armed

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[8] Not only legal but also illegal armed actors have tried to make their actions invisible and denied their responsibility in the crimes perpetrated (CNMH 2013, p. 33).

conflict have been taking place during recent years as part of the implementation of the Law of Victims, which recognized the victims of all armed actors.

This chapter relies on interviews with campesinos, with a state official and a lawyer, some reports by human rights organizations, a review of 90 articles of a local newspaper, *El Meridiano* de Sucre, and participant observation in campesino communities and encounters between campesinos and state officials especially concerning processes of collective reparations.

3.3 The image of the "weakness of the state": the military versus the social presence of the state at the territorial margins

The second half of the nineties and the first years of the 21st century saw the escalation of the armed conflict in the region of Montes de María. In 1996, police stations were removed from several of its municipalities in the area of Sucre, particularly in Colosó, Chalán and Morroa, after the donkey-bomb attack in Chalán by the FARC guerrillas which killed 11 policemen. The national direction of the police made this decision, arguing that there were not minimum-security guarantees in these municipalities.[9] The removal of the police was an opportunity for the expansion and strengthening of the FARC guerrillas during the following years, not only in more distant rural areas in Ovejas, Chalán and Colosó, and also in the urban area in the two last municipalities.

Chalán and Colosó were the more critical cases, but the scarce presence of the police in more remote rural areas also affected Ovejas, although the police stations continued to operate in the urban area. According to interlocutors, the Marine Infantry, located in Corozal, was in charge

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[9] The sub-commander of the police in Sucre said that "policemen will not return to these municipalities until police stations capable of resisting any attack are built." Sin policías 4 municipios, El tiempo, March 24, 1996.

of this region, but their presence was sporadic and involved mistreatment and repression against campesinos when these inhabitants run into the soldiers.

During the period between 1996 and 2001 there was an expansion of paramilitary groups in the region. Paramilitary presence in Ovejas, Chalán, Colosó, Morroa, Los Palmitos was not permanent, in contrast with other municipalities around where these groups settled and tried to or actually did govern populations, such as in San Onofre (GMH 2011) or María la Baja (Berman 2017). However, during those years, there were several incursions of these groups in the mountain zone, which ended in massacres of the civilian population or selective assassinations of individuals, often labeled as guerrilla collaborators.

In September of 2002, the region of Montes de María became the first zone of Rehabilitation and Consolidation in Colombia, created by the government of the former president Alvaro Uribe Vélez within the context of the exceptional measures taken after the declaration of *conmoción interior* (states of exception), at the beginning of his first presidential term. These zones were created as special locations of security to strengthen the presence of the state in "areas affected by criminal groups" (Decreto 2002 de 2002). Other researchers have shown that the image of the absence or weakness of the state has been used by governments to promote and legitimize militarization in areas of armed conflict in the country (Tate 2015; Ramírez 2019), and Montes de María was not an exception.

From the beginning of his government, the president declared war against terrorism, denied the existence of the armed conflict in the country and labeled illegal armed actors as "terrorist groups," in particular the guerrillas. In addition, in the decree, it was stated that members of these "criminal organizations" are camouflaged within the civilian population, and that their

communications equipment, weapons and ammunition are hidden in the populations. From this perspective, the distinction between combatants and non-combatants became blurred.

Special powers were granted to the *fuerza pública* (the Military Forces and the National Police) and other state actors in the zone in order to guarantee the protection of populations and to restore the public order. Although the formal existence of the zone only lasted for eight months, in the mountain zone it was the beginning of a period of increasing militarization and the exacerbation of violent state practices carried out in campesino communities.

During the existence of the zone and in the context of the implementation of the policy of Democratic Security during the early 2000s, different state agents, especially the military, imagined and depicted campesinos as potential guerrilla collaborators, or even guerrillas, or as potential informants and cooperants of the state. These depictions can be seen clearly in the local media of these years. These representations translated into concrete actions against these populations, as I show in the following section.

In turn, according to the discourse of the national government, the region depicted as dominated by "criminal groups" which "camouflage within the civilian population" became to be imagined as existing in the territorial margins of the state. These representations were not far from the definition of territorial margins, mentioned above, referring to peripheries imagined and depicted as lawless, violent, distant from central state power, inhabited by "unruly subjects" (Das and Poole 2004). The discourse behind the creation of the zone not only denied any political dimension of the guerrillas but the status as civilian population of inhabitants of these territories became blurred.

Although the situation of the mountain zone in rural areas was critical, it was far from being lawless or just dominated by "criminal groups." It was instead a scenario where the presence of

guerrillas and different practices of governance by them had been strengthening while the paramilitary groups operated with the acquiescence or complicity of politicians and authorities of the department of Sucre, in the context of the armed conflict in the region.

The zone of Rehabilitation and Consolidation covered 15 municipalities of the department of Sucre and 9 of Bolivar, including Montes de María. A colonel was appointed as the military commander of the zone. Among the exceptional measures were the detention of suspects and home searches without judicial authorization, powers to establish restrictions on the mobility of people such as curfews and military checkpoints, and powers granted to the military commander for gathering, verifying, keeping and classifying information about residency and people entering to the zone. The interception of communications and powers to preventively detain drivers if any assistance to a criminal organization was suspected also became part of these measures. Several of these measures were criticized by human rights organizations not only for granting judicial police functions to the military but for allowing detentions only based on suspicions (CCEEU 2006).

The measures on the Zone of Rehabilitation and Consolidation were predominantly military even though the government promised that some social investment was also coming to the region. Although several mayors of the municipalities included in the zone and the governors of the departments of Bolivar and Sucre agreed with its implementation, a constant claim by these authorities and other local actors was for the need of social investment in the region. A review of the regional newspaper, *El Meridiano,* [10] during the time of existence of the zone, allowed me to identify this repetitive concern. For example, although the association of councilors of the

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[10] I reviewed 90 articles that were published in *El Meridiano* de Sucre during that period related to the zone of Rehabilitation and Consolidation.

department agreed with the creation of the zone, it also pointed out that "the violence in the department of Sucre has its roots in the lack of social investment" and "the abandonment of the state and its inhabitants" (*El Meridiano* 2002a; 2002b; 2003a). From another view, what the region needed was not guns and helicopters for war but schools for the kids, roads for campesinos, education, health, and houses for the poor, which are examples of social investment (*El Meridiano* 2002c).

This shows the different meanings concerning state presence in Montes de María for the national government and some local and regional authorities and other actors in the region. For the government overcoming the "weakness of the state" or strengthening its presence translated mainly into a focus on operations of the military and the police in the stage of recovery of state control. In contrast, for some local and regional actors, social investment was key regarding the presence of the state and to overcome the conflict in the region. However, several of these local and regional authorities also agreed with the creation of the zone, indicating that some of these authorities saw these two dimensions of state presence as complementary.

During the following years, a project for bovine repopulation, increase of coverage of the Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar (Colombian Family Welfare Institute), and micro-business projects were implemented. Other forms of social investment by state institutions and the government during the period consisted mainly of assistentialist and emergency help. Despite these social projects, the main focus of the government for the region continued being the military dimension.

Operations by the military and the police started a few days after the creation of the zone. Counter-guerrilla battalions, prosecutors, members of the technical criminal investigative body,

and members from the inspector general office arrived in the region to conduct and monitor military operations aimed at fighting guerrillas and paramilitary groups.

Troops of the Marine Infantry and counter-guerrilla members of the National Police began conducting operations and checkpoints in the Troncal Highway in Colosó and Chalán, considered a critical area of presence of the 35th front of the FARC guerrillas (*El Meridiano* 2002d; 2002e). Units of the national army and the 1st marine infantry started to have a permanent presence and conduct operations and checkpoints in rural and urban areas. The permanent presence of the police in the municipalities of Chalán, Morroa, Colosó and Los Palmitos was established. In the following months, counter-guerrilla groups also arrived in the region. In February 2003, local media reported that more than 1000 men from a mobile brigade of the Rapid Deployment Force (FUDRA) arrived in Chalán (*El Meridiano* 2002f).

As part of the Democratic Security policy, campesino soldiers, networks of cooperants, and informants were also promoted, involving the civilian population as participants in the armed conflict. The cooperants consisted of citizens cooperating with the authorities, but without remuneration. The informants of the security agencies of the state received rewards for the information provided.

In November 2002, the Constitutional Court declared unconstitutional some articles of the Decree 2002. However, the zones of rehabilitation and consolidation continued to formally exist until April 2003, along with some exceptional measures. For example, preventive detentions, interceptions of communications, and inspection or home searches were allowed but only after a judicial authorization. In April of the same year, the Constitutional Court declared unconstitutional the extension of the *conmoción interior* and these zones stopped existing legally. Regardless, the government stated that the 5,000 soldiers and policemen, assigned to the zones of rehabilitation of

Sucre, Bolivar and Arauca, were not going to be withdrawn. This decision was in line with the spirit of the Democratic Security which emphasized the presence of the state and authority of institutions based on operations of the *fuerza pública* in the first stage of state control of the territory. The military presence continued to increase in the following years.

To sum up, in the context of the creation of the Zone of Rehabilitation and Consolidation, Montes de María was depicted by the national government as existing in the territorial margins of the state, as a periphery dominated by criminal and terrorist groups which could only be controlled through measures of states of exception. The rural population was depicted as being potential guerrilla collaborators. While from the perspective of the national government the image of the "weakness of the state" translated into a focus on military and police power, social investment was considered an essential condition to strengthen its presence and overcome the conflict from the perspective of some local and regional authorities. However, several of these authorities also welcome the creation of the zone.

3.4 Campesinos experiences of the state in a context of militarization of everyday life and control, surveillance and violent state practices

I arrived in the morning in Don Gabriel, a *corregimiento* located in the mountain zone of the municipality of Ovejas, near Carmen de Bolívar and Chalán. The mountain zone was among the rural areas of Ovejas most affected by the armed conflict. It takes approximately 40 minutes by motorcycle to reach Don Gabriel from the urban area of the municipality. It could take longer on raining days. Sometimes when I traveled to the rural communities, I could not avoid imagining how moving on these roads and areas should have been during the armed conflict, especially

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running into an armed actor. In some parts of the road, there are only some dispersed houses or only vegetation.

Figure 4. Campesino house and road on the way from urban area to Don Gabriel and Chengue in rural area, municipality of Ovejas.

Segments of concrete road pavement and unpaved road on a rainy day. Photo by the author, October 2017.

In the times of 'post-conflict', I often found myself and the driver of the motorcycle completely alone in some of these mostly unpaved and narrow roads. In the more critical tracks of this road, there are segments of concrete pavement, but they were built after the war. Sometimes

we ran into a campesino riding a donkey, another motorcycle or I saw a house near or far from the road.

When I arrived at Don Gabriel I met with David, one campesino member of these communities. He told me that there are approximately 900 inhabitants and 220 houses in the *corregimiento*. He was among the campesinos who 'resisted' in the area and was not displaced, even after the massacre of 2001 by paramilitary groups in Chengue, located approximately 10 minutes from Don Gabriel by motorcycle. After talking for some time about the arrival of the guerrillas to the area, he told me:

> When the state abandoned the region, our communities were left at the mercy of illegal groups. When the other phase began [he refers to the militarization of the area], the state entered [to the rural area] to go after the guerrillas, but they abused the civilian population… we were stigmatized in the region, we were considered guerrillas… But the state had a lot of responsibility. It was not that we were guerrillas, or people liked the guerrillas, but rather that when the illegal armed groups came and began taking control of populations, if you wanted to remain in the area or with life, you had to observe the regulations established by the illegal armed groups. When they organized a meeting, people had to go… they began killing people selectively and saying this [person] is an informant [of the military], so they use to kill that person…
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> Because of this, the state stigmatized this region of being guerrillas… then the persecution came against everybody, for them everyone was an informant [of the guerrillas]. They [the military] began detaining people… But the fact that the guerrilla groups operated in rural areas, did not mean that everyone was a guerrilla, inhabitants were in the middle. Who was responsible for this? The state, the state should have protected communities from illegal armed groups, to be present, but neither in that way, nor in social investment or in any way… There was a complete abandonment of the authorities. We could not see the face of the state, of the police, of the soldiers, nothing [referring to the situation of the rural area during some years] […]
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> Then the abuse came, the arbitrary detentions…there was a moment of extreme abuse by the military that one did not feel safe. When one saw that the soldiers were in the 'monte' [rural area where their *parcelas* are located] nobody went to work. First, because of fear of combat, and second, fear of running into them when one was alone. Immediately the stigmatization used to begin, and one could even be killed … we knew that we were not going to find trust with them, but verbal mistreatment, and sometimes also physical. We became more afraid of the state than the guerrilla… when the policy of Democratic Security came, they [the military] began acting, but they crossed the line […]" (Campesino from Ovejas, February 2018).

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In contrast with the discourse and representations of the region by the national government, the narratives of the campesinos interviewed regarding those years refer to the abandonment by the state and, at the same time, to abuse, mistreatment and stigmatization by the *fuerza pública*.

This abandonment does not exclude a claim regarding the lack of presence of police or the military or other state institutions, but also refers to the lack of social investment and to a police and military presence unable to show care and protect campesino communities, as shown in Alejandro and David's narratives. From the perspective of some interlocutors, the problem was not only the scarce or non-presence of the military and the police in rural areas, but that the sporadic encounters with soldiers and policemen often ended in stigmatization and mistreatment of campesinos. These rural inhabitants perceived the military and the police as repressive.

State abandonment is also associated with the lack of social investment regarding schools, roads, health and overall social projects aimed at improving the social and economic conditions of rural inhabitants. Social investment is often depicted by campesinos as a central aspect of the presence of the state, in contrast with the government's view at that time, which focused mainly on militarization. As Alejandro mentioned, people were expecting that the creation of the zone of consolidation would bring social projects.

Mistreatment and labeling of these populations by the military and stigmatization did not start with the zone of rehabilitation or the Democratic Security, as illustrated in Alejandro's narrative and as several interviews show. In previous years, campesinos in rural areas were also mistreated, stigmatized and persecuted by the military and by paramilitary groups that committed massacres in their communities accusing campesinos of being guerrilla collaborators.

With the Zone of Rehabilitation and Consolidation and militarization of the region, in a context of formal non-recognition of the existence of the armed conflict, existent violent practices

by the military and the police were exacerbated during this period, at the time that other forms of control and violent practices were also carried out on these populations, for example, mass arbitrary detentions of campesinos who were considered suspects of being guerrilla collaborators.

Most interviewees use words such as stigmatization, abuse, mistreatment, control, persecution, torture, detentions, incarceration, informants, and also killings to refer to the relationships with the military and the police during this period. In most cases, my interlocutors did not explicitly use the term violence but several of these behaviors and practices involved symbolic and physical forms of violence as well as forms of control on populations. In this chapter, I refer to control, surveillance and violent state practices to characterize the practices described in this section.

The militarization of everyday life became the norm in the mountain zone and other municipalities of Montes de María, as Alejandro described in the case of Chalán. Soldiers often occupied civilian spaces, forcing campesinos to share many spaces of everyday life with them, which also exposed them to the retaliation of guerrillas or to be caught in the middle of combat. In several interviews, my interlocutors narrated how the military started to occupy the spaces adjacent to campesinos' houses and schools, or to hang their hammocks in spaces around the houses. The troops also used to enter campesinos houses to ask for water, cooking utensils and in some cases, they even stole chickens, turkeys, and animals.

According to one official from La Defensoría del Pueblo, the military's stance during that period was that there were no banned zones regarding its presence. Some interlocutors told me that, in some cases, campesinos could not even meet without the interference of the military. If there was a community meeting, the military used to interfere by controlling the attendance list or watching who was in the meeting.

In everyday encounters with soldiers, campesinos were often harassed to provide information about the location of guerrillas and were often labeled as guerrillas or collaborators. Although, in many cases, these encounters were limited to verbal abuse and stigmatization, in others, there was physical mistreatment, torture or detentions, as mentioned by David. In campesinos' narratives, the abuse, mistreatment, and stigmatization are associated mainly with the presence of soldiers of the Marine Infantry, although some also refer to other troops.

The militarization of the zone and control, surveillance and violent practices by soldiers of the marine infantry and other state agents in everyday life caused fear and terror in campesinos in rural areas. In the words of one community leader, "there was a total abuse by the state during those years, so communities became more afraid of the Marine Infantry than the guerrillas… the Marine Infantry were savages with the civilian population" (Campesino from Ovejas, July, 2018).

As I moved among different communities in Ovejas conducting interviews with campesinos and having informal conversations, I realized that mistreatment and persecution of campesinos by the military were not necessarily the same throughout the rural area. In the case of Ovejas, the oral accounts of my interlocutors suggest that some areas were more affected than others by mistreatment and abuse of the military, as well as by the occupation of civilian spaces. In rural areas more distant from the Troncal Highway, especially in the mountain area and communities on that side of the Highway, mistreatment and repressive practices against campesinos seem to have been more common and more severe during those years. Also, not all rural inhabitants were exposed to the same level of mistreatment and abuse. While almost all interlocutors interviewed emphasized being frequently labeled as guerrilla collaborators or guerrillas, not all of them were affected by other forms of cruel physical abuse or persecution.

Restrictions on the mobility of inhabitants and the entry of food and other items to rural areas also translated into the militarization of everyday life through the establishment of checkpoints where the amount of food which could be brought in was strictly controlled, and some items were prohibited such as cans, some medicines, syringes, etc. In a context where it was assumed that inhabitants in rural areas were guerrilla collaborators, the amount of food that people could bring in was limited to prevent food supply from ending up in the hands of the guerrilla groups. Juana, a campesina from Ovejas who was at the time a *madre comunitaria* (community mother) in charge of taking care of children of other members of the community told me:

> We, the community mothers, used to go to Ovejas [to the urban area] to pick up the food for the kids we took care. We used to go and come back [to the rural area] by donkey. Every time that we came back to the *vereda* we were stopped, and we had to take out all the food. Because of that, sometimes I arrived home at 7 or 8 pm. The *vereda* is two hours and a half far by donkey… Several times I had to go back to the mayor's office by donkey to ask for a certificate saying that we were community mothers, while the other women waited for me [in the place where we were stopped]. After some time, the mayor's office gave us an ID [as community mothers], but even with that, they [the police, the marine infantry] continued bothering us (Campesina from Ovejas, 2018).

Not only individuals were controlled but also individual owners of small stores often located in corregimientos in rural areas. These owners were forced to ask the military commander in advance for permission to bring in supplies for local stores. As another campesino told me: "for the fuerza pública, everyone who had a small store in the rural or the urban area, they saw them as a store for food supply to the guerrillas" (Campesino from Colosó, October, 2017).

The restrictions on food affected campesinos in rural areas, given that the roads connecting the rural areas with the urban areas were in bad condition and transportation was difficult. Campesinos used to go to the urban areas or to the small stores in *corregimientos* to get items that they could not produce in their *parcelas*, such as rice, oil, salt, coffee. These controls forced them to travel to the urban area more often, which became very onerous for those living in rural areas.

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My interlocutors also remembered the network of cooperants and informants which provided information to the military and the police during those years. Campesinos saw informants as people who wanted to make easy money without working, people who misinformed, and even delinquents. In the words of one campesino: "When the government started paying the rewards, the one who wanted to earn easy money became an informant. The informants used to provide wrong information and sometimes this ended with the lives of many people and even their own. There were civilians killed and incarcerated due to wrong information provided by the informants to the military and the police" (Campesino from Ovejas, April, 2018).

In Ovejas, I did not meet anybody who was an informant during the militarization of the zone, but at least two campesino men told me that they received proposals from military members to work as informants, but rejected them. I was once sitting outside of a house in the urban area of Carmen de Bolívar talking with a community leader whose family stayed there after the displacement. A person was walking in front of us, on the opposite sidewalk, and as the individual passed, the leader told me that this person used to be an informant for the military. Rural inhabitants were often accused of allegedly being guerrilla collaborators by some members of rural communities, or inhabitants in the urban area who became informants of the military. In turn, guerrillas had the milicianos, individuals who were part of the organization but who used to dress as civilians and inform the organization about everything happening in the area and the towns.

In this context, becoming an informant or being perceived as an informant of the police or the military became dangerous, since practices of governance by the guerrillas, particularly the FARC guerrillas, continued in the rural area during those years. The guerrillas did not tolerate 'sapos', individuals who provided information to the military or the police. These individuals were often killed by this armed group, through selective assassinations, in some cases, also due to wrong

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information. Some campesinos also narrated that it was not possible to report displacement in local state offices or to accept financial aid from the government since the guerrillas prohibited it. Rural inhabitants who went often to the local state offices were sometimes seen as potential 'sapos' [informants].

My interlocutors emphasized that the network of informants produced a deep rupture of the social fabric since people started to distrust everybody: neighbors, friends and, in some cases, even members of the family. However, the rupture of the social fabric had already started with the *milicianos* and informants of the FARC.

In addition, some campesinos also alluded to what has been known in the country as 'false positives', a form of extrajudicial executions, which also took place in Montes de Maria, although to a lesser extent than in other departments of the country. 'False positives' consisted in the extrajudicial executions of civilians by the military. These civilians were dressed with military clothes and falsely presented by the military as guerrilla members killed in combat to show results in the fight against these illegal armed groups.

Campesinos' experiences of the state in the context of the militarization of everyday life and control, surveillance and violent state practices carried out in these communities by state agents show the different ways in which these populations were constituted as subjects at the margins of the state. Among these practices I have mentioned controls and restrictions to bring in food through checkpoints, arbitrary individual and mass detentions, labelling of campesinos as guerrilla members or collaborators, stigmatization and cruel and degrading treatment, occupation of civilian spaces and 'false positives.'

In a context of non-recognition of the armed conflict and the status of the civilian population of rural inhabitants, their rights as citizens established in the Colombian Constitution

were constantly violated. This was also the case of their rights as a civilian population, according to the international humanitarian law, in the context of internal armed conflicts. This situation has not been specific only to Montes de Maria. Inhabitants have been often treated as "guerrilla auxiliaries" (Ramírez 2019) and criminalized, in other areas of armed conflict in Colombia, especially in those with presence of illicit crops (Tate 2015; Sanford 2004, Ramírez 2011; Ramírez 2019), and in other counterinsurgency contexts in other countries (Carmack 1988).

These practices can also be seen as taking place at the margins of the state, through which law and order were redefined by state agents through forms of violence and authority lying simultaneously inside and outside the law in a context of armed conflict. These practices took place in a context characterized by the presence of guerrillas, which also tried to rule populations and exercise practices of governance (Mampilly 2011; Arjona, Kasfir and Mampilly 2015; Arjona 2016). State agents, particularly the military, engaged in practices outside the bounds of the constitution and the law. Instead of protecting the civilian population they targeted them as part of the counterinsurgency strategy against the guerrillas.

Although the states of exception are contemplated in the Colombian Constitution, several of the measures introduced under the Zone of Rehabilitation and Consolidation in Montes de María were considered unconstitutional only a few months later because they did not even fit the regulations concerning these states in Colombia. In addition, the described state practices were not limited to the zone of consolidation but they continued taking place in the region for several years after the zone stopped existing legally.

3.4.1 Presence of other institutions in campesino communities and practices of resistance

Several interlocutors also told me that during the implementation of the Democratic Security and previous years, the presence of other state institutions in rural areas was very limited and even nonexistent. The exception was the regional branch of the Defensoría del Pueblo (Ombudsman's Office of Colombia), which sometimes entered these areas. Most local state institutions and authorities remained present in the urban areas of municipalities and regional authorities in the capital city.

In one of my visits to the Defensoría del Pueblo in Sincelejo, one official told me that their work with displaced communities and at risk in the region began in 2004. They provided accompaniment through the Proyecto Defensorial Comunitario (project to defend communities).

> We first showed them [campesinos] that the Defensoría was a control body independent from the government to build trust with communities. Campesinos told us about some abuses by the *fuerza pública*, such as cruel and degrading treatment, some cases of torture and bombing in proximity of campesinos' houses. The first task was mediation with the military forces and informing about human rights violations to the authorities […] There were also selective assassinations, especially by the FARC, which caused family displacement. We activated the route of humanitarian attention… we did not know how to act because paramilitaries were still present in the region, so we kept a low profile. We did not know if there could be retaliation against us" (state official Defensoría del Pueblo, July, 2018).

This shows that although there was some room for mediation, especially concerning human rights violations by legal armed actors, there were also limits for action related to the presence of illegal armed actors in the region.

Despite the evident risks, campesinos were not passive in this context. After the massacres committed by the paramilitaries in 2000 and 2001 and the massive displacement in rural areas, some campesinos returned permanently to these areas in the following months or few years. Others who began living in the urban area continued returning on daily basis to their *parcelas* to take care

of their agriculture activities, named '*retornos laborales*'. These became practices of resistance in the midst of armed conflict. These campesinos were often caught in the middle of combat and exposed to encounters with the military forces and the guerrillas.

Campesinos developed practices of resistance and care to diminish the risk of suffering violence in everyday encounters with soldiers, such as working in small groups of four or five. In order to avoid encounters with both legal and illegal armed actors, they also changed the traditional schedules for work in agriculture activities. During those years, many rural inhabitants had been displaced to the corregimientos or the urban area and they had to travel from there to the *parcelas*, often by donkey and even walking. When campesinos also knew that the military troops were in the area, some of them avoided going to their parcelas at all. Silence, or speaking as little as possible when questioned by any armed actor, and non-denunciation became a strategy for some campesinos, while for others, talking or facing the armed actors was also a strategy for survival.

During that period, there were also some pacific demonstrations and mobilizations. For example, at the end of 2002, campesinos in Ovejas and Chalán, in the context of a mass demonstration, demanded that more food and medicines necessary for subsistence be brought into the area (*El Meridiano* 2002g).

In line with other scholars drawing on theories of the margins of the state (Sanford, 2004) or working on zones of war and armed conflict (Nordstrom 1997; Lubkemann 2008), there was some room for creativity and agency in this context, evidenced by the attempts of campesinos to question representations of them as guerrilla members and collaborators or as potential informants of the state. They were also able to claim their status as civilian population, through practices of resistance and care in everyday life or through more direct forms of protest and mobilization.

The concept of resistance and especially agency of communities (Sanford 2004; Ferme 2013) at the margins of the state can be seen as related to the idea of coproduction, I mentioned above. In this sense, the margins are also the result of multiple interactions of different actors, including communities, even though power relationships between them can be very asymmetric. However, these margins are not only coproduced through forms of resistance and agency of communities or individuals but also other mechanisms such as negotiation, pressure, reporting and complaints involving other actors such as human rights organizations, NGOs, international organizations.

3.5 Making visible the violations of human rights and denial

As I realized reviewing articles of the regional newspaper *El Meridiano*, the public discourse of the military commander of the zone emphasized the positive results, the key role of the network of cooperants and informants, and the significant improvement of security in the region.

However, before the end of the Zone of Rehabilitation and Consolidation, the human rights violations taking place became public, even though the military, members of the police and some regional and local authorities denied or minimized them, which is also reflected in the newspaper articles. In April 2003, a group of officials from United Nations ONU interviewed relevant actors in the territory to evaluate possible violations of human rights (*El Meridiano* 2003b). In the event Region Caribe de Paz, July 2003, which counted on the assistance of local and regional authorities, a representative of the ONU confirmed human rights violations by illegal armed groups, the military and the police in the zone of rehabilitation (Incalcaterra 2003).

However, some local and regional authorities denied the occurrence of human rights violations. For example, concerning the report, the governor of Sucre by that time, Salvador Arana Sus, denied human rights violations in Sucre and stated that "the illegal armed groups were responsible for human rights violations" when they took place (*El Meridiano* 2003c). This is not surprising considering that years later, the governor was convicted for his links with paramilitary groups and other crimes in the region.

In July, another visit by a commission of human rights, comprised of officials from ONU, the Vice-president's office, and NGOs, was organized to evaluate possible violations of human rights (HR) and the International Humanitarian Law (IHL) by armed actors in the zone. The violations were confirmed during the visit to rural inhabitants in Ovejas and Colosó. A member of the NGO Andas, who participated in the visit, stated in a local newspaper, that "the majority of denunciations referred to the abuses of the *fuerza pública*, and specifically one battalion of the Marine Infantry." The complaints included "the restrictions on the entry of food, the occupation of campesinos's houses by the military, detention of inhabitants without a detention warrant and verbal abuse (*El Meridiano* 2003d; 2003e)." A member of the Marine Infantry and the police of Sucre denied again the accusations made by the civilian population and stated that the controls by authorities established in the zone did not violate human rights (*El Meridiano* 2003f).

Despite these previous complaints, violent practices and human rights violations by the military and the police continued during the following years. In July 2006, the *Juntas de Acción Comunal JACs* (Community Action Boards) from Colosó, Ovejas, Chalán and Carmen de Bolívar agreed to organized a humanitarian visit (MSACMM 2006; CNMH 2018). Since there was distrust of state institutions at the local and regional level, a small commission of campesinos leaders traveled to Bogota to contact national human rights organizations and NGOs to evaluate the

situation and provide accompaniment to inhabitants. Around 1000 campesinos from the mentioned municipalities participated in the visit (MSACMM 2006). El Colectivo de Abogados José Alvéar Restrepo (CAJAR) and El Comité Permanente por la Defensa de Derechos Humanos (CPDH) were among the human rights organizations that participated in the visit.

In a written document, the organizations participating in the humanitarian visit reported the occurrence of mass and arbitrary detentions of campesinos by the *fuerza pública* and other state agents; restrictions to the entry and circulation of food and other items by the Marine Infantry; occupation of civilian spaces by the military and the police; and the social crisis regarding health, public services, education and roads. The report also alluded to the general stigmatization of the population, "which is linked to the armed conflict as participant" (MSACMM 2006). In August 2018, I traveled to Bogotá to interview Pilar Silva, one of the lawyers of CAJAR who participated in the humanitarian visit. She told me that during the visit to Montes de María they began to see all the violence and violation of human rights that were taking place in the region and that they produced a report and she also reported the irregularities to the *Procuraduría*. She also said that it helped to improve the situation regarding the detentions (Interview Pilar Silva, August 2018).

Although the situation in the region began improving after the visit some interlocutors told me that some leaders participating in its organization were persecuted by the military after that (CNMH 2018). In the words of one leader: "after the humanitarian visit, the stigmatization and human rights violations were mainly against the more visible leaders, the ones who organized the visit" (Campesino from Carmen de Bolívar, July, 2018). I wondered what happened to the leaders who helped to organize the visit. I found out that two of them were detained and accused of rebellion, one in 2007 and the other in 2008. They spent months in jail and were released or acquitted because of a lack of evidence. Another campesino leader was extrajudicially executed

by members of the Marine Infantry and falsely presented as a guerrilla killed in combat in 2007. He was one of the 'false positives' in the region and the crime remains in impunity until today (CAJAR 2018). These state crimes against campesino leaders who organized the humanitarian visit to the region evidence the risks of resistance and action at the margins of the state.

Despite the attempts of communities, human rights organizations and even international organizations to make visible the situation of human rights violations in the zone, and success in achieving that, the discourse of the military and members of the police was of denial of what was happening. Some local and regional authorities seemed to be indifferent to these reports or also denied the human rights violations. It is worth mentioning that some of these authorities were investigated later for their links with paramilitary groups, as in the case of the governor, some deputies of the regional assembly and a few mayors. These aspects contribute to explaining how visibility and invisibility of some forms of state violence that took place in the mountain zone began to be produced at the regional and local level.

3.6 A look into the present: the production of invisibility and visibility of state violence

I traveled early in the morning, by motorcycle, to one of the communities located in the rural area of the municipality of Ovejas. It was a sunny and beautiful day. I attended a meeting scheduled between members of some campesino communities and an official of the Defensoría del Pueblo of Sucre. We met in the community room of one of the communities. The purpose of the meeting was to gather campesinos' declarations of the forms of victimization that affected them during the armed conflict. As part of this work, members of the communities previously elaborated a timeline and reconstructed the narrative of the most relevant experiences of violence

that affected them during those years. The statements and the construction of the timeline are the first steps to propose the community as a possible subject of collective reparation within the framework of the Law 1448 of 2011, known colloquially as the Law of Victims. The official of the Defensoría del Pueblo was in charge of filling out the forms to collect these declarations and attach the timeline in order to send this information to the Unit of Victims, which evaluates if the case fits the conditions to be approved as a subject of collective reparation.

Several members of the community met to elaborate the timeline in the prior weeks. At the invitation of the leaders, I attended these meetings and helped to systematize the campesinos' memory activity. The document constructed by campesinos presented in some detail some aspects related to the general context of armed conflict in Ovejas, the main acts of violence that affected the community and their members, and some general aspects about the history of the community. This story narrated the acts of violence by all armed actors, paramilitary groups, guerrillas and the military forces during the armed conflict. For example, selective assassinations by the FARC guerrilla were mentioned. Community members also spent part of the time during that meeting talking about the types of abuse and violence by state actors they experienced, including home searches, stigmatization and persecution of campesino leaders for allegedly being guerrilla members, mistreatment and arbitrary detentions and incarceration, among others.

In the meeting, the official from la Defensoría del Pueblo told the campesinos that she needed to fill in the declaration form and started asking some questions. She started gathering some general information about the communities and then she asked questions about some forms of victimization. She asked if there were assassinations in the community and in which period they occurred. She continued filling in the form of the declaration. She also asked if and when there

were forced disappearances, land mines, threats, instances of cruel treatment. Participants in the meeting answered all questions, trying to remember the exact dates.

During the exercise, some campesinos in the meeting began referring to forms of state violence they experienced at the hands of the military. The state official said: "we are not gathering the information about the forms of victimization by the military but by the guerrillas and the paramilitary groups, because the forms are designed this way." Several campesinos seemed surprised by what they heard. I was also surprised. We looked at each other. Suddenly, Manuel, one of campesino attending the meeting got up from the chair and looked annoyed. He said "if the mistreatment and violence by the military cannot be registered in the declaration, then I will leave the meeting." The official replied: "these forms of victimization are not registered in the declaration forms, but you can include them in the timeline and the story constructed by the community." One campesino pointed out that the military were also responsible for several forms of victimization. Manuel left the meeting. Despite the dissatisfaction of several community members, the declaration continued.

The official also asked if there was torture and cruel treatment by armed groups different from the *fuerza pública*. Likewise, the state official inquired about other forms of victimization such as threats, raids, displacement and recruitment. Campesinos answered each question. For example, some campesinos pointed out that there was recruitment by FARC guerrillas. One campesino said that the guerrillas recruited his son when he was an adolescent and that he never saw him again. Other campesinos continued talking about other forms of violence during those years.

Almost at the end of the declaration the official also asked if and when detentions occurred. The state official also asked for the names of 10 campesinos of the community who suffered forms

of victimization that had the greatest impact on the community. She said that it was necessary to specify whether the form of victimization was perpetrated by the guerrillas or the paramilitaries. She provided more explanations and campesinos answered. After the declaration, somebody proceeded to read the document with the narrative about the timeline constructed by the community. The state official and some campesinos made some comments.

The state official and the campesinos agreed to continue the following day in order to gather the information concerning the traditions and cultural practices of rural communities and how they changed with the war. After the meeting, we all shared a *mote de queso*, a traditional dish of the region. (Meeting between members of campesino community and state official from la Defensoría del Pueblo, November, 2017, Ovejas).

Although the state official told campesinos that the forms of victimization by the *fuerza pública* could be included in the timeline and the narrative of the community, campesinos were surprised and unsatisfied with the response of the official and the way the declaration was conducted. While the violence of the guerrillas and paramilitary groups was the focus of the declaration, the narrative of the campesinos of the violence experienced during the armed conflict, gathered in the memory exercise, included forms of victimization by paramilitary groups, guerrillas and also state agents, in particular the military. In fact, members of the community spent some time describing different forms of violence by state actors when they constructed the timeline, since those forms of violence shaped in important ways their experiences of the state and violence, during the armed conflict.

Campesinos from these communities do not consider the violence by the guerrillas or the paramilitary groups as irrelevant but rather they want the same recognition of the forms of state violence carried during the armed conflict, and their effects on communities.

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Concerning the declaration for the collective reparation, it is unclear whether the focus on

the forms of victimization by guerrilla and paramilitary groups and not by all actors, including the

fuerza pública is a standard procedure, or whether it rather depended on an interpretation of the

law or the forms by the official who collected the declaration. When I asked a different state official

from the regional Defensoría del Pueblo about this issue, that person told me that regarding

collective reparations all forms of victimization, including the ones by the state agents, are

considered not only in the timeline but also in the declaration.

Regardless of whether the declaration in the rural community reflects the standard

procedure or not, this case exemplifies how invisibility of some forms of state violence which took

place in the region is produced in encounters between state officials and members of campesino

communities, the discomfort that the non-recognition of this violence produces among these

inhabitants, and also how this invisibility is questioned in memory practices of these communities.

After the meeting with the state official, some campesinos commented that the state does not want

to recognize its victims.

These were also the perceptions of some campesinos in other communities. In an interview,

a man from a different community, told me:

> In this area where we are [alluding to that *vereda*] the paramilitary did not hit us too much.
> What hit us was the *fuerza pública*, because most people who were killed here, they were
> killed by the *fuerza pública*. Today they do not want to recognize that the *fuerza pública*
> was an actor that also did too much damage in these territories… they camped close to this
> place where we are now, the military action that caused damage here was the action of the
> state, the police as well as the military, the marine infantry which used to come and
> conducted operations at all times… these operations did not last one day but the military
> camped in this area, one month, two months, three months […]" (Campesino from Ovejas,
> June 2018).

Although this narrative primarily emphasizes the damage caused by the *fuerza pública* it

also highlights the lack of recognition of this damage by these state actors. While some of my

interlocutors stated that it is impossible to say that one armed actor caused more damage than the others, other campesinos considered that the state was responsible for many human rights violations and violence in the rural areas in Ovejas.

It is important to consider that campesinos and communities do not always question the invisibility of some forms of state violence that took place in the region. In some cases, this invisibility can even be reproduced by them. In a rural community in Ovejas, some of their members told me about forms of state violence experienced during the armed conflict, including mass arbitrary detentions. However, when they showed me the timeline of victimizing acts that they had constructed to be considered as a possible case of collective reparation, the mass detention that took place in the community did not appear among these acts. The timeline was not a narration of events but rather annotations of different acts of victimization, names of the victims, and dates organized in chronological order.

I was curious about why they had not included the arbitrary detentions together with the victimizing acts by guerrillas and paramilitary groups. I was surprised because they narrated to me in detail the mistreatment and abuse by the military and the mass detention of several community members, and also the violent acts of paramilitary and guerrilla groups. When I asked about it, one campesino replied that they did not think about it. I took pictures of the timeline and examined it more carefully some days later. The timeline focused exclusively on the victimizing acts of the paramilitary groups and the guerrillas. I could not observe how the timeline was constructed by members of the community or the instructions provided to the community by the state official in charge of gathering the information. However, this case illustrates how, in some cases, members of communities can also reproduce or reinforce invisibility of state violent practices that took place in the region, their effects on communities, and related forms of victimization.

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By focusing on the state practices which took place in the mountain zone of Montes de María in the context of the militarization, I do not intend to make invisible the practices of governance and the violence by other armed actors, such as the paramilitaries or the guerrillas. I rather show that although control, surveillance and violent state practices by state agents, through which campesinos were stigmatized, humiliated, physically mistreated, persecuted, controlled and incarcerated in the context of the fight against the guerrillas, shaped in important ways campesinos' experiences of the state before and during the 2000s years, these practices and violence have been less visible and often minimized.

The Law of Victims of 2011 formally recognized the victims of all armed actors in the context of the armed conflict and considered several forms of victimization, which can be included in the Unique Register of Victims RUV, regardless of the responsible actor. The Constitutional court has also clarified that the RUV, created by this law, does not reflect the whole universe of victims in Colombia and that it is a tool of technical character, which does not define or grant the condition of victim, but recognizes the recipients of certain measures aimed at the protection, respect and guarantee of their rights. However, defining which forms of victimization are included and who are or are not included as victims for the purpose of this register may have effects at the local level in terms of making some victims more visible/invisible than others and even producing different types of victims. For some interlocutors to be included in the RUV was associated with being recognized as a victim and, in consequence, also with the possibility of receiving reparations.

Several forms of state violence which took place in the mountain zone in everyday life and for a long period of time, such as accusing campesinos of being guerrilla members and several forms of mistreatment and persecution associated with that labelling, can hardly being incorporated into those registers, at least they became forms of victimization contemplated in the

normative framework of the Law of Victims.[11] However, these forms of violence and especially the stigmatization, humiliation, and persecution, also caused significant damage to communities and the territory.

I also found that some victims of forms of state violence that took place in the mountain zone, especially the victims of the arbitrary detentions, feel that they are not recognized as victims. These cases are not handled through the Law of Victims, but through lawsuits against the state which could take as much as a decade to be settled. Narratives about being invisible or forgotten victims were predominant in interviews and in other spaces of encounter with them during fieldwork. Several of my interlocutors and especially victims of the mass and arbitrary detentions perceive that the state does not want to recognize them as victims. In the words of one campesino from Colosó: "We were stigmatized and persecuted by the state. We first had to endure the guerrillas and a number of homicides in the municipality, displacement of some families, and later the state came to victimize us again by saying that we were guerrillas. And the worse is that the state does not want to recognize its victims, not even the Law of Victims." I discuss this further in the following chapter.

The Law considered several forms of victimization to be included in the RUV, such as threats, crimes against freedom or sexual integrity in the development of the armed conflict, forced disappearance, forced displacement, homicide, massacres, kidnapping, torture, forced abandonment of land or land dispossession.[12] At a first glance the law seems neutral regarding victims of illegal and legal armed actors and their forms of victimization seem to reflect the damage

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[11] This is also true regarding the violence of other armed actors that took place in everyday life, but do not fit in the categories of victimization established by the Law.

[12] Others are terrorist act/attacks/combats/confrontation; land mines and explosive devices; involving children and adolescents in activities related to armed groups.

produced by the overall dynamic of the armed conflict. However, several of my interlocutors did not perceive that in practice some victims of the state are recognized in the same way as other victims in the context of the Law of Victims as mentioned above.

Invisibility is also produced in other ways, for example through public representations and depictions of the violence which took place in the region. As shown in the previous section, invisibility began to be produced by the public denial of human rights violations by the military and some local and regional authorities, even in the context of the efforts of human rights organizations and communities to make visible the situation and to report it to other authorities.

In the aftermath of the armed confrontation, Montes de María came to be depicted as a region which was deeply affected by the presence of guerrillas; the expansion of paramilitary groups and atrocious massacres perpetrated by them; the alliances between paramilitary groups and regional politicians and local and regional authorities; and also one of the Colombian territories where the FARC and other guerrillas were successfully defeated by the military forces within the context of the fight against these groups during the 2000s.

Although these public representations are not inaccurate, they obscure other dimensions of violence that also took place in the region, and particularly in the mountain zone. In this zone, some forms of control, surveillance and violent practices carried out in campesino communities in everyday life by state agents have become less visible, even though they are remembered by the campesinos who experienced them.

The public recognition of the human rights violations by the military and other state agents, of the damage caused, and attempts to ask forgiveness to the victims have been scarce in the region. These efforts have been related more with the massacres. For example, in 2008 colonel Rafael Colon asked for forgiveness from the communities of Chengue (Ovejas), Macayepo and El Salado

(Carmen de Bolivar), in the name of the Marine Infantry, for any negligence or lack of attention regarding the massacres perpetrated by paramilitaries in these communities. However, his superior, the commander of the Fuerza Naval del Caribe, did not endorse these apologies. Through a statement, he expressed: "we did not accept any responsibility in these criminal events and we acted under constitutional precepts in defense of the Colombian citizens whose results are evident" (*El Tiempo* 2008). However, in 2011, the president Juan Manuel Santos, in the name of the state, asked for forgiveness from the community of El Salado, admitting that there was state omission and that the massacres should have never occurred.

In 2019, through a written communication [there was not a public act], the state armed forces apologized for the death of one of 11 victims of 'false positives' in Toluviejo, municipality of Montes de Maria in Sucre. However, this was done to comply with a request of a sentence of the High Administrative Court in Sucre (Bustamante 2019).

These different practices and mechanisms of producing or reinforcing invisibility in the context of some encounters between state officials and members of communities and through the use of state registers of victims and public representations can be seen as forms of symbolic violence taking place in the post-conflict transition. By denying, failing to recognize, minimizing or blurring the visibility of some forms of past state violence, and their effects on populations and related forms of victimization, these victims are ignored, are not properly recognized, or become invisible. The production of invisibility of these forms of state violence and related forms of victimization can be seen as an extension of the margins of the state in the current context, through forms of symbolic violence. Although Olson (2013) refers to the symbolic violence of secrecy as a routine practice present in political interventions and public debates, and one that takes place at

the margins of the Guatemalan state in the aftermath of war, symbolic violence has been rather overlooked in studies engaging with theories on the margins of the state.

The invisibility of state violence is also contested in several ways. Organizations of victims and communities, human rights organizations, groups of lawyers and the National Movement of Victims of State Crimes (MOVICE) at the national and territorial level are among the organizations which have been in charge of making visible the violence and crimes of the state. This has taken place through different mechanisms including the production of reports, denunciation, and lawsuits at the national and international level. The National Center of Historical Memory (CNMH) has also produced several reports documenting the violence of legal and illegal armed actors in different regions of Colombia, including Montes de María (CNMH 2017; CNMH 2018; CNMH 2019).

It is also important to mention that not all forms of past state violence are invisible and that some have become more visible overtime at the national or territorial level. For example, the extrajudicial executions of civilians falsely presented by the military as guerrillas killed in combat, or 'false positives', became very visible at the public and national level given their prevalence throughout the country and the work of human rights organizations, and are now one of the cases prioritized for investigation by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP) in the context of the implementation of the peace agreements.

At the local level, campesino memory practices in the context of processes of collective reparations, lawsuits against the state, and in some cases everyday encounters with state officials, for example the one presented at the beginning of this section, question this invisibility and make these past forms of violence and their effects on communities more visible.

For example, in the Integral Plan of Collective Reparation (PIRC) of the communities of Flor del Monte and La Peña, in the municipality of Ovejas, one of the collective damages identified is the damage to the good name of campesinos due to finger-pointing, stigmatization and for being labeled as guerrilla collaborators. The reparation measure requested by the community regarding this damage, is the "realization of a public act, divulged by the national media, to make visible the status as civilian population of the communities and to overcome the stigmatization received" (*Plan de Reparación Colectiva*, Flor del Monte y La Peña).

In the Plan of Collective Reparations, the communities of Seis Veredas identified widespread threats to communities for being alleged guerrilla collaborators in the context of the armed conflict. One of the damages identified was the weakening of campesino leadership and the reparation measures requested are historical memory processes to recognize those campesinos who were and are the leaders and who have bravely exercised leadership of communities, and the realization of public acts to recognize the dignity and good name of the leaders who were stigmatized as being guerrillas (*Plan de Reparación Colectiva*, Seis Veredas). These forms of victimization, the collective damages and measures requested are among several others identified by the communities related to the actions not only of the state but also the illegal armed groups.

In a follow-up visit to the mountain zone, in August 2019, the driver of the motorcycle and I were on the Troncal Highway on our way to a nearby community. I was going to visit one leader. I suddenly saw a banner on one side of the paved road and I asked the driver to please stop (Figure 5). The banner is shown in the picture. The message of the banner is the following:

> Rural zone of Ovejas. Land of cheerful, hardworking, enterprising, humble, resilient and surviving people. We want to tell the world that we never were and nor belonged to any armed group. We are campesinos who work the land every day to provide sustenance for our families. Today we work for the reconstruction of the social fabric of our communities of Montes de María, Territory of Peace.

Figure 5. Symbolic act of reparation in Seis Veredas. Communities in collective reparation.

Seis veredas (Villa Colombia, El Palmar, Medellín, La Coquera, San Francisco and Borrachera). Banner located in the Troncal Highway, *vereda* la Coquera, rural area of Ovejas. Photo by the author. August, 2019.

I was excited because I knew that even small symbolic acts like this are meaningful for the communities. The banner is a symbolic act of reparation in the communities of Seis Veredas which have been in a process of collective reparation since 2015. I have followed the process of collective

reparation of these communities since 2014, when I visited Ovejas for first time. As part of the process, which is coordinated by the Unit of Victims, the communities of Seis Veredas made the banner with the purpose of showing that they did not belong to any armed groups and to emphasize the nature and work of campesino communities.

However, these kinds of symbolic acts have been rather scarce and sometimes only involve the communities, or in this case also the Unit of Victims. They are also very recent. The plans of collective reparation (PIRC) mentioned were approved between 2015 and 2016. Overall, the implementation of the PIRC has been slow and poor, including symbolic acts or reparation. The public acts requested by the communities of Flor del Monte and La Peña and Seis Veredas, with the participation of institutions, and in particular the ones which were involved in the violations of human rights and these forms of victimization, such as the military or the police, have not taken place.

DeLugan (2013) shows that the margins of the state in the aftermath of civil war in El Salvador are not only sites for the production and reproduction of different forms of violence, but also reconfigure national belonging through the work of popular social memory. In a similar vein, the margins of the state in the aftermath of intense political violence can also be seen as sites for making some forms of violence and their effects on communities visible through inhabitants' memory practices and other mechanisms, in a context where at the same time other practices reinforce invisibility.

To conclude this section, I want to point out that the invisibility of some forms of state violence and attempts of campesino communities to make them visible continue shaping encounters and relationships between these populations and the state in the current scenario. While this invisibility is produced in the context of some encounters between state officials and members

of communities, through state registers of victims and public representations, it is also questioned from memory practices of campesino communities, lawsuits against the state and the production of reports, among other mechanisms.

The current processes of the Truth Commission, as part of the Final Agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC guerrillas, has opened a window for the construction of other truths and the public recognition of other narratives about what happened in the region during the armed conflict and the violence and crimes of different armed actors, including the FARC guerrillas and the Colombian state. The Truth Commission has a territorial approach and started working recently in Montes de María. One of the twenty-two *Casas de la Verdad* (Houses of Truth) created in the country began operating in Sincelejo after my primary fieldwork. During my follow-up visit in August 2019, members of the Truth Commission in charge of Montes de María had begun to meet with some members of the communities. Campesinos in Ovejas told me about one meeting they had with a representative of the Truth Commission team in the municipality, a few weeks before my visit. I also visited the *Casa de la Verdad* in Sincelejo to get more information about the plans and methodology of the regional commission. Also, a few NGOs, grassroots organizations, and members of communities were also working on producing some reports that will be turned in to the Truth Commission.

3.7 Conclusions

In this chapter, I show that the region of Montes de Maria was depicted by the national government as existing in the territorial margins of the state to justify the militarization of the zone and to implement measures of states of exception such as the Zone of Rehabilitation and

Consolidation, in the context of the fight against guerrillas in the early years of the 21st century. Depictions and representations of the region as dominated by criminal and terrorist groups, in a context of non-recognition of the armed conflict, led to a focus on the military and police power as a way to overcome what the government characterized as the "weakness of the state" in these areas of the country.

However, some local and regional actors and particularly campesino communities questioned these representations by focusing on claims regarding social investment as an essential condition to strengthen the presence of the state and overcome the conflict in the region. In contrast with the representations and discourse of the national government, narratives of campesinos interviewed refer to the abandonment of the state and abuse, mistreatment, stigmatization and persecution by the police and the military during this period.

Campesino experiences of the state during the militarization of everyday life, and control, surveillance, and violent state practices carried out in these communities by state agents also show the different ways in which these populations were constituted as subjects at the margins of the state. The margins of the state were not only territorial but also ran inside the political body through forms of violence and authority lying simultaneously inside and outside the law, in the context of the armed conflict and practices of governance of illegal armed actors.

In this chapter I also show that in the context of control, surveillance and violent practices carried out in rural communities, campesinos were not passive. Through practices of resistance and care some of these inhabitants found ways not only to remain in the territory, but to diminish the risk of suffering violence in everyday encounters with soldiers or with illegal armed actors. Pacific protest and mass demonstrations also played a role in pressing the authorities regarding the restrictions and controls imposed, or in making visible the situation. The articulation of campesinos

with the Defensoría del Pueblo and human rights organizations at the national level were also important to calling attention to and making visible the human rights violations and other violent state practices taking place in the region.

This also shows that the margins of the state during that period were also coproduced in the context of interactions between the *fuerza pública*, campesino communities, institutions such as the Defensoría del Pueblo, human rights and other organizations involved in the humanitarian visits and even illegal armed groups. However, recognizing that there is room for coproduction at the margins of the state does not mean that all actors are in the same situation in their attempt to define or reshape these margins. For example, although campesinos organized a humanitarian visit to the region in coordination with human rights organizations, the leaders participating in its organization were stigmatized and persecuted after the visit, showing the possibilities for creativity but also the dangers of action at the margins of the state.

Finally, in this chapter I argue that campesino experiences of the state in everyday life in the mountain zone were shaped in important ways by control, surveillance and violent state practices carried out in these communities in the context of the fight against guerrillas, particularly during the militarization of the region. However, some of these violent state practices, their effects on communities and related forms of victimization have become more invisible at the public level after the decline of the armed conflict in the region.

The production of invisibility regarding forms of control and state violence and effects on campesino communities began in the context of the Zone of Consolidation and Rehabilitation through the denial by the *fuerza pública* and other local and regional authorities concerning the human rights violations taking place in the region, even after reports of human rights violations by human rights organizations became public. In the aftermath of the intense armed conflict, other

practices and mechanisms have continued producing and reinforcing invisibility. The invisibility of these forms of state violence and related forms of victimization can be seen as a form of symbolic violence and an extension of the margins of the state in the current context.

However, campesino communities also question invisibility through memory practices in the context of processes of collective reparations, lawsuits against the state, and in some cases in current everyday encounters with state officials, making visible some forms of state violence and human rights violations that were carried out in campesino communities in everyday life.

4.0 State Violence and Invisible Victims: Mass Arbitrary Detentions, Long-term Effects and Emotions in Campesino Communities in the Mountain Zone of Montes de María

4.1 Introduction

I arrived in the morning at Carmen's house, located in a *corregimiento* in the mountain zone of Montes de María. She lives with her husband and her youngest son and daughter. Carmen is a campesina who was displaced with her family from her *parcela* at the end of the nineties. A few years after the displacement, she became a community mother, responsible for taking care of children in her community, under the program of Community Homes of the Colombian Family Welfare Institute (ICBF). Carmen told me that one day in 2004, the SIJIN, the DAS, the *Fiscalía*, and the military showed up at her house looking for guerrillas. They told her that they were looking for her sons. She said: "I do not have any sons; I only have daughters. They were looking for something, but they could not find anything. They even opened the fridge to see how much food I had…" She told me that they did not care that she was looking after several kids at that moment as part of her job as a community mother. They did not show her any judicial order for a home search. They left after turning the house upside down.

She clarified that the persecution of her family started before that day. She said: "The military and the police used to be around the house, watching us, even though I was looking after these kids." She told me that her family had experienced home searches previously. "I lived alone by that time because my husband had been detained and was in jail. My brother was also in jail [both accused of rebellion]."

Carmen mentioned that a few days after the home search, the police, the military, and a *fiscal* (prosecutor) went back to her house at 3 am, and knocked on the door. She was sleeping with her daughters, including a 16-month old baby. She said: "They said that they had a warrant to arrest me. There were several cars and people around the house as if I was a big criminal. It broke my soul. I thought I had not done anything, I am a hardworking person, my God, why this suffering?" She said that the baby girl grabbed her, and when she tried to put the baby in a chair, a man from the SIJIN pushed and slapped her. "Please do not mistreat me in front of my daughters because this is the biggest pain. The *fiscal* told the man to respect me…" During the detention, she took the baby with her and gave it to a relative later. They detained several other people on the way.

She said that all of the detainees were taken to the SIJIN and the following day to the Battalion of Corozal. "When we were there, they took us to a small room. They brought a *caratapada* [person with a covered face] several times… the press also took pictures of us and after that, we were taken to the jail La Vega…"

Carmen told me that her daughter hired a lawyer. "We had to pay. *Nosotros quedamos limpios* [We were left without any money]. My daughter had to sell everything, I spent nine months in jail, but I was acquitted… my daughters suffered; my oldest daughter had to take care of them. She did everything to try to take me out of jail… My daughter tried to commit suicide twice" … As she started providing details, I saw how tears were escaping from her eyes and rolling down her cheeks… I listened in silence… Carmen cried for a little bit. I tried to comfort her.

After some minutes, Carmen wanted to continue telling me her story. "But my community did not abandon me. They made a memorandum, they collected signatures, they sent everything there to help to prove my innocence". She told me that her detention affected the community. She

said: "To be a community mother is not just about taking care of children; it also includes the community." She said that she was finally released, but her husband and brother stayed in jail for longer. Carmen told me that she was accused of rebellion. During the trial, she saw the photos they took of her. She said:

> It was all about my daily activities with the kids I took care of and my family. They even had photos of me growing vegetables… Look at all these pictures that you are showing me [she told the *fiscal*], it means that I was watched all the time, and there is nothing there… that was supposed to be the evidence… what happened to me was an injustice. The state wanted to see results [in the fight against guerrillas], but they affected campesino communities, we were affected by the state, trust was lost [referring to trust in the state] … I want to know why they caused that damage to us and why we were so persecuted […]

She and the other people detained with her sued the state more than ten years ago. She is still waiting for a decision concerning her lawsuit of direct reparation (Campesina Mountain zone, June 2018).

During the period 2002-2008, arbitrary and mass detentions became commonplace in the region of Montes de María, in the rural areas affected by armed conflict, and especially in municipalities perceived as being among the areas where guerrillas had a strong presence in the region. In the mountain zone, mass detentions known in Colombia as '*capturas masivas*' targeted campesino communities and other inhabitants under the suspicion of being *milicianos* or guerrilla collaborators. The detentions were used by members of the military forces and other state agents to show results in the fight against guerrillas. They became a component of the counterinsurgency strategy against these armed groups.

In this chapter, I examine the effects of mass detentions on campesino victims and their communities, and the specific ways in which these violent state practices have continued to shape relationships with the state in the aftermath of the armed conflict in the region. I show that, despite the invisibility of the violence behind the detentions, their victims, and the damage produced, these

state practices have had a long-term impact on campesino communities, victims, and their relationships with the state.

I also explore some issues related to emotions and state affect (Krupa and Nugent 2015) in the context of the experiences of the mass detentions and other related encounters with state institutions and officials that came after these state practices took place in the region. I consider these emotional and affective dimensions relevant to understanding some of the lasting consequences of detentions and incarceration on communities, the victims, and their relationships with the state.

I suggest that the mass detentions and incarceration of campesinos have worked on the emotional and affective dimensions of relationships with the state, not only through their immediate effects on communities and victims such as the spread of fear and humiliation but also by keeping some of the victims attached to state processes in the long term.

Mass detentions and related experiences have continued shaping relationships with the state through their lasting effects on campesinos who were detained and incarcerated such as the damage of the *hoja de vida* and to their reputations, new temporary detentions after being acquitted on a trial or completion of sentences, fear of being detained again, state affect, long lasting lawsuits of reparation against the state and expectations and claims for truth, justice and reparations.

In the first section of the chapter, I analyze the specific characteristics of mass detentions and provide insights into the workings of the state in the context where these practices took place. The second part explores some of the ways in which mass detentions operated as a mechanism of state terror in rural communities and the impact of arbitrary detentions on victims, families, and communities. In the third section, I examine how the experiences of detentions and incarceration experiences have continued shaping relationships with the state among the victims through their

lasting effects. These effects include affective aspects involved in the interactions of victims and state institutions and officials.

This chapter draws on 47 case studies[13] of campesino victims of the arbitrary detentions and their experiences; interviews with other rural inhabitants, lawyers, a former *fiscal*, and a state official; articles of a regional newspaper; some judicial files, especially lawsuits of reparations; and participant observation in meetings with the victims of detentions. I conducted the interviews in Ovejas, Chalán, Colosó, Chalán and Los Palmitos, municipalities of the mountain zone of Montes de María.

4.2 State affect and emotions in the context of encounters with the state

Carmen's narrative about her detention, incarceration and the persecution of her family by state agents speaks not only to the arbitrariness and violence of the detentions but also to the emotions involved in these experiences and how they still shape her relationships with the state. I met with Carmen approximately 13 years after her release from jail. Even though it seems a long time ago, the experiences of the detention and incarceration still have effects in her present and in their relationships with the state. She not only lost trust in state institutions, but she has been waiting for a lawsuit of direct reparation against the state for a decade. She also expects to know the truth about the persecution by the state and her detention and incarceration.

Several of the conversations and interviews I conducted with women and men who were detained and incarcerated were very emotional. I was also emotionally touched by their

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[13] I consider each individual who was detained and incarcerated as a case study.

experiences and injustice. Overall, the narratives of the victims regarding their encounters and experiences of the state, in the context of the arbitrary detentions and their aftermath, talked about several emotions such as humiliation, fear, anger, suspicion, distrust, indignation, hate, sadness but also dignity and hope. Emotional accounts of victims regarding experiences of their encounters with state institutions and officials in the context of detentions and incarceration and their aftermath also speak about victims' emotional engagement and affective attachment to the state.

The affective and emotional dimensions of relationships and encounters with the state are connected to the workings of state power. In the following section I provide insights into some of the workings of the state and state power in the context of the arbitrary and mass detentions which operated as a form of state terror in the context of relationships between state institutions, officials, and campesinos during the fight against guerrilla groups and the implementation of counterinsurgency policies.

State terror relates to state power and emotional aspects. Scholars have shown how fear operates in contexts of state terror, the lasting effects and the legacies of fear in societies (Corradi, Weiss and Garretón 1992). Several scholars have studied cultures of fear and terror to understand how violence lingers in the aftermath of war (Corradi, Weiss and Garretón 1992; Green 1999; 2004; Burrell 2013). For example, Green (1999) shows that fear and terror are major mechanisms of sociopolitical control in post-conflict Guatemala. For the author, fear is not only a subjective personal experience, but has also penetrated the social memory in Guatemala, producing lasting effects in the post-conflict setting.

I examine not only some aspects of the use of fear in the context of the detentions and incarceration but also broader effects on communities and relationships with the state that are not

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limited to fear. These effects on communities and the victims, and specifically state effects, also relate to the workings of state power (Mitchell 1999; Trouillot 2001).

Here, I understand state terror according to Sluka's definition: "the use or threat of violence by the state and its agents or supporters, particularly against the civilian individuals and population, as a means of political intimidation and control" (Sluka 2000: 2).

Ethnographic and other research has studied affective issues and emotions involved in state documents, processes, and bureaucracies (Linke 2006; Navaro-Yashin 2012; Krupa and Nugent 2015; Woodward 2014). By focusing on the conceptual discussion about the sensual life of the state, Linke points out that modern states are not only imagined or discursive cultural regimes but embodied forms. Emotions are "engendered by the everyday zones of contact between embodied subjects and the political state apparatus" (Linke 2006:4).

In an edited volume about the state and rule in the Andean region, Krupa and Nugent (2015) propose the concept of state affect to refer to the "emotional investment people make" regarding promises "that seems to adhere to the state as an object of desire" or a form of attachment. Needs and hopes, desires and expectations around "the obligation of the state to its constituents" are essential to understand "how affect commonly becomes effect and the affective dimension of this bond of obligation" (Krupa and Nugent 2015:14). Building on the concept of state affect by these scholars, I use the category to refer to people's emotional engagement with and attachment to the state resulting from their encounters with state processes, practices, officials, and related experiences.

Navaro-Yashin examines the affective aspects of bureaucracies and documents. According to the author, institutions and their objects such as documents, modes of governance, administrative and legal practices produce and are charged with affect. Since bureaucracies as a

practice "produces and incites specific modes of affect" (Navaro-Yashin 2012:82), they should not be analyzed only as rationalizing apparatuses but also as an emotive realm.

In an edited volume, Laszczkowski and Reeves (2018) use the concept of affective states to refer to a range of "affects, feelings, and emotions for and about the state and its agents, and explore how those contribute to the state's emergency, transformation, endurance, or erosion" (p. 2). By examining sites and spaces of affective engagement ethnographically, these scholars explore the affective workings of the state.

Despite these studies, the affective dimension and emotions involved in state processes, encounters, and experiences have received relatively little scholarly attention, especially ethnographically (Laszczkowski and Reeves 2018). According to Gupta (2015), one of the "underexplored aspects in the study of the state is the question of emotion, of the feelings that connect or alienate people from the state," even though to be a "subject and citizen is to be emotionally invested in the state." The emotional ties between citizens and the state and emotions such as fear, frustration, disappointment, and hope are central to understand people's responses to state initiatives and actions (p. 274).

Ahmed (2004) and Beatty (2019)' studies on emotions are relevant for the analysis in this chapter. Ahmed points out that emotions are about objects and are shaped by contact with objects. However, objects do not necessarily have a material existence; they also can be imagined. For example, a memory of something, "can be the object of my feelings in both senses: the feeling is shaped by contact with the memory, and also involves an orientation towards what is remembered" (Ahmed 2004:7). In turn, Beatty (2019) highlights the narrative structure of emotion and how emotions implicate narrative and vice versa. He is not only alluding to the narrative as text but the "structuring of emotions as construals of events" (Beatty 2019:279).

In the case of the arbitrary detentions, memories and oral accounts of what happened to victims and campesino communities, current processes related to the detentions such as lawsuits against the state, temporary detentions after acquittal or completion of sentences, expectations and claims for truth and reparations, and the effects on victims, families, and communities become objects which trigger emotions (Ahmed 2004) and shape state affect.

4.3 Characteristics of arbitrary and mass detentions as state practice in rural communities

Arbitrary and mass detentions of campesinos and other rural inhabitants became a state practice during the implementation of the Democratic Security Policy in the context of the fight against guerrillas during the government of former president Alvaro Uribe Vélez. Although individual detentions of inhabitants also occurred during this period, mass detentions became a common modality of detention.[14] Both individual and mass detentions of rural inhabitants systematically took place during the period 2002-2008 and can be seen as part of the same phenomenon.

Victims of mass arbitrary detentions in the mountain zone of Montes de María included social leaders, educators, small storekeepers, and mostly campesinos living in the areas of armed conflict. My interviews focused mainly on individuals detained in mass detentions [15] but a few of them were also detained individually. Based on some documents and mainly on victims' interviews, I identified some characteristics of mass detentions mentioned below. I interviewed

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[14] Arbitrary detentions in Colombia had existed for a long time, although before the 2000s, there were mainly selective detentions. During the 2000s they targeted whole communities.

[15] The mass detentions I mention here involved at least six people detained as part of the same military operation and, in most cases, more.

women and men detained under different operations, in different municipalities and years, to get a better picture of detentions' common characteristics.

Detentions took place in a context of stigmatization of rural inhabitants in these territories, which were seen by state agents as actual or potential guerrillas and collaborators. A characteristic of the mass arbitrary detentions is that campesinos and other inhabitants who had nothing to do with the accusations but lived in an area under the control of guerrillas also became the target of these detentions.

Although encounters between inhabitants and guerrillas in rural and even urban areas were not uncommon, most victims of the detentions and other campesinos interviewed saw encounters and interactions between inhabitants and guerillas, when they took place, as survival strategies which did not make them guerrillas or *milicianos*. However, detained campesinos and other rural inhabitants were considered not only suspects of collaborating with the guerrillas but also accused of being *milicianos*, especially of the FARC. It can be seen in the sentences and lawsuits against the state regarding these cases. These detainees were investigated for rebellion, and in most cases released because of lack of evidence or acquitted in a trial. However, some campesinos and other inhabitants were also convicted.

According to Ferro et al. (2002) the *milicias* of the FARC are a "mechanism of political and military work" created by this guerrilla group. The milicianos did not make the military career, but they live in their houses and families and continue with their regular activities. They "follow specific orders" and are in charge of "work involving surveillance and control. They contribute to "the articulation of the FARC and the civilian population" (p. 55-56).

Although arbitrary detentions have occurred for a long time in Colombia, mass and individual detentions became a state counterinsurgency mechanism during this period in the region

and the country (CCEEU 2006). In Montes de María, arbitrary detentions also took place in other municipalities different from the mountain zone, especially in Carmen de Bolívar (CNMH 2018; Dejusticia 2019).

When the Zone of Consolidation and Rehabilitation was first implemented, in September 2002, 60 people were detained in the *Operación Escorpión* conducted in Don Gabriel, Salitral, Chengue and Pijiguay in Ovejas and Desbarrancado in Chalán (Cinep and Justicia and Paz 2002). Local media reported that troops of counterguerrilla battalions of the Marine Infantry conducted the military operation, and a woman with her face covered (*caratapada*) pointed out at some rural inhabitants and accused them of being guerrillas (*El Meridiano* 2002h). The presence of *caratapadas* in some mass detentions was not uncommon. Several of my interlocutors talked about this, including some individuals who were detained in the *Operación Escorpión*. Some inhabitants, mainly women, reacted to the detention and complained that "the detained relatives had just arrived from their work in agricultural activities and had nothing to do with the guerrillas" (*El Meridiano* 2002i).

During the following years, other mass detentions took place in the region.[16] In the Mariscal Operation, conducted in August 2003, 156 people were detained in the municipalities of Ovejas, Chalán, Colosó, and Los Palmitos. In the context of different operations, campesinos and

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[16] Among these operations can be mentioned: Operación Escorpión (60 people in rural areas of Ovejas and Chalán), Operación Mariscal (156 people in Ovejas, Colosó, Chalán, Los Palmitos, Corozal and Sincelejo, 2003), Operación Floral (14 people in rural areas of Ovejas, Corozal and Sincelejo, 2004), Operación Conquista I (20 people in rural area of Ovejas, 2004), Operación in Los Palmitos (7 people in rural area, 2004); Operación Colosó (19 people in rural and urban area of Colosó, 2004); Operación Conquista II (6 people in Ovejas, 2004); Operación Búfalo (10 people in Ovejas, 2004); Operación Sabana II (27 people in Chalán, 2005); Operación República 163 (10 people in Chalán, 2006); Operación Faraón (19 people in Colosó, 2006) and Operación República 133 (13 people in rural and urban area of Ovejas and Chalán, 2008).

This information is based on a review of *El Meridiano* newspaper during the period 2000-2007, interviews with a lawyer and victims, and some lawsuits of direct reparation. These detentions are only for the mountain zone in Sucre. In Carmen de Bolívar and other municipalities of Sucre there were other operations and detainees.

other inhabitants were detained and incarcerated. In this chapter, I mention main mass detentions, but the list is not exhaustive.

Figure 6. Campesino house in a corregimiento where arbitrary detentions took place in the rural area of Ovejas.

Campesinos were often detained during the night while they were sleeping in their modest houses with their families. Detentions often involved a disproportionate display of state power to detain inhabitants. Photo by the author. May, 2018.

In 2006, the humanitarian visit to Montes de María reported the occurrence of mass detentions without warrants. Intelligence reports based on interviews with demobilized guerrilla ex-combatants and members of the network of informants were used as legal justification for the detention of inhabitants (MSACMM 2006).

Detentions were also often accompanied by house searches (*allanamientos*) without judicial orders. In addition, a report on arbitrary detentions in the country during the period 2002-2004 also pointed out that detentions were based on suspicion, used illegal procedures, lacked autonomous, independent and impartial investigation, and lacked procedural guarantees (CCEEU 2006:1). Interviews with some lawyers, reports by human rights organizations, and reparation lawsuit files also show that many of these detentions in the region were arbitrary[17] and conducted illegally (MSACMM 2006: 36; CCEEU 2006).

Several mass detentions of campesinos in rural areas, and in some cases also in urban areas, included large and spectacular operations. Not only the Marine Infantry participated in these operations, but often *fiscales* (prosecutors), members from the SIJIN, the CTI, and the DAS did as well. As described by victims of arbitrary detentions, these operations often involved several men in detaining campesinos. They also often took place during the night while rural inhabitants were sleeping in their modest houses with their families (Figure 6). In several cases, the detainees were transported by helicopters to the Battalion of Corozal. These detentions often involved a disproportionate display of power and force by the state, as if the campesinos were the most dangerous criminals, as mentioned by Carmen and other of my interlocutors.

Mass detentions during this period often included several other violations of human rights and forms of violence. Several individuals interviewed stated that they experienced different forms of mistreatment during the detention, including cruel treatment, humiliation, and in some cases, physical mistreatment. In some cases, mass detentions were preceded by surveillance and persecution by state agents, as in Carmen's case.

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[17] For a discussion about the arbitrariness of these detentions in the context of the national and international law, see CCEEU, 2006).

In more extreme cases, victims of the mass detentions told me that they were tortured in order to coerce them to provide information about the guerrillas or to confess their collaboration with these groups. Torture seems to have been more common in the initial operations. Five victims of arbitrary detentions I interviewed were tortured while detained. However, they never denounced this violation of their human rights due to fear and distrust in local and regional institutions. Other detainees stated that they were not mistreated during the detention, at least not physically, while others experienced psychological pressure to confess, even though they had nothing to confess.

Detained people were often photographed, and the photographs were often published in regional and even national media after the detention, before any serious investigation or trial. I spent some time in the public library in Sincelejo looking at the local newspaper *El Meridiano.* I found several examples of what interlocutors had told me about the pictures taken of them during the detention. Some campesinos were detained two or more times while in other cases more than one member of the family was detained and incarcerated, as happened with Carmen and her husband and brother.

In some cases, campesinos and inhabitants accused of being milicianos and guerilla collaborators were detained and released after several days or months since the investigations were precluded due to lack of evidence. I interviewed four individuals who were in this situation. For example, in the Floral operation, 12 out of 14 people detained in March 2004 were released before the end of April since the *Fiscalía* did not find enough evidence. In other cases, people detained and arrested were acquitted in a trial after being in jail for some months or even years. I interviewed 23 campesinos who experienced this. Some of these individuals were acquitted in their initial trials (*Primera Instancia*) while others were convicted in their initial trials and acquitted in second instance decisions after appealing their cases (*Segunda Instancia*). I also interviewed 20 people

convicted and sentenced to six years in jail for rebellion.[18] All of these 20 campesinos claimed to have nothing to do with the charges and to have been convicted unfairly.

4.3.1 The Mariscal Sucre Operation

The Mariscal Operation was the largest mass detention in the region and had the most significant impact on rural communities, according to my interlocutors. This operation is still in the memory of the victims of the arbitrary detentions and rural communities. Some victims of the detentions told me that they were detained under the Mariscal Operation even though I found that they were detained in a different military operation. Not all victims of the detentions knew the name of the operation by which they were detained.

In August 2003, the National Police, the CTI from the Attorney General's Office and the Marine Infantry carried out the Mariscal Sucre Operation, involving around 600 men from the National Police, which led to the detention of 156 inhabitants of Ovejas, Colosó, Chalán, Los Palmitos, Corozal and Sincelejo (*El Meridiano* 2003g). The detainees were considered suspects of being *milicianos* and guerrilla collaborators of the FARC, or in some cases ERP and ELN guerrillas, and included students, doctors, professors, public drivers, and mainly campesinos living in rural and urban areas of these municipalities.

The Mariscal Sucre Operation illustrates not only the conflicting workings of different state institutions and agents at the regional and national level regarding the mass detentions but also how detentions, the investigation, and trials caused a deep sense of injustice and distrust in the state, especially among the detainees and their relatives.

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[18] The standard sentence for rebellion was between six and nine years.

The process began with an intelligence report of the National Police, the testimonies of former FARC guerrillas, and the warrants for detentions issued by the *Fiscalía*. In the following weeks, the *Fiscalía 16 Seccional* ordered preventive detentions against 128 inhabitants. After the detainees' lawyers appealed this decision, the *Fiscal Delegado ante el Tribunal Superior de Sincelejo* (Delegated Prosecutor before the High Tribunal), Orlando Pacheco, revoked the preventive measures after considering that there was not enough evidence.

I traveled to Bogota to interview the former *fiscal* Pacheco. He told me: "the evidence at that stage was a report of the military intelligence, which did not have value as evidence, and the testimonies of former FARC guerrillas … however, the *Fiscalía* did not verify or receive directly sworn testimonies before the detention warrants were issued. I analyzed each testimony, and they were full of inconsistencies and contradictions… there were also other irregularities […]" (Orlando Pacheco, April, Bogotá, 2018). The 128 detainees were released in November 2003 (*El Meridiano* 2003h).

However, the *Fiscal General (Attorney General)*, Luis Camilo Osorio, did not agree with this decision and said that the *fiscal* Pacheco "*no estuvo a la altura de sus funciones* [did not measure up to his functions]" (*El Meridiano* 2003i). El *Fiscal General* separated Pacheco from his position as *fiscal* and initiated an investigation against him for *prevaricato por acción* (breach of duty) (*El Meridiano* 2003j). Months later, the Supreme Court of Justice acquitted Pacheco and stated that his actions were in accordance with the law.

In June 2004, the *fiscal* who was appointed to continue the investigation presented an accusation of rebellion against 134 individuals, out of the 156 originally detained. Most of them were detained again and sent to La Vega jail in Sincelejo. In February 2006, and after the trials, the Juzgado Penal del Circuito (*Primera Instancia*) convicted 28 of these individuals of rebellion,

and three more of being accomplices; the remaining 103 individuals were acquitted.[19] Those acquitted were released while the convicted remained in jail. After the appeal of the *Fiscalía* and lawyers, in June 2007, the Tribunal Superior of Sincelejo (*Segunda Instancia*) affirmed the conviction of rebellion for 25 of these individuals, acquitted three who were previously convicted of rebellion and acquitted one more who had previously convicted of being an accomplice. The Tribunal also convicted 44 of the individuals who had been acquitted of rebellion by the *Juzgado Penal del Circuito*, and one individual who had been acquitted previously was convicted of being an accomplice. Arrest warrants were issued for these individuals. In total, as a result of the decision of the Tribunal Superior regarding the Mariscal Operation 69 people were convicted of rebellion, two more were convicted of being accomplices while 61 were acquitted.[20]

The Juzgado Penal del Circuito and the Tribunal Superior de Sincelejo based their decisions in the testimonies of demobilized guerrilla members, particularly the testimony of a former member of the FARC, even though these testimonies were highly criticized by the *fiscal delegado* who revoked the preventive measures and by the lawyers of the detainees. The critiques were based on several grounds, including the personal interest of the demobilized ex-combatants who received benefits for collaborating with justice, the contradictory, imprecise and vague character of some testimony, and the failure of the former FARC member in recognizing many of the detainees in lineups.

One lawyer, who was in charge of the defense of several accused individuals in the Mariscal Operation, sees it as an "*adefesio legal*" (legal monstrosity). In his words: "people were

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[19] Juzgado Segundo Penal del Circuito. Sentencia de Primera Instancia, Sincelejo. Febrero 3 de 2006. RAD.2003-00207-00. Proceso seguido contra Luis Enrique Aguilar y otros por el delito de rebelión.
[20] Tribunal Superior del Distrito Judicial de Sincelejo, Sala Penal de Decisión. Junio 25 de 2007. Radicación No 2003-00207-04

convicted without evidence. The only evidence they constructed was a false testimony of a reinserted former guerrilla member. This witness was used for everything [also for other cases different than the Mariscal Operation] …" (Remberto Benítez, Lawyer, Sincelejo, January 2018).

Individual and mass detentions were not only used as a counterinsurgency mechanism that could purportedly be used to dismantle the network of *milicianos*, but became a mechanism to control populations, mainly through the use of fear. Campesinos and other inhabitants living in areas where guerrillas were present could also be considered suspects of being *milicianos* or collaborators, and consequently, be detained and incarcerated.

The detentions involved not only physical forms of violence, which were present in some cases, but also other forms of violence and demonstrations of state power. The latter is evidenced by the disproportionate display of power and force by state agents in the detentions of inhabitants, the presentation of them in the media as suspects of being *milicianos* or guerrilla supporters before any serious investigation, trial, or sentence, and other forms of mistreatment and humiliation.

The mass detentions also involved arbitrariness, other human rights violations, and different forms of state violence involving several state agents from different institutions, including not only members of the police, and the military but also *fiscales* and judges. The violence connected to the mass arbitrary detentions was not limited to the detentions themselves and the spread of terror that they produced in rural communities but also ran through the seemingly more ordinary workings of the state taking place through prosecutors, prisons, judges, and courts.

In this sense, there was an attempt to cover up the arbitrariness and irregularities of the detentions and incarceration with the appearance of legality through the use of prosecutors, trials, sentences, witnesses, and legal documents, as illustrated in the Mariscal Operation. In this context, members of not only the military and the police but also of the judicial system were put at the

service of the counterinsurgency state practices, showing the continuum between more spectacular forms of violence carried out in campesino communities during the detentions and more ordinary workings of the state such as those inside prisons and courts. In these sites, the legal and the illegal became blurred, for example, through the use of unreliable or fabricated testimonies. In a similar vein, Feldman (1991) sees arrest and interrogation as integral components of the counterinsurgency strategy in the case of Northern Ireland. He also refers to the gradual reorganization of the judicial system into a counterinsurgency apparatus (p. 87).

To understand the effects of the detentions, it is important to consider their specific characteristics and how they operated as a method of exercising state power not only over the detainees but also over communities.

4.4 State terror and the impact of arbitrary detentions on campesino victims, families and their communities

Interviews and participant observation with victims of the arbitrary detentions show that mass detentions created fear and terror in women and men in rural areas, produced constant distrust among them, deepened the breakdown of the social fabric, increased stigmatization of rural inhabitants and their communities, and damaged their reputations. Mass arbitrary detentions have had long-term effects on communities and especially on the direct victims and their families.

Mass detentions produced fear and terror among campesino communities due to their arbitrariness and other characteristics described in detail in the previous section. In the words of one state official: "These were operations of terror… they [rural inhabitants] went to sleep, but

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they did not know if they were going to wake up in jail or at home" (Official from la Defensoría del Pueblo, July 2018).

In one of my visits to the rural area of Ovejas I met Astrid and Carlos, both campesinos of Ovejas. Astrid and Carlos' narratives illustrate fear and terror due to the detentions. I asked them when and how their detention took place. Astrid replied: "It was in September 2002, after the violence of Chengue". Carlos, who was sitting with us and was also detained that day, added:

> First, we were displaced because of Chengue [referring to the massacre by paramilitary groups in 2001], we had to leave, but we came back because we could not survive in Ovejas [in the urban area], we did not have a job, we had to come back here. When we returned [after a few months], we were detained… [other inhabitants from adjacent *veredas* were also detained]. This was a lonely area; a few families were living here […]

Astrid described in detail how the detention took place. Astrid, Carlos, and other people detained were brought to the school and spent the night there. She told me that Carlos was tortured:

> They [the military] asked Carlos to talk; they asked the name of the guerrillas. Carlos answered that he was not a guerrilla and that he had never been a collaborator. Since he did not talk more, they put a plastic bag on his face… after that they hit him. When we were taken to Corozal [to the battalion], nobody said anything, we were afraid that they might kill us… We were taken to the battalion of Corozal in a helicopter. They continued pressing us to confess. They mistreated us… I told them that I was not a guerrilla. We stayed there five days, and after that we were taken to La Vega jail in Sincelejo… I spent 20 days in jail and Carlos 48…

Astrid cried a little bit. I tried to comfort her. After a few minutes, she continued:

> I was considered a suspect of killing five kids and the lieutenant told me to confess to reduce the sentence, otherwise, I would spend 30 years in jail… I thought of my little boy and that I was not going to be able to raise him… they said that I was from the ELN. When this happened [the detention] it was terror; that was horrible… we were watched for some time…

> People told us to sue the state, but we did not, because of fear. My father told me; I prefer to be poor. I do not want to lose you tomorrow just to receive some money, and it is better to leave things like this. This also affected the communities. People wondered why we were detained. Inhabitants thought that the military could also come and detain them, people were afraid… when the military came here, everyone used to hide, and I also did. I became very fearful of the soldiers. Now I see them, and I do not feel anything, but the previous

years I could not even see the military […] (Campesino and campesina from Ovejas, March 2018).

Some mass detentions took place in the communities located in the area of the massacres or where people had been displaced. In these cases, some of the *resistentes* (individuals who did not displace or decided to stay after previous displacements) or those who did return to rural areas on a daily basis while living in the urban area (*retornos laborales*), were arbitrarily detained and accused of being *milicianos* or collaborators. According to my interlocutors, in this context the impact of detentions was brutal, even producing the displacement of some inhabitants still living in the area.

In other rural areas where detentions occurred interlocutors also pointed out that inhabitants began experiencing anxiety and fear because it was perceived that anybody could be detained and arrested. In the words of one campesino, "anybody could be detained because of suspicions, information, finger-pointing, envy, for whatever reason" (Campesino from Ovejas, February 2018). According to my interlocutors, many inhabitants, especially men, began sleeping in places other than their houses due to fear. They sometimes slept in the house of a neighbor or a relative, in the *monte* (area where the *parcelas* are located) or even under a tree. According to my interlocutors and lawyers, while it was easy to be detained and arrested, once people were in this situation, they could be released in a few days or stay in jail for months or years until they were acquitted or convicted. Inhabitants were terrified of being detained or incarcerated.

These oral accounts illustrate that fear in the context of arbitrary detentions became part of everyday life not only for the direct victims and their families but also for other members of rural communities. Mass detentions operated as a mechanism of state terror. According to Torres, terror and torture are "strategic uses of state violence with the explicit intention to alter the social fabric. Terror requires the social spread of knowledge about state violence or its imminence (Torres

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2018:386). In the case of the detentions, the spread of knowledge concerning state violence took place through the detention of several individuals at the same time, and often at night when people were in their homes, making the detentions visible to the rest of the members of the community. The display of disproportionate power and force by state agents during the detentions and the publication of the suspects' names and photographs in the media (Blakeley 2012) also contributed to the social spread of knowledge about state violence.

Overall, many campesino communities in rural areas were affected by individual and mass detentions of some of their members. However, in some municipalities, rural areas, and communities this situation was more critical. Detentions took place in the houses of campesinos in the rural area, but in some cases inhabitants were also detained in the urban area, especially in the case of those who had been displaced to the urban area and continued returning to their parcelas on a daily basis to take care of agricultural activities (*retornos laborales)*.

The impact of the arbitrary detentions on campesinos, families, and communities was significant even in the cases of individuals who were released in a few days, and much more so in the cases of those who spent months or years in jail before being acquitted, and those who were convicted and sentenced to 6 years in jail.

Detentions were often based on accusations by former FARC guerrillas or by informants in rural communities or urban areas. The presence of informants in communities caused distrust; it was not possible to trust anybody. In the words of one campesino, "I did not dare to visit the neighbors, the social fabric broke down. I did not trust my neighbor or even my family, I did not trust anyone." (Campesino from Ovejas, December 2017). According to interlocutors, it was not uncommon for the informants to provide incorrect or false information to the police or the military to get economic benefits, or even to take revenge on somebody in the community with whom they

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had problems in the past. A few campesinos told me that inhabitants who accused them are still in their communities, but they do not talk to them. In other cases, informants were killed or had to leave rural communities.

Arbitrary detentions and incarcerations had a deeply negative impact on the victims, their families, and rural communities. At the family and individual levels, the consequences in each case were different, but in most cases examined, the life projects of these individuals and their families were truncated. Some families and marriages fell apart. Victims and relatives experienced great suffering.

Most victims also mentioned that their families had to sell their animals and, in some cases, even their land to pay for private lawyers or to get resources to maintain their families while one or more members were in jail. Pedro's narrative illustrates this situation. The Marine Infantry detained Pedro in 2007 in his house in the rural area. He was accused of collaborating with the guerrillas by a member of another community, and was incarcerated. He was acquitted, but he spent 16 months in jail.

> When I was detained, I had animals and yam crops here. The neighbors helped to collect the yams, and she [his wife] sold them to get money to visit me in jail, all Sundays. She survived with that. Nevertheless, she did not stay here during that time; she went back to live with her family, she came by donkey sometimes… We were left with nothing… My father also had some animals, and he had to sell them to pay for the lawyer. He also had some hectares of land and this ranch, but he had to sell that too [for a very low price]. He was desperate because he had to pay the lawyer… when I came back from jail I had to start from scratch. That was like being born again... I had to build the house again because it was almost on the ground" (Campesino from Ovejas, December 2017).

The consequences for families were also different depending on whether the person detained was the husband, the wife, or other family member. Although men and women were both detained and arrested, in my visits to rural areas, I found that many more men were detained than women. For example, in the Mariscal Operation only 12 out of 156 individuals detained were

women. In campesino communities, men are often the main providers of the house and the family, while women tend to be in charge mainly of domestic activities and care of their children. In the case of Pedro, since he was detained and was the primary provider, his wife had to move to her parents' house in order to survive. In other cases, women found ways to provide for their families. Also, men tend to be more involved in organizational processes than women.

Campesino leaders were particularly likely to be persecuted and were often detained and incarcerated. The Juntas de Acción Comunal JAC (Community Action Board) and their members were stigmatized and accused of being infiltrated by the guerrillas. The detention of respected members of the communities, including both women and men and especially leaders, produced humiliation among campesinos and their communities. As Mahmood points out, humiliation is relevant to understanding the dynamics of state terror since it affects not only the capability of resistance of a group but also basic dignity (Mahmood 2000:74).

Mass detentions negatively affected organizational processes. Some campesinos did not dare to organize anymore for fear of being detained while others continued the work as social leaders in their communities, but kept what they call a "*perfil bajo*" [low profile]. Hector's case illustrates this. Hector is a community leader detained in 2006, convicted of rebellion and sentenced to 6 years in prison.

> We were in jail for 31 months, and some of the people who were detained with me were even 35 months in La Vega in Sincelejo. After this, we went out on conditional release. We came back to our territory, but we were stigmatized by the state and by the community. They were still pointing at us. Look at the guerrillas who left the prison ... In my case, when I left the jail, I was still stigmatized, the *fuerza pública* continued watching me [...]

When I asked him what the process of going back to the community was like, he replied:

> You know, at the moment that you are in jail, the first thing that the public opinion says is there should be a reason for him to be there. People, the same campesinos, also made accusations. If he was detained and he is in jail, it is because he is guilty, a guerrilla member… However, I continued working in the rural area, in the agricultural activities.

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When we went out of the prison, there were several people, not all, who sometimes made accusations, not against me, but against others who were also in jail. There is a doubt […]

In my case, I also continued as a social leader. I continued working with the JAC, with the support of my community in the rural area... because we were leaders of the communities we were labeled as guerrillas (Campesino leader from the Mountain zone of Montes de María, October 2017).

Mass detentions also had consequences at the community level. They often included community members who played important roles in the community, such as leaders, professors, owners of small stores in rural areas, and drivers of cars transporting people between rural and urban areas. Among the 47 cases I studied, eight individuals were leaders of their communities, and eight more who also played important roles. These included a professor, a community mother, an owner of a small store, and even one worker from a local office. For example, in Carmen's case, her detention had a particularly strong impact on her community because of the role she performed as a community mother.

Some victims of the arbitrary detentions, including leaders, faced stigmatization after returning to their communities. In some cases, the stigmatization came from community members, in other cases, from state officials, as Hector mentioned. However, other interlocutors also pointed out that this was not always the case since their communities knew them. In the words of one campesino: "People here know who collaborated and who did not, and I have not felt any rejection, but obviously some people say you were imprisoned for a reason. A small part of the population can say that, but the rest know that one is from a good family, is a worker, and is not involved in bad things" (Campesino leader from Colosó, January 2018).

Some campesinos who were stigmatized and incarcerated have tried to rebuild their ties with friends, relatives and their communities after returning from jail. However, these attempts at social repair (Theidon 2013) have been the result of the personal efforts of some victims since the

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experiences of the mass detentions is a topic that has not been addressed at the collective level of communities. By the end of my primary fieldwork, in August 2018, state institutions and actors had not publicly acknowledged all the violence behind the detentions or the damage of these practices in rural communities. A campesino from Chalán, illustrates victims' experiences after returning from jail and efforts to rebuild social ties. He was detained and convicted and sentenced to six years in jail. He told me that when he came back to his community after being release from jail, it was tough. He said:

> Some people avoided me. Some people were afraid that if they talked to me, they could also be detained or considered as an accomplice… the state used the mass detentions to create terror in people, fear in people… the ones who were imprisoned, after we left, as soon as we were in the street, some friends avoided us, they almost did not talk to us. It was because the state had already created terror in the people; they wanted to create terror so people would not collaborate with the guerrillas… there was stigmatization by people, and some friends did not look at me with the same eyes […]

I asked him if these relationships had begun to be rebuilt. He replied yes, but clarified that it happened over a period of years.

> At the beginning, people had doubts, but over time people knew more; people realized that it was not as justice said, but there were false positives [referring to judicial false positives] … When I went out of jail, I thought I am the only one who can clarify people's doubts. Nobody will talk with the neighbor, with the friend, with the relative to say that I am nothing.

> I have been doing this work, since I left the jail until now, convincing ordinary people that I was nothing, I am nothing, and I continue being nothing [referring to not being *miliciano* or guerrilla]. I am a campesino affected by the state, and I am a victim of the state. When I approach people, what I emphasize is that I am a victim of the state… Today I feel good in my community because people see me as a victim of the state. I cleaned my image. (Campesino from Chalán, 2017)

During my primary fieldwork, inhabitants did not talk openly about the experiences of the arbitrary detentions in public spaces. However, these experiences were very present in their memories and narratives about those years, as I could notice in my interviews and observe during participant observation in communities. In the case of the direct victims, talking about the

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detentions and incarceration was more common in daily conversations, but mainly among them and also relatives. These conversations often center on how the lawsuits against the state are going, and more recently, on the opportunities opened by the peace accords to achieve justice and truth or to be publicly recognized as victims of the state. However, some victims of the detentions began making some efforts to organize themselves. In my follow up visit to the region, in August 2019, I also knew that some victims of the detentions had been organizing some meetings among themselves and expected to possibly present a report to the Truth Commission regarding their cases.

Current narratives of memories and oral accounts of these experiences and conversations by the direct victims and their relatives still trigger emotions such as sadness, humiliation, distrust, pain, and indignation concerning what happened in the context of the violence carried out by state actors. In this context, these narratives and oral accounts become objects which trigger such emotions (Ahmed 2004).

4.5 Relationships with the state: state affect, invisible victims and claims for truth and reparations

Arbitrary and mass detentions and incarceration have also shaped relationships between campesinos and the state through the lasting effects on communities, new encounters with the state regarding the detention and incarceration, state affect and emotions, and claims for truth and reparations. In this section, I explore these issues.

4.5.1 La hoja de vida sucia, manchada, dañada

A common narrative in the interviews with the victims of the arbitrary detentions was *tener la hoja de vida sucia, manchada, dañada* (having the *hoja de vida* dirtied, stained or damaged) as a result of the detention and incarceration. The literal translation of *la hoja de vida* is curriculum vitae. However, campesinos are not referring to work or professional life, but to the ways other people see them, and to the damage caused to their reputations and their good names in the context of their life history. This aspect was also mentioned by some women and men when referring to these victims: *Les dañaron la hoja de vida (*they damaged their *hoja de vida)*. Most of these narratives emphasize this damage regardless of whether the campesino detained was released after a few days, acquitted after a trial, or sentenced to several years in prison.

The case of Andres illustrates this situation. He was arbitrarily detained at 3 am. He describes the operation that resulted in his detention as large, with the participation of the CTI, the Gaula, the military, the Marine Infantry, and *fiscales*. He told me that the day of the detention, there was no room left for more cars or soldiers in the street adjacent to his house in the rural area. His house was a humble one, as I could see while conducting the interview. He was detained with other people. After Andres was detained, the press took photographs of him. He and the other detainees were shown in the regional newspaper. He spent 17 days in jail and was released after that. He told me:

> I asked why they were detaining me and what the accusation was. One of the state agents replied that he was from the intelligence of DAS, and that I was accused of rebellion and homicide. Imagine that, I have never even killed a chicken… I do not owe anything to anyone, and I was not doing anything bad. I work in the field and that's it…

> What hurts me is that they published that in the press and media. If I go to the police to get my judicial antecedents, obviously they come clean. I already did that […] my judicial antecedents are normal, but it is not the same for the community. My *hoja de vida* is dirty for people who know me here. I will tell you why. If you come here and ask if they know

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Andres, they will say ah yes, the one who went to jail for being guerrilla… This is a stain that I have, and that hurts. (Campesino from Ovejas, May, 2018).

Andrés was detained only 17 days, but he feels that his detention caused humiliation and great damage to his good name. The large operation to detain him in his house in the rural area and the fact that he was shown in the newspaper, as a suspected *miliciano*, is what matters concerning the humiliation in his community's eyes. Although several campesinos were released after few days in jail or after acquittal in a trial, the damage to their reputations and communities was already done. Several interviewees emphasized the damage caused by the publication of the detentions in regional newspapers and other media. These publications often included the names of the detainees and even their photos. Sometimes pictures of detentions in the newspaper even showed a close-up of the detainees' faces.

Although Andrés' detention took place more than a decade ago, he talks about the damage not as something only belonging to the past, but rather as still present in his life. In most of the interviews, victims also alluded to having *la hoja de vida* dirtied, stained or damaged as something that they still experience as part of their present.

Narratives of campesino victims about the detentions and incarceration often produce or trigger emotions of humiliation, pain, sadness, indignation, and even anger, as in the case of Andrés. As one campesina pointed out: "you know what it is to be persecuted, without being one nothing [without being a guerrilla member], *que le echen a uno a perder la hoja de vida"* [to have one's *hoja de vida* damaged]. I get angry when I remember that" (Campesina from Ovejas, May, 2018).

The concept of the sociality of emotions proposed by Ahmed (2004) is useful for understanding the emotional dimension involved in the experiences of the detentions of campesinos not only as something limited to individuals and their interior states but also the

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collective. However, from this perspective emotions are not "in either the individual or the social." They are rather produced through contact with objects, which "take shape as the effects of circulation" (Ahmed 2004: 10). According to the author, what circulates here is not the emotion as such but the objects of emotions. In this way, emotions can move "through the movement or circulation of objects (p. 11).

Oral accounts of the memories of the arbitrary detentions and incarceration, narratives about *la hoja de vida* being dirtied, stained, damaged, and other long-term consequences, and current related experiences such as lawsuits against the state or claims for justice, become objects of emotions. The contact of the victims of the arbitrary detentions and other members of communities with these objects trigger and produce emotions.

These objects circulate among inhabitants who were detained and incarcerated through narratives, oral accounts, daily conversations, rumors, and shared experiences. Some of these objects circulate in the collective. For example, the occurrence of the individual and mass detentions of campesinos and the damage to the *hoja de vida* were common references not only in the narratives of the direct victims but also in other campesinos interviewed. However, not everyone knew all the details of what happened. These memories and oral accounts are part of the collective memory and circulate at that level.

4.5.2 The past continues haunting me: being watched, new detentions after the time in jail and state affect through documents

In the case of several victims of arbitrary detentions, their encounters with the state institutions and agents did not end with their release from jail, acquittal, or sentence completion. At least eight victims interviewed said they continued to be watched and even harassed by

members of the police or the military after returning to their communities from jail. Other campesinos continued being detained temporarily after being acquitted at a trial or completing their sentences because a detention warrant still appeared in the police database. Other campesinos did not have any more problems, but even in this situation, some of them were fearful of being detained again.

José and Antonio were detained, convicted and sentenced to 6 years in jail for rebellion. Both of them consider themselves as victims of the state. Both also spent 36 months in jail and were released under conditional release after that time. José told me that after getting out, every time that there was a checkpoint, he had to show the cédula (Colombian official ID), and an arrest warrant still appeared in the system.

> I sold fruit at the time, and it was not uncommon to be detained again, after I got out of jail… It became embarrassing because I was leading a process of social and political organization with the communities… I got tired of this situation, and I solved this by going to the court of execution of sentences, I was removed from the system [from the database]. For us, the campesinos who were detained and incarcerated for rebellion in Montes de María, it was difficult to recover the normal life […]

Antonio went back to the urban area in his town during conditional release. He told me:

> Since I had children and I needed to feed them, I was desperate… My brother had a little billiard room here, so I told him, please help me, I will take care of the billiard room and you help me with anything you can; for my children. My brother agreed. However, the most critical period came. The police used to go to the billiard on Saturdays and Sundays to take me out from there. They used to detain me for 5 or 6 hours and several times I woke up in the police command. I could not work. That happened 10 or 15 times. Whenever they wanted, they went to the billiard to bother me and take me out [while working] …

> The police continued detaining me because I still appeared in the system [the police database]. I got tired of the situation…. One day I faced the police commander and told him: look I was already convicted for rebellion; you keep telling us that we are guerrillas… it does not matter if I was or I was not [a guerrilla], I was already convicted and in jail for that crime, please let me work, I need to feed my children… They violated our human rights as they pleased and without evidence. (Campesinos from the mountain zone of Montes de María, October, 2017).

The case of José and Antonio shows how some people who were detained and incarcerated continued being temporarily detained and even watched and harassed by state agents in the following years after being released. Although in the case of Antonio the police stopped bothering him around 2008, the cases of other rural inhabitants interviewed suggest that these practices continued taking place during the following years, even though they seem to have become marginal over time.

These temporary detentions did not last more than a few hours or a few days. However, they have been relevant in prolonging the experience related to the detentions and incarceration of victims, relatives, and even communities during the following years. Other victims of the detentions and incarceration interviewed, who were not temporally detained again, narrated avoiding paths that would expose them to running into the *fuerza pública*. They were afraid of still appearing in the database of the police and being detained and arrested again.

At first glance, the experiences related to the individual and mass detentions seem to be something from the past. However, I was surprised to find that some people who were detained and incarcerated are in some cases still fearful of a potential detention because they may still appear in the police database, even years after being acquitted or the completion of their sentences.

A lawyer, who defended several victims of the arbitrary detentions in this region, told me that several people who were acquitted or convicted continued being detained even today. The lawyer stated, "this is the police; they have a system where detention warrants are registered. The police detain people without a valid detention warrant, they [old detention warrants] still appear in the system… this is negligence of the part of the state… they continue violating the human rights of these people" (Lawyer, Sincelejo, January 2018).

In the case of my interlocutors, these detentions did not last more than a few hours or a day; because they were able to show the documents of acquittal or the completion of sentence, or they called a lawyer. Reactions of victims of detentions and incarceration to this situation allowed me to understand how campesinos' fears and other emotions such as distrust can be easily triggered even today when there is a situation that resembles victims' past experiences. However, this is not the situation of generalized fear that people described regarding the context in which the mass detentions took place.

The detainees' experiences also speak of the relationships between victims of arbitrary detentions and the state through documents. Campesinos who had been in jail began carrying the documents that certified that they were released, acquitted, or completed sentences. According to my interlocutors, it became more important to carry these documents than *la cédula* (the Colombian official ID). Some campesinos even made reduced-size copies of these documents and laminated them in order to keep the documents in their wallets. For example, one campesino showed me his wallet and told me: "I always bring my documents [referring to the acquittal certificate] … this document was big but I reduced it to carry it in the wallet… You look at my wallet and it looks big, you would think it is money, but these are the documents. I still carry them in my wallet." (Campesino from Ovejas, December, 2017).

In line with Navaro-Yashin (2007; 2012), I point out that these state documents produce affect among those who were detained and incarcerated. Several victims showed me these documents in my visits to their houses. Most of them have been kept for many years. Some of these documents have even become illegible over the years, but people still keep them. These documents prove that campesinos do not have pending issues since they were acquitted or served a sentence. However, these documents are also the living proof of the arbitrariness and injustice

against these inhabitants by state agents. According to Navaro-Yashin, documents, as the material objects of law and governance, are capable of "carrying, containing, or inciting affective energies" when used in the context of "specific webs of social relations" (2007: 81).

4.5.3 State affect: resentment, distrust and other emotions

The experiences of the detentions have also shaped the ways in which campesinos who were detained and incarcerated interact with state agents and institutions and their emotional engagement with the state. Some victims of the individual and mass detentions find it difficult to interact with some state agents, especially the military or the police. At the very least, they are careful in their interactions. Encounters with these officials or the memories involving them often trigger emotions such as resentment, anger, or distrust. María's case is an excellent example of this. María was detained in the early 2000s and convicted for rebellion.

She told me that one month before the detention, there was a census [*empadronamiento*] in the town, and the police asked some people for personal information, including her, and took photographs of them. She said that she asked the policeman what the purpose of the census was, but she did not get any clear response. When she was detained, she lost her job and did not get any compensation. By that time, she had worked as a cleaner in a local office for 11 years. The detention and incarceration also led to several tragedies in her family. She narrated her experience of encounters with police officers, years after the detention and incarceration.

> Since that time, I became very nervous and worried. Sometimes I see the police officials close to my house, and I think if they come to ask for signatures or something, I would say no because I am very resentful of them. They made this census, and after that, they came to detain and incarcerate me. I lost my job. Furthermore, after being detained for two months my mom passed away… my mom began suffering from a deep depression […]

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I do not want to be asked to sign, or they [the police] coming to tell me anything. One day they came [policemen], and they asked me for a signature because they were going to do something in the neighborhood, and I said no, I do not want to know anything, I am very resentful with the government. I told them that. The policeman asked why? I said that because of the census, they came to detain me and after that I lost my mom, my brother. I lost everything… the policeman said we understand you and they left. (Campesina from the mountain zone of Montes de María, April, 2018).

Maria's case shows that her encounters with state officials in the present, in this case policemen, are still shaped by her previous experiences and encounters with these officials in the context of the arbitrary detention and incarceration. She is not only resentful because of what happened to her, but she does not trust them, even today. Not all campesino victims of the arbitrary detentions who I interviewed relate with the police, military, or other state agents in this way. Some of them do not blame such agents, but rather blame the government at the time of the detention. Some even see what happened as the result of state policy (*política de estado*). In this context, the object of state affect could be state agents, several institutions, the government, or, in a more abstract way, the idea of the state. As stated by one campesino: "when it [the detention] happened, I felt a little bit of rage, but I do not have anything against the policemen or the soldiers, we know that after all they also obeyed orders" (Campesino from Colosó, January, 2018).

Experiences of arbitrary detentions also created and intensified distrust in the state not only due to the arbitrariness of these detentions but also because deceit (*engaño*) by state agents was often involved, as in the case of the census mentioned by Maria. References to deceit were present in several of the narratives of interlocutors, who were detained and incarcerated. In the words of another campesino, referring to his detention: "They [policemen] deceived me when they took me from my house because I did not appear on the list they carried. They told me that they were going to verify my *cedula* in Colosó and if I did not have any problem, I could come back home… They did not verify anything there, they decided that I should go to Sincelejo with the other detainees

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because they were going to investigate there". He told me that he was brought to the SIJIN with the other detainees. The media took photographs of them and they were shown as suspected of being guerrillas (Campesino from Chalán, March, 2018).

Over time, some victims of the arbitrary detentions have recovered some trust in the state or some state institutions and they engage with and participate in other state processes taking place in the region. Others are still careful in their interactions since, for them, it is difficult to completely trust again, especially concerning the military or the police.

4.5.4 Invisible victims and claims for truth, justice, and reparations

The current context of the implementation of the peace agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC guerrillas created expectations in several victims of the arbitrary detentions concerning the possibility of being recognized as victims and knowing the truth. The victims see the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and the Truth Commission, created by the accords, as an opportunity concerning their rights to truth, justice, and reparations.

Some of the victims filed lawsuits of *reparación directa* (direct reparation) to achieve economic reparation from the state. However, it has not been the case of all women and men who had the option of filing lawsuits of direct reparation. Only those who were detained and released due to lack of evidence or who were acquittal after a trial had the option to sue the state. 16 out of the 27 campesinos who had this option filed lawsuits of *reparación directa* against the state. Other campesinos who could have sued the state did not do that because of fear or lack of information about the deadlines for filing lawsuits against /the state.

The lawsuits often request the recognition of the responsibility of the *Nación-Fiscalía General de la Nación* for the damage caused due to the unfair deprivation of freedom of the

plaintiff. These lawsuits often take years and even more than a decade in some cases to be resolved. Several of these lawsuits have been won while many others are still ongoing, as one lawyer who handles these cases in the region told me.

Although in the judges' decisions regarding the lawsuits of direct reparation, the individuals who were affected by the detentions are recognized as victims due to the damage caused and family members also received economic compensation, this recognition is limited. What is recognized here is only the unfair deprivation of freedom of the individual who was detained and the responsibility of the state, specifically the *Fiscalía*, due to the lack of enough evidence to issue a preventive detention and present charges. However, in this chapter, I have shown that mass detentions involved much more than the unfair or arbitrary deprivation of freedom of some inhabitants in the region. As mentioned earlier, the detentions not only involved several other human rights violations and forms of violence, but, as I have suggested, also operated as a mechanism of state terror to control populations in the context of counterinsurgency state practices. This caused damage and great suffering to the campesinos who were detained and incarcerated, their families, and on the communities.

In the lawsuits of direct reparation against the state, the unfair deprivation of freedom is considered a failure or error of the judicial system. In this context, what is rendered invisible is not necessarily the occurrence of the detentions but all the violence behind the mass detentions that was carried out in rural communities, the victims and relatives and how this state practice operated as a mechanism of state terror.

In the mountain zone, state institutions have not publicly recognized the violence carried out in campesino communities regarding the mass detentions, the victims, the injustice involved,

and the damage caused to campesinos and their communities. There have not been public acts asking for forgiveness.

In the case of the campesinos and other inhabitants who were unfairly convicted, the situation is even more complicated since they are not seen as victims by some officials. In the eyes of the state, they were *milicianos* or collaborators of guerrillas, even though many of them also appear in the Unique Register of Victims due to other forms of victimization.

Gabriel, a campesino leader from the mountain zone who claimed to have been unfairly convicted of rebellion and was sentenced to six years in prison, told me that he presented a petition to the Land Restitution Unit to be included as a land restitution claimant, but it was denied. I saw the written response of the state official, which said: "… Although X (real name of the person) is included in the Colombian registry of victims, given that he was convicted of rebellion, he cannot be considered as victim according to the Law of victims and Land Restitution: members of illegal groups will not be considered as victims […]" This case is an example of how the detentions and unfair convictions continue to affect campesinos even today and shape relationships and interactions between victims and state institutions and officials in the current context.

Some of the expectations of the victims are to know the truth behind the arbitrary detentions, to have the good names of themselves and their communities restored, public recognition by the state institutions of the injustice committed against these campesinos and communities, and their recognition as victims of the state. Alejandro is a campesino leader from Montes de María. He was detained in the second half of the first decade of the 2000s with other rural inhabitants from the area. He was convicted of rebellion and sentenced to six years in jail. I asked him about his expectations in terms of justice concerning his case and the cases of other women and men arbitrarily detained and incarcerated in the region. He replied:

I hope that the truth will be known one day and that we will have the right to have our good names restored. We never did anything wrong to anyone, but we are stigmatized because of the sentence. I want justice… I was never found with guns, or a document or any evidence. If I had known that they were going to convict us unfairly, I could have said, yes, I collaborated with the guerrillas and I would have received a sentence of 30 months and gone home… However, I was always cleaning my name as a campesino, as a social leader. I never thought that one could be convicted, look at how justice is in this country, the law of the strongest…

We did not know many things, and we did not have the economic resources; we did not have 10 or 20 millions of pesos to give to the prosecutors or a judge. All this affected us. By that time, everything was corrupt. It is not a secret that the judicial branch in the department was corrupt (campesino leader from Colosó, 2018).

Some victims think that the lawsuits of direct reparation somehow compensate economically the damage caused, while for others, no money could repair that damage. However, the expectations of most victims of the detentions interviewed are not limited to economic reparations, but also involve the symbolic dimension as well as other issues concerning truth and justice.

Near the completion of my fieldwork, I organized a meeting in the rural area of Ovejas. Seventeen campesinos participated, among them nine victims of the arbitrary detentions. I also organized a similar meeting in Chalán with approximately 14 victims of the detentions from that municipality. Among other issues, in the meetings we talked about victims' expectations regarding truth and reparations concerning the arbitrary detentions and other related issues in the context of the peace accords. Antonio, a campesino leader, who participated in the meeting of Ovejas and whose brothers were detained as well as other members from his community, told us:

I think that we need to consider that the leader who was detained and incarcerated, due to his social work, has had the opportunity of talking with his family, with his wife, with his neighbors and explain to them the reasons why he was incarcerated. But this campesino who never thought in his life to be in jail, who did not even participate in the campesinos' struggle for the land… this campesino has not had the opportunity even to know why they were in jail. Then, this is an aspect that we need to work on, the social leaders. This invisibilization of the mass detentions, the negative impact on the communities, the stigma…

We need to focus on restoring the good name of communities. Everything has been done here at the individual level and the processes have been given to lawyers who have taken advantage of them [campesinos who were detained]. They have been robbed because there have not been collective processes…

We search in the records and find that the press and media in the region showed them [the campesinos] as terrorists, their pictures are there. Then what they have to claim to the Truth Commission is to have their good names restored… it is a truth that we have economic problems, but the money they receive, a compensation will leave them in the same ruin. No money is enough to pay for the damage caused to them. What is more important, and we need to work on that, is the good name of the campesinos who were detained, a public act, that the authorities recognize that they made a mistake and say that these people [the detainees] were not what they said, also the media. This is an act of reparation, the symbolic. It is more important than receiving money, but this is what the state does not want to recognize… It hurts them more to tell the truth than to give money to people. (Meeting with victims of arbitrary detentions and other campesinos, Ovejas, July 2018).

Antonio refers to two important aspects related to the mass detentions and expectations of victims in the current context of the implementation of the peace agreement. First, he alludes to the invisibility of the mass detentions and their victims. Individuals who were detained and incarcerated often mention that they are non-recognized and forgotten victims. As mentioned above, women and men who were convicted are not even recognized as victims.

Furthermore, Antonio emphasizes the relevance of the symbolic reparation, including the restoration of the good names of individuals and communities, and the relevance of a public act where the authorities recognize the injustice against these communities, including those unfairly convicted. In the context of the lawsuits, the reparation has been mainly economic when it has taken place. When I asked one lawyer, who has handled many of these cases in the region, whether there has been any symbolic reparation in the sentences resolving these lawsuits, he told me: "I have one case in Chalán, where the *Fiscalía* asked for public forgiveness, but it appeared in the newspaper in a tiny note. The *Fiscalía* invited the family [to attend a meeting] to ask them for forgiveness. I attended the act as a representative of the family because they did not want to go.

They were still afraid. However, the act was only a formality" (Interview with lawyer, Remberto Benítez, Sincelejo, 2018).

Claims by victims of arbitrary detentions are not only economic but also symbolic since this is seen as an essential step in the process of social repair as well as overcoming the stigmatization that is still present in some ways.

There is also a deep sense of injustice among victims of mass detentions regarding the judges and courts' decisions, as shown in Hector and Ricardo's narratives. Most of the victims of the detentions I interviewed and other campesinos mentioned that many innocent people were in jail and that others were convicted despite being innocent. This sense of unfairness is present in their imaginaries about the state, and it also shapes how these victims have experienced encounters with state institutions and officials even today. Lawyers who handled the cases and members of human rights organizations pointed out several of the irregularities regarding the judicial files and the trials. I already mentioned some of them regarding the Mariscal Operation. According to one lawyer interviewed, who defended many campesinos and other inhabitants, "there was a lack of equity by prosecutors and judges in assessing evidence in some cases. Also, the results of trials were different depending on the *fiscalías*, judges, and the lawyer defending the person (Interview with lawyer, Sincelejo, 2018).

4.6 Conclusions

In this chapter, I examine arbitrary and mass detentions of campesinos as a violent state practice that took place in the mountain zone of Montes de María, producing long term effects on rural communities and the victims. While these detentions were presented by members of the

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military and other state agents as positive results in their attempt to disarticulate the networks of *milicianos* and weaken the guerrillas in the region, they targeted many campesinos and inhabitants who were not milicianos or guerrillas, but simply lived in the areas in which these groups exerted control.

Some of the characteristics of the arbitrary detentions suggest that they were not an isolated or marginal state practice but rather became a counterinsurgency mechanism in the fight against the guerrillas in the region to control populations, mainly through the use of fear. Victims and other members of communities experienced the detentions as arbitrary, violent, and as a form of state terror.

The detentions involved physical and other forms of violence and a disproportionate display of power and force by state agents. Simultaneously, the detentions involved several human rights violations and violence by state agents from different institutions. The violence connected to the detentions was not limited to the detention itself or the spread of terror in rural communities. It also ran through the seemingly more ordinary workings of the state involving prosecutors, judges, prisons, courts, and everyday encounters with the police. It shows the continuum between more spectacular forms of political violence carried out in campesino communities and seemingly ordinary workings of the state in a context of state counterinsurgency practices. The magnitude of the violence carried out in campesino communities as a result of the detentions, the related state processes that came after them, and even the victims have remained invisible.

I show that arbitrary detentions have had a long-term impact not only on campesinos and their communities but also on their relationships with the state. I examined the overall impact of the detentions on victims and their communities, emphasizing fear and terror, distrust among members of communities, the deepening of the breakdown of the social fabric and stigmatization

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of rural communities, and especially the victims of detentions. Some of these consequences have even lingered until today, despite the efforts of campesinos regarding social repair to undo some of the effects of violence (Theidon 2013).

As part of these long-term effects, mass detentions and incarceration have continued shaping relationships with the state. This is evidenced by narratives about the *hoja de vida* being dirtied, stained and damaged; experiences of temporary detentions, surveillance, and harassment after being acquitted in a trial or completion of sentences; emotions such as resentment or distrust; and claims for truth and reparations. These related experiences regarding the detentions and incarceration are still part of everyday life and not only something from the past, particularly in the case of the direct victims.

My analysis suggests that current relationships and experiences of the state in contexts where state violence has been carried out against communities are shaped by the specific lasting effects of this violence on individuals and those communities, current related state processes, and emotions and state affect concerning these experiences. Thus, previous experiences and encounters with the state cannot be overlooked, but rather it is crucial to analyze the specific ways in which they still continue to shape people's everyday lives and state experiences in the 'post-conflict' transition.

I explore emotions and state affect (Krupa and Nugent 2015) regarding the experiences and encounters between campesino victims and the state in the context of the arbitrary detentions, incarceration and their aftermath. I analyze these aspects at different levels. I examine emotions among victims as they are shaped by contact with memories and oral accounts of past encounters with the state and its agents concerning the detentions. By drawing on Ahmed (2004), I approach

these memories and oral accounts as objects which shape current emotions at the individual and collective level.

However, emotions and state affect concerning the detentions are shaped not only by memories of the past, but the lasting consequences of the detentions and other related experiences and encounters with state processes and agents that have taken place after the detentions themselves. The narrative about having the *hoja de vida* dirtied, stained, damaged is not just a memory but a lasting effect for victims of the detentions which still produces emotions such as humiliation, sadness, and anger.

Past experiences of the detentions and incarceration and related current experiences also shape state affect and the emotional engagement with the state among the victims and other members of communities. I draw on the notion of state affect (Krupa and Nugent 2015) to analyze the forms of affective attachment and emotional engagement associated with the state. In line with Navaro-Yashin (2007; 2012), I also show that state documents related to the detentions produce affect among the victims. These experiences of the detentions and incarceration have also shaped how some of their victims interact with state agents and institutions today and their emotional engagement with the state. Emotions such a resentment, anger, or distrust regarding the state are relevant to understand these interactions, even though these relationships and affective attachments have also changed over time.

5.0 Shaping Relationships with the State, Land Restitution and Continuities of Violence in Campesino Communities in the 'Post-conflict' Transition: The Case of La Europa

5.1 Introduction

During the last years of the first decade of the 21st century, the intensity of the armed conflict and political violence in the mountain zone of Montes de María decreased as a result of the dismantling of the FARC organization and other guerrilla organizations in the region and the demobilization of the paramilitary groups. In the following years, the government and other actors began to refer to the region as a 'post-conflict' zone (Ilsa 2012).

In the second decade of the 2000s, state processes centered on the victims of the armed conflict and reparations, including land restitution, also began to be implemented in several regions of Colombia, including the mountain zone of Montes de María. The Law of Victims and Land Restitution, passed by Congress in 2011, promised reparations for victims at the individual and collective level and the restitution of the land for those who were dispossessed or force to abandon their lands during the armed conflict.

In this chapter, I examine continuities of violence as they unfold in everyday life in campesino communities. I also examine how relationships and interactions between these communities and state institutions and officials have been shaped in the 'post-conflict' transition in the region. I show that after the decline of the armed conflict in the region, some campesino communities in the municipality of Ovejas have experienced the continuation of violence, which has taken place mainly through threats made against social leaders and structural violence. At the same time, multiple interactions and encounters between state institutions, bureaucracies and

campesinos and processes of rights claiming have also become part of everyday encounters and experiences of the state in these communities.

The Law of Victims and Land Restitution created opportunities concerning the rights of victims of the armed conflict and has led to a greater state presence in rural areas through institutional processes and bureaucracies that interact with rural inhabitants. However, at the same time, experiences of the state in campesino communities have been shaped by the partial or very slow fulfillment of state promises of reparations and the continuity of precarious living conditions and poverty in rural areas. The seemingly endless waiting for the fulfillment of state promises often increases uncertainty, reinforces the already precarious socio-economic conditions in rural areas, and accentuates images of state abandonment among rural inhabitants.

I argue that the continuity of violence and the institutional efforts to reshape relationships with the state in rural communities and with the victims of the armed conflict have coexisted. This reflects the specific ways in which state institutions have been present in these territories in the 'post-conflict' transition. Increased institutional presence in rural areas and efforts to 'undo' or redress some of the consequences of the armed conflict in the mountain zone take place in a context where substantial change regarding conditions of poverty in rural communities has not occurred, and where the risks and threats faced by social leaders and communities have continued.

In this chapter, I focus on the community of the Finca La Europa as a case study to explore and illustrate these arguments. La Europa[21] is a case in the mountain zone in which several processes converge: land dispossession in 2008, several forms of violence during the escalation of the armed conflict in the region and its aftermath, the organization of the community for the

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[21] In this chapter, sometimes I refer to the Finca La Europa or simply to La Europa. I use these terms interchangeably.

purposes of defending the land and claiming their rights, and multiple interactions with state institutions before and in the context of the process of land restitution that began in 2013. I analyze how relationships with state institutions and officials in this community have been reshaped during the last decade, particularly in the context of the Law of Victims and Land Restitution, at the same time that different instances of violence have continued to unfold in everyday life.

This chapter relies on interviews and informal conversations with members of the community La Europa, interviews with members of human rights organizations which have provided accompaniment to the community, and participant observation in community activities and encounters with state officials. I also relied on documents archived by the community and the files related to the land restitution process assembled by the Unit of Land Restitution. Although this chapter relies mainly on this case study, it is also informed by fieldwork with other rural communities in the municipality of Ovejas.

5.2 The case of the Finca La Europa: political violence and land dispossession

La Europa is a community and a *vereda* located in the rural area of the municipality of Ovejas. It usually takes about 20 minutes to reach the place by motorcycle from the urban area. In my visits to the community, as soon as I left the Troncal Highway and took the unpaved road on my way to the *finca*, I saw the beautiful landscape full of vegetation and the small hills in the surrounding area (Figure 7). The unpaved road that crosses the *finca* and connects the Troncal Highway with the municipality of Chalán is in awful condition.

La Europa used to be a large *finca* (estate) that belonged to a private landowner. One of the eldest campesinos told me that he arrived in La Europa around 1950 and that by that time, more

than 100 people were working there, but they did not own the land. They had to pay a fee to the landowner in order to be able to use the land. They did not have the right to cultivate permanent crops, only *pancoger* crops (subsistence crops) and tobacco. Campesinos had created an agrarian union comprised of members of La Europa and other rural areas in Ovejas.

Figure 7. Finca La Europa sector El Bajo, rural area, Ovejas.

Some dispersed houses and the elementary school can barely be seen in the distance. Photo by the author. December 2017.

Through the agrarian union, campesinos demanded the adjudication of the *finca* by the Colombian Institute for the Agrarian Reform INCORA. According to my interlocutor, many people in the *finca* had been working there for several years and even decades. In 1969, INCORA assigned the *finca en común and proindiviso* to 114 families that had been working there.

La Europa has an area of approximately 1.321 hectares and is divided into five sectors. When one arrives at the sector El Bajo, the main entrance to the *finca*, there is a metallic fence which members of the community installed some years ago to protect themselves in the context of the conflict over the land with the personnel of the Arepas Don Juancho company. This company purchased the land illegally in 2008.

On the left side of the main entrance, there is a school where children in elementary education attend. There is another school in the sector of Los Muchachos, which was the first school in La Europa built in the 1980s as a result of campesinos' claims to the local government. Students in high school have to travel to the urban area to receive classes. Many of the houses are in the sector El Bajo, but others are dispersed across other sectors. Like many other rural areas in Ovejas, the Finca La Europa does not have an aqueduct or potable water supply but relies on two *pozos de agua* (water reservoirs) and a stream crossing the *finca*.

In the sector El Bajo, there is a community room where women and men often meet to discuss issues of relevance for the community and occasionally meet with state officials or members of NGOs. La Europa is an active and well-organized community. Sometimes its members also organize meetings with members of other rural communities of the municipality and even other municipalities of Montes de María.

The violence in the Finca La Europa did not start with the dispossession of the land by the Arepas Don Juancho company. Instead, the dispossession can be seen as a continuation of the violence experienced during the most critical period of the armed conflict. According to campesinos from the *finca*, between 1992 and 1995, the first assassinations of leaders and inhabitants during the armed conflict occurred in La Europa. In those years, several members of the community and other *veredas* appeared in lists circulated by paramilitary groups already

establishing a presence in the region. In 1994, one of the community leaders was forcibly displaced and relocated with his family in Cartagena, which was followed by the displacement of other families in the following years.

Although between 1994 and 2001, women and men living in La Europa were exposed to the presence of legal and illegal armed actors that moved around the area, the most critical moment came in 2001. According to campesinos, due to the constant confrontations between guerrillas and the military in La Europa's highlands where the former used to cultivate and the assassination of two members of the community by illegal armed groups in 2001, around 80 families were forcibly displaced to the urban area of Ovejas and even other cities.[22]

Six families stayed in the Finca La Europa.[23] The other campesinos forcibly displaced left the municipality or stayed in the urban area. In the following years, the inhabitants who stayed in the urban area continued traveling to the rural areas several times a week to take care of agricultural activities, known as '*retornos laborales*'. In this way, many members of the community resisted abandoning and losing the land despite the intensity of the armed conflict in the region. Others were displaced to cities and did not return to the *finca* for several years, while a few others never returned. Among the forms of victimization in La Europa during the period from 1992-2008 that can be mentioned include 15 assassinations and three disappearances, burning of houses, forced displacement, and some arbitrary detentions by state agents.

Once the armed conflict's intensity decreased in the municipality and the region around 2007, some families began returning to La Europa while others continued doing '*retornos laborales*.' Permanent returns were voluntary and without accompaniment by state institutions.

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[22] Commonly, families in this region have between four or six members, and sometimes even more, since it is not uncommon for them to include a grandparent or some younger brothers or sisters.
[23] Some campesinos mentioned six and others ten.

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The purchase of most *parcelas* of the *finca* by the Arepas Don Juancho company took place in 2008 when families were still returning.

5.2.1 Dispossession of La Europa and complicity or lack of protection by institutions

The dispossession of La Europa by the Arepas Don Juancho[24] company occurred when the more evident manifestations of violence related to the armed conflict had significantly decreased. The dispossession of the Finca La Europa took place in the context of the land massive purchases in some municipalities in Montes de María.

During 2008 and the following years, massive purchases of land occurred in the region, and thousands of hectares of land ended up in the hands of private companies. The purchased land became plantations of forest crops, especially teak, in some municipalities of Montes de María, including some areas of Ovejas, as part of an afforestation project developed by the Reforestadora del Caribe, from Cementos Argos S.A (Ilsa 2012; Ojeda et al. 2015). In most cases, these companies did not purchase the land directly from campesinos but from individuals or third parties who had purchased the land from these rural inhabitants a few months or years before.

The land was often bought for low prices, sometimes using coercion (Tenthoff 2011) and other mechanisms (Ilsa 2012; GMH 2010).[25] The massive purchases often involved land that was previously abandoned or dispossessed from rural inhabitants during the armed conflict (Ilsa 2012).

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[24] Initially, the company was only known as Arepas Don Juancho. However, later it was discovered that the company's legal representative, who signed the purchases agreements of the *parcelas*, was associated with another company called Pajumar S.A., which was registered in the department of Antioquia in 2008. Apparently, Arepas Don Juancho belonged to Pajumar S.A.

[25] Land dispossession in the context of the massive land purchases is only one modality of dispossession in Montes de María. Paramilitary groups were also responsible for the dispossession of the land of campesinos in the region (GMH, 2010).

A significant part of the land purchased had been assigned to campesinos by INCORA decades before, during the struggle for the land. The land purchases also took place in a context where 'post-conflict' development began to be promoted by the national government, which invited private companies to invest in the region.

In Land Restitution processes in the region involving these cases, companies such as Cementos Argos S.A. have tried to show their good faith regarding the land purchases. In one case, the company argued that they arrived in the region "during the 'post-conflict' to socially and economically deprived zones due to the armed conflict in previous years." They arrived in these zones and purchased the land since "the national government and state policies called on public and private entities to focus their attention in these zones" and to invest there to contribute to their social and economic recovery (Tribunal Superior de Antioquia 2016:5). However, some tribunals have rejected this argument in cases of land restitution involving these companies, as I describe in more detail later.

The Finca La Europa was purchased by other company known as Arepas Don Juancho. Unlike other cases of land massive purchases in the region, there were not large plantations of teak or other crops were not established, even though the company representative had stated that its main activity was the cultivation and processing of corn.

In 2008, the Arepas Don Juancho company arrived in the region to purchase the Finca La Europa. In that year, the representative of that company and some women and men from the *finca* signed purchase agreements in the notary of Ovejas. Apparently, these agreements did not become public deeds or were not registered in the Oficina de Instrumentos Públicos. However, based on these purchase agreements, the personnel of Arepas Don Juancho occupied several *parcelas* of the *finca* in the following years.

In a meeting with some community members and another person who has provided accompaniment to the community, they said:

> In 2008, Arepas Don Juancho appeared, buying the land… we were almost displaced again, because of the Don Juancho company. We did not know who these people were. During that time, they used to have guns […]

Another campesino talked about the moment he knew that the *finca* was being purchased:

> I was in Ovejas [urban area] to sell yuca and bring corn and knew that Arepas Don Juancho was buying La Europa. I saw a lot of people [in the notary office]. When I entered the place, they asked me if I was going to sell [the parcela]. I said no, I came to see if I appear in any documents. They started looking and said you are here [in some documents], bring me the *cédula* [Colombian ID]. I said I did not come here to sell; I just came to ask… we started thinking about what we were going to do. Then, we contacted another member of La Europa, who was displaced in Cartagena, and he contacted a lawyer, but the latter did not work with us for a long time [However, he attended the first meetings between the community and Arepas Don Juancho] […]

After the campesinos spoke, the person who has provided accompaniment to the process of La Europa told us:

> When we arrived here [to the finca] in 2008, I observed fear in campesinos, people were afraid, and we said this case needs legal consultancy […]

The purchase of the Finca La Europa took place in the context of extreme vulnerability of campesinos due to the violence experienced in previous years, as illustrated in the narratives presented above. Even though the instances of violence related to the armed conflict had significantly decreased by those years, there was still fear among rural inhabitants. Also, the effects of years of political violence in rural communities were still very present.

Members of the community La Europa were not passive, and organized themselves to take the necessary actions to claim their rights to the land. This is reflected in some letters sent to several state institutions in 2008. These letters, which are part of the documents still kept by the community, reported the irregular purchases of *parcelas* of the *finca* and the pressure of the company's personnel on members of the community to leave the land. The letters were sent to the

regional office of INCODER and the Ministry of Agriculture, with copies also being sent to several other regional and local authorities. Some of these documents are also included in the Land Restitution files assembled by the Unit of Land Restitution.

Women and men from the Finca La Europa narrated that during the purchase of the *finca* and the first stages of defense of the land, some officials had been protecting the company, and not the interests of campesinos. It is also reflected in some letters members of the community sent to institutions during those years. Other officials were indifferent to the situation of community members. They did not take any actions to protect these campesinos who had been displaced during the armed conflict, and in consequence, were a population subject to special protection. During this period, relationships with state agents were characterized by distrust. A campesino told me:

> At the beginning, the Colombian Institute of Rural Development, INCODER, denied information to us. We went there to look for information, and they did not provide that. INCODER gave information to Arepas Don Juancho. We got the documents through the latter… The notary was also corrupt… They [people from Arepas Don Juancho] were there even until 8 pm buying [the *parcelas*].

Campesinos' narratives about some state agents not protecting them but rather aligning with the interest of the company's personnel are not surprising. Some studies have shown that dispossession and abandonment of land in Colombia occurred, in some cases, with "the participation of local authorities (majors, councilmen, notaries, registrars) and agrarian institutions, such as INCODER, which established alliances with agents involved in dispossession" (García et al. 2019:310).

According to interlocutors, Arepas Don Juancho signed purchase agreements regarding 82 parcelas, out of the 114 in the original deed for land La Europa.[26] The company's personnel

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[26] The accurate term is *cuotas partes*, 1/114 *cuotas partes*, since the original deed of the *finca* was still *in proindiviso*. Although campesinos never received individual deeds, they have worked in specific *parcelas*.

contacted the individuals who appeared in the original deed, or in some cases their relatives when the person had already died, and signed purchase agreements with many of them. Some individuals included in the original deed had lost their rights to the land.

In 1978 INCORA revoked the land adjudication to 37 campesinos because they had abandoned their land in the Finca La Europa years before, and they did not provide any justification. In spite of this, Arepas Don Juancho signed purchase agreements with the majority of these campesinos, who had not been living in La Europa for many years. Among the remaining people in the original deed, some signed purchase agreements, while others refused to do so.

The campesinos who organized to defend the land were mostly possessors of the *parcelas*. Some of them are relatives of campesinos included in the original deed and have been living and working in the *finca* for decades or were even born there. Others arrived to live and work in the *finca* several decades or years before the arrival of Arepas Don Juancho. Some campesinos in the original deed, who were living in the *finca* or in the urban area when the purchase of the *parcelas* took place, also participated in the community's organization to defend the land. According to interlocutors, the prices in the purchase agreement in the case of La Europa were far less than fair.

5.2.2 Conflict with Arepas Don Juancho and other forms of violence[27]

After the decline of the armed conflict in the municipality of Ovejas campesinos from La Europa continued experiencing different forms of violence in everyday life. At the end of 2008, the president of the first committee created by members of la Europa to defend the land was

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[27] This and the following section are based on documents written and sent by the community to state institutions, denunciations by the MOVICE, denunciations to the *Fiscalía*, an exercise of memory with community members, and some individual interviews. These documents were collected from the community of La Europa and MOVICE Sucre.

assassinated. He had previously received threats and was the last person of the *finca* murdered. The authorities never established who killed the community leader. However, community members suspect that his death was related to the defense of the land since he was involved in the community's organization.

In the following years, the conflict between Arepas Don Juancho and the community was exacerbated, and different forms of violence against the campesinos occurred. In 2011, the situation became critical when the company's workers occupied several *parcelas* of La Europa. In January of that year, the company's administrator showed up with guns and dogs in some *parcelas*, requesting the campesinos to pay for the lost wages due to their presence on what he claimed to be the property of Arepas Don Juancho. During the same month, a house located in the sector of Las Peñitas was burned. The community had built the house after the voluntary return.

In February, one member of the community was grazing cows in the sector Ahuyamal when five armed men arrived and told him to stop working because that land had been purchased. In March, the company's workers arrived in the sector El Bajo to remove the fences of the *finca* to build new ones. The police arrived in the *finca*, but together with the administrator and the legal representative of Arepas Don Juancho. Members of La Europa thought that the policemen were offering protection to the company's members and not to the inhabitants of the *finca*. In November, members of the community reported to the *Fiscalía* that some *ranchos* (type of rural house) in the sector of Las Peñitas and Ahuyamal were destroyed. Inhabitants of La Europa had decided to build 40 *ranchos,* with their own resources, for some of the families that had returned to the *finca*.

Several other similar incidents continued to take place during the following two years. For example, in February 2012, the community's *rancho* was destroyed. It had been recently built to store the products of the harvest. During that year other *ranchos* were also burned. In January

2013, there was a fire in the sector of Ahuyamal, where the workers of Arepas Don Juancho were located, affecting several hectares of the ecological reserve. During those years, some members of the community also received some threats related to the defense of the land. All these incidents were reported to the *Fiscalía* and other authorities. Some of these complaints and documents are still kept by the community.

According to some interlocutors, the intensity of the conflict between the community and Arepas Don Juancho decreased around the beginning of the land restitution process in 2013. However, in 2014 one campesino was injured in a confrontation with the administrator of the *parcelas* occupied by the company when the administrator shot him. Fortunately, the campesino survived and recovered in the following months while the administrator left the *finca*.

In the following years, some members of La Europa, especially leaders, have received anonymous death threats related to the defense of the land, often through messages on their cellphones. When the complaints have been taken to the authorities, those behind the threats have not been identified. Death threats have been made from time to time not only against some campesinos in La Europa, but also against other social leaders in Ovejas and the broader region.

5.2.3 The continuum of violence after the decline of armed conflict in the region

What was considered by the national government as the beginning of the end of the armed conflict in the region did not translate into the absence of violence in everyday life of campesinos living in La Europa. Instead, other forms of violence resulting from the conflict with Arepas Don Juancho and threats to some community members began to occur. The more visible manifestations of political violence, such as displacement, assassinations, massacres, forced disappearances, and combat, had dramatically decreased around 2008. However, the effects of these forms of violence

on communities were still present through fear, the breakdown of the social fabric and hopelessness.

The following years saw localized conflicts and forms of violence affecting some communities, such as those related to land dispossession in the case of La Europa, and to the massive land purchases in other communities in Ovejas (Tenthoff 2011; Ilsa 2012). I refer to localized conflicts and instances of violence in contrast with the context of generalized political violence during the escalation of the armed conflict affecting whole populations in rural areas.

Threats against social leaders have also been part of the 'post-conflict' transition not only in the case of community leaders from La Europa but also other leaders in the municipality such as members of the *Mesa de Víctimas* (representative of victims at the local level) created by the Law of Victims. Although during recent years death threats against social have been made from time to time, these threats have continued occurring in the 'post-conflict' transition even today.

Some campesinos suspect that some of these threats are related to the continuity of armed organizations in the region that emerged after the demobilization of the paramilitary groups. Post-demobilization armed groups still have a presence in some municipalities of Montes de María. In a report of the *Sistema de Alertas Tempranas* (System of Early Alerts) in 2012, the Defensoría del Pueblo reported that nine communities in the rural area of Ovejas, including La Europa, were at risk in the context of processes of land claiming, defense of the territory, and resistance regarding the conflict for the land. This took place in a context where campesino economies were in opposition to the interest of the new owners of the land in the region and the model of development (Defensoría del Pueblo 2012).

These findings are in line with the emphasis on the continuation of violence in the aftermath of political violence and 'post-conflict' contexts, as pointed out by several scholars (Richards

2005; Shneiderman and Snellinger 2014; Rojas, 2008; Moodie 2012; Olson 2013). According to Rojas (2008), anthropological studies show that "violence has continued as a permanent, even defining feature of 'post-conflict' societies in Latin America (2008:254).

Other scholars propose the category of the continuum of violence to refer to how manifestations of violence in 'peacetimes' are connected with forms of violence in 'wartime contexts' and how violence could linger in peacetimes in different ways (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004; Bourgois 2004). For example, in the case of El Salvador, Bourgois (2004) sees the continuum of violence in war and peace and the connections between the transition from political violence during the armed conflict to "delinquent and interpersonal violence during peacetime in the neoliberal context of ongoing structural and symbolic violence" (2004:428).

However, the issue here is not only whether violence has or not continued, but also in what ways it has continued and how it is connected to the previous context, specifically the intense period of political violence. In the case of the Finca La Europa, the violence associated with land dispossession was perpetrated not only by the company's workers but also by some state officials. Some of the latter acted as accomplices in the legalization process of the purchase agreements of the land despite the irregularities involved and the violence that took place in La Europa during the escalation of the armed conflict, whereas others were unable to protect these inhabitants from the land dispossession.

While at first glance, this violence could be seen as disconnected from the armed conflict, this is not the case. The concept of the continuum of violence proposed by Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2004) is useful to understanding the connections between different forms of violence. One interpretation of this continuum alludes to how forms of political, structural, symbolic, and everyday violence are often connected, reinforced, translated, produced and reproduced by each

other. The continuum also refers to the connections between violence in peacetimes and wartime contexts, as already mentioned.

The land dispossession of the Finca La Europa was not disconnected from the political violence of the armed conflict (Darby 2012; Hinton 2002; Bourgois 2001), and at the same time, it is connected to forms of structural violence (Farmer and Rylko-Bauer 2016). On the one hand, according to the definition of structural violence of Farmer and Rylko, the violence of these forms of land dispossession can also be seen as related to the violence of "injustice and inequity" embedded in "cultural and political-economic structures" such as neoliberalism and poverty. As pointed out by these authors, these structures "reproduce violence by marginalizing people and communities, constraining their capabilities and agency, assaulting their dignity, and sustaining inequalities" (2019:47).

On the other hand, this violence is not unlinked to the armed conflict but rather a continuation of it. Rural inhabitants in the municipality and the community connect both of them. The political violence of the armed conflict paved the way for the massive land purchases and this specific form of land dispossession in Ovejas and other municipalities of Montes de María. Not only had the land purchased from campesinos been forcibly abandoned or dispossessed during the armed conflict in rural areas, but fear was still present in the context where the illegal purchase of La Europa and other massive purchases of the land took place.

Some court decisions of land restitution involving other cases in the context of the massive purchases of land in Carmen de Bolívar, a municipality of Montes de María, have recognized that these purchases took place in a context of violence. This is illustrated by one case of land restitution where the land claimant was a campesino who sold the land in the context of the massive purchases. Concerning this case, the tribunal pointed out that although the Cementos Argos S.A.

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company purchased the land in 2010 from previous buyers, who in turn had bought the land directly from the individual in 2008, it is clear that these previous buyers took advantage of the situation of violence in the area. According to the tribunal, it is not difficult to conclude that "fear and intimidation" was present in the context in which the campesino sold the land. The tribunal also pointed out that the company was not prudent and did not analyze the previous purchases of the land, which was expected considering the context of violence in which they took place (Tribunal Superior de Antioquia 2016:70-71).

Regarding state officials who allowed or facilitated the purchase agreements of the land of the Finca La Europa or did not protect the campesinos, their action or inaction produced violent effects on communities and individuals. Although bureaucratic practices are not often depicted as involving forms of violence, several authors have examined the intersections between them (Graeber 2015; Cabot 2014; Oliver de Sardan 2009).

The assassination and threats against social leaders are forms of violence that have continued to occur in the country and the region in the 'post-conflict' transition. In other regions of the country, the continuity of violence has manifested through the assassination and forced disappearance of social leaders and human rights defenders, which have been significant in the period after the signature of the peace agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC guerrillas. In Montes de María, some social leaders have also been assassinated during the last few years, although to a lesser extent than in other regions of the country. However, death threats against social leaders have been common in the region for several years.

The category 'social leader' (*líder social*) refers to the person who "leads, coordinates or supports processes or activities of collective character that positively impacts community life,

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improves living conditions or contributes to building the social fabric" (IEPRI et al. 2018:9). Social leaders are recognized by their communities for their role and activities they performed as leaders.

5.3 Reshaping relationships with the state before and after the Law of Victims and Land Restitution

In this section, I focus on the second part of the argument presented in the introduction concerning how relationships with the state have been reshaped in the 'post-conflict' transition, particularly in the context of the Law of Victims and Land Restitution. As shown in the previous section, institutions did not protect campesinos of La Europa during the dispossession of the *finca* and the first stage of their defense of the land. However, relationships with state institutions and officials began changing over time in the context of the defense of the land by the campesinos, the presence and accompaniment of human rights organizations, the interaction with other state officials, and the Law of Victims and Land Restitution. In a conversation with one campesino he told me:

> At the beginning, INCODER, the notary of Ovejas and the mayor's office of the municipality seemed to be in favor of Arepas Don Juancho. The notary allowed the *compraventa* (purchase agreement) of the land, even though most campesinos had been displaced from the *finca* due to the armed conflict… we looked for help in the major's office, but we did not find any response. Since the institutions of the municipality did not pay attention to us, then we looked for the help of the institutions in Bogotá. There was a state official from the Ministry of Agriculture who helped us a lot… there were some state officials who helped us […]

> In the beginning, the police and the military also seemed to protect the company. However, when other institutions, such as human rights organizations and the Defensoría del pueblo began supporting the campesinos, the police and the military began also changing… the human rights [organizations] helped us a lot; they almost moved to the *finca*. When a new mayor was elected in Ovejas he also began looking at us differently. He opened some spaces for us, the committee of transitional justice was created [with the Law of Victims],

the committee of prevention. Then things began improving, in the sense that they recognized that there was dispossession.

Most people [from La Europa], who had not been included in the Unique Register of Victims, were registered. With the creation of the Law 1448 [Law of Victims], campesino victims were included in that law. With the protection of the Defensoría del Pueblo and the human rights organizations, the *personero* from the municipality also began playing an important role regarding the victims in the region. We also reached an agreement with the police and the military to improve the security situation in the *finca*. Since 2013, the military began staying permanently in the *finca*, and we also developed some self-protection measures at the community level.

As suggested by the campesino, interactions between campesinos of La Europa and officials were different depending on institutions and state officials involved. While these inhabitants perceived that officials at the local level were protecting the company's interests, they found support and help from some state officials at the national and regional levels.

My interlocutors in Ovejas often imagine and refer to local state officials as corrupt (Gupta 1995) and, at best, just indifferent to the needs of communities (Herzfeld 1993). However, it does not mean that communities do not ask local officials to provide public services and goods or get responses from them. Sometimes some institutions and state officials from the regional level are also seen as corrupt or indifferent to the needs of communities.

The accompaniment by human rights organizations such as the Movement of Victims of State Crimes Sucre (MOVICE) and El Comité Permanente por la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos (CPDH) was also critical in the first stages trying to resolve the conflict with Arepas Don Juancho. Other international organizations such as Brigades International (PBI) have also provided accompaniment to the community during recent years. In an interview with a member of MOVICE the person told me:

We arrived at the *finca* La Europa around 2010. We [MOVICE and members of the community] began having meetings with the *institucionalidad*[28] [institutions]; we began meeting with the governor' office, with the major's office, with INCODER and other institutions because of the conflict with Arepas Don Juancho. We identified that the problem was legal dispossession and with complaisance of authorities. We wanted to make visible the situation. We began coordinating meetings with the institutions and demanded the conformation of an interinstitutional committee to handle the case of La Europa. State officials from the national level also participated in that committee.

This helped to make progress regarding the process. It became visible. We also denounced the irregularities. That helped to improve the conflict with Arepas Don Juancho. They realized that the community was not alone. The previous administration and the governor's office improved the road, they built the school, they brought computers to the community, and they took care of water maintenance… It was a response from the *institucionalidad*, but because there was pressure on them and the case became visible (Interview with member of MOVICE, Sincelejo, July, 2018).

In 2011, some meetings between INCODER, members of the community, MOVICE, and several representatives of state institutions took place to address the conflict between the company's workers and the community. In the context of these meetings, leaders of the community not only claimed their rights to the land but also requested that attention be paid to their socio-economic rights. The community's organization was not only important to articulating the claims made to state institutions but also to handling the conflict with the company. As one campesino told me:

We began to organize because we could not allow them [the company] to take the land away from us, our families' livelihood… we had the accompaniment of the human rights organizations, and we organized *colectivos* [a group of people working together] in order to work on the land that Arepas Don Juancho was occupying. Since the company's workers were armed, we began organizing *colectivos*, to be together as a community, to work together in agricultural and other activities. We organized *colectivos* of even 60 people, so we did not feel afraid… sometimes they came when we were working together [in agricultural activities]. They used to ask us who the leader was. We used to reply we all are the leaders.

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[28] People often refer to the institutions and state officials from the regional and local level as the *institucionalidad*.

The *colectivos* (collectives) are an example of the self-protection strategies used by inhabitants of La Europa. The campesinos' response when they were asked about their leader also illustrates these forms of self-protection mechanisms at the community level, in a context where leaders are the ones persecuted and threatened as a form of intimidation to whole communities.

The Asociación de Campesinos and Campesinas de La Finca La Europa was created to defend the land. New *ranchos* were built in *colectivos*; this continues to be a common practice used by members of La Europa and other rural communities. For example, during my fieldwork, the community organized a *colectivo* to demarcate La Europa from the finca La Catalina. Women and men agreed to do that work collectively, not only to demarcate the Finca La Europa from La Catalina but also to promote the integration of the community.

While men went to demarcate the highlands of the *finca*, women stayed in the community room talking and preparing the lunch. I stayed with the women. At the end of the journey, we had lunch together. Working in *colectivos* was not only a way to diminish the risk when running into the personnel of Arepas Don Juancho; it has also been important to rebuilding the social ties in the community and to creating conditions conducive to building peace in everyday life in the *finca* in the aftermath of the intense armed conflict.

Around 2012, the Marine Infantry also began to have a permanent presence in La Europa. During fieldwork, I saw the soldiers mainly in the main unpaved road connecting the Troncal Highway with Chalán, when I was going to La Europa or Chalán and Colosó. This road, which crosses the *finca*, connects Ovejas with those municipalities.

The community also received a tractor, the school and the road were improved, and water maintenance in the *finca* was also performed. Although these measures helped to temporarily improve the living conditions of inhabitants in La Europa, they are only palliative considering the

precary of socio-economic conditions of rural populations in the region. Also, campesinos

mentioned that not all the commitments were fulfilled, such as the commitment to provide

communication equipment they requested for the self-protection measures developed by the

community. The campesinos' efforts have also had many other results, such as the construction

ranchos.

Figure 8. Community room in the Finca La Europa, Ovejas.

The communities of Montes de María say yes to Peace. Photo by the author. November 2017.

Relationships between the community and state institutions and officials began to change

before the case for land restitution was considered in 2013. Several officials took some actions to

protect the community and address some of their needs. Measures regarding the protection of

community members and assistance as displaced populations also began to be discussed, even though measures for the protection of displaced people had existed for a long time before the Law of Victims and Land Restitution. Officials' responses were also the result of the pressure of human rights organizations, the community's actions claiming their rights to state institutions, and a focus on the victims of the armed conflict since 2011.

In an ethnography about Guatemala, Stolen (2005) finds that relationships between returned refugees, specifically peasants, and the state are not only those of antagonism and resistance, which was characteristic of the years of exile, but also of "active engagement to become included in the Guatemalan state" and "renegotiate their citizen conditions" in the post-peace accords period (Stolen 2005:146). Rather than expecting to be included in the state as in the case examined by Stolen, campesinos from la Europa have tried to make effective their status as citizens by claiming the fulfillment of their rights to the land and socio-economic rights, broadly recognized in the Colombian Constitution of 1991.

During this period, the efforts regarding the case of La Europa focused on proposing solutions to resolve the conflict between Arepas Don Juancho and the community and to addressing campesinos' claims to rights. Officials were also planning to transfer the *parcelas* in La Europa that belonged to INCODER[29] to campesinos occupying them. However, in late 2012, INCODER suspended the formalization of the *parcelas* and transferred the case to the Land Restitution Unit to resolve possible requests of land restitution under the Law of Victims and Land Restitution. This decision was taken given the situation of displacement, violence, and alteration of public order that took place in the zone where La Europa is located.

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[29] Since INCORA had been liquidated, these *parcelas* were transferred to INCODER in 2011. These are the *parcelas* that were revoked by INCORA in 1978 since campesinos had abandoned them.

5.3.1 The Law of Victims and Land Restitution

In the municipality of Ovejas, the implementation of the Law of Victims and Land Restitution is often criticized by victims in daily conversations due to the extreme slowness and sometimes scarce progress concerning the processes of individual and collective reparations and land restitution. However, at the same time, some campesinos said that the Law of Victims has also been important for the victims of the armed conflict. One interlocutor in Ovejas told me: "the implementation of the Law 1448 was key because, through the Mesas de Víctimas at the municipal level, several communities and leaders began mobilizing around the Law. Communities also had the accompaniment of the mesas the victims to claim their rights. Although the law has not been completely effective, there were significant advances regarding the recognition of the armed conflict and its victims."

In her study of land restitution in Colombia, Meertens (2019) points out that the status of victims of the armed conflict has "become a means -legally and socially- for enhancing new forms of citizenship and social protest, particularly after their formal recognition" in the Law of Victims (p. 10). In my fieldwork, I observed that the status of victims has been important to claiming rights in rural communities in a context in which the victims have become the focus of policies implemented in these territories.

However, the case of the Finca La Europa also shows that claims to rights are not only mediated by the status of victims, but what is also part of historical processes of claiming rights in campesino communities in order to satisfy their basic needs and guarantee sufficient living conditions. I observed that sometimes rural communities use their status as victims to gain the attention of local and regional authorities and claim their rights, including socio-economic rights. I particularly observed this in the case of the communities under processes of collective

reparations, which mobilize their status as victims to claim their rights to reparations and demand the improvement of living conditions and socio-economic rights.

5.3.2 Land restitution and the slow fulfillment of promises of reparation

The community did not oppose the decision of INCODER to transfer the case of La Europa to the Unit of Land Restitution. In the context of the Law of Victims and Land Restitution, the case was treated as a possible case of land dispossession and not merely as a conflict between the company and the community.

Figure 9. Asociación de Campesinos Finca La Europa, Ovejas.

The land is not bought, the land is not sold, the land is cultivated and defended, for a dignified return. Photo by the author. September, 2017.

Especially in the early stages, the process created expectations and hope among women and men regarding the state's promises of Land Restitution. Campesinos expected that, in this way, their situation regarding their rights to the land and the dispossession of the land were going to be resolved more quickly.

However, women and men in La Europa soon realized that the land restitution process was not going to be straightforward. While 19 campesinos were accepted as land claimants in the process of restitution, the rest were not included. In the files of the land restitution processes of La Europa, assembled by the Land Restitution Unit, the cases accepted as land claimants were those individuals who were unable to continue with their agricultural activities or to return to their *parcelas* because Arepas Don Juancho occupied them. The rest were not included as land claimants since according to the Land Restitution Unit they did not lose the possession of the land, insofar they either never left the *finca* or continued doing '*retornos laborales*'. Unexpectedly, they were included in the process but as *oponentes* (the opponents to the claims of restitution), the same situation of Arepas Don Juancho, which is also considered an opponent. This caused confusion among campesinos who even today do not understand that decision since they consider themselves as land claimants.

Since 2013 several encounters between officials of the Land Restitution Unit, and other state agents, and campesinos of La Europa have taken place as part of the restitution process, especially during the first stages of that process. For example, there were meetings between officials and community members to gather sworn statements, to gather evidence to establish whether there was an abandonment of the land or dispossession in the *finca*, and to document the cases. The construction of the historical context of La Europa and an evaluation of the impact of

the armed conflict in the community also took place in these meetings. Several of these meetings took place in the community. Most of the information gathered in these meetings is included in the files of Land Restitution process assembled by the Land Restitution Unit. Over time, the physical presence of these state officials became sporadic since the process is being resolved in the courts, specifically in the Tribunal of Cartagena.

The processes of Land restitution not only promised reparations for those who were forced to abandon the land or became victims of land dispossession but also brought new bureaucratic apparatuses that have been present in rural areas and interacting with inhabitants of those areas. This is also the case of the Unit of Victims in charge of individual and collective reparations. In Sucre, both offices are located in Sincelejo, but meetings often take place in rural communities. Over the years, I have attended several meetings between officials of the Unit of Victims and communities under processes of collective reparations in rural areas.

I often saw state officials from these and other institutions wearing vests, with the institution's name on them, to make clear that they were representing the state. This is a way to make visible the presence of state institutions and bureaucracies in rural communities. However, sometimes rural inhabitants perceived this presence as physical but not necessarily as a presence that translated into concrete results, or at least not at the expected pace. Rural inhabitants sometimes refer to the presence of these new bureaucracies in rural areas as *desfile de chalecos* ('parade of vest').

Members of La Europa and especially the leaders go from time to time to the Land Restitution office in Sincelejo to see if there are any updates regarding the restitution process. Women and men organized two *plantones* (public demonstrations) in front of the Tribunal in

Cartagena to demand a response regarding the process of land restitution. After more than six years, there is still no decision regarding the process.

During my visits to the *finca*, expectations and hopes regarding the land restitution process were more pessimistic among some members of the community than others. Not only there was not yet a final decision by the Tribunal Superior de Cartagena (High Court of Cartagena) regarding the case, but the process was declared null. Some notices were omitted in 2013, some death certificates were missing, and it was necessary to clarify other issues regarding the opponents' *parcelas*.

In a visit in September 2017, one campesino from the *finca* told me that they have to gather evidence again and to clarify some issues. He said that he had already lost faith in the processes, and we talked about how it was difficult to understand how the process was declared null after four years. In a conversation, another campesina expressed her concerns: "I know this is a difficult case, but at this point, there should be an answer not a nullity of the processes. I do not have the same faith as at the beginning. I am afraid of losing because of the [declaration of] nullity. I do not see any clarity in the decisions of the judges. I do not see consistently that they are pulling us back in the process [of land restitution] … However, we should continue the struggle."

This situation caused concerns in some women and men who began wondering if the tribunal was going to give one part of the *finca* to the company. There was no information indicating what decision the tribunal could take, but the slowness of the process and the nullity decision stimulated these concerns and rumors among campesinos.

In October 2017, the lawyer of CPDH representing most of the community members visited La Europa to explain the decision of nullity. These decisions are often very technical and not easy for ordinary campesinos to understand. A two-day journey was scheduled with

community members to gather part of the information requested by the Court. I attended and collaborated with this activity. Some women and men attended that day while others showed up the following day. Not all campesinos attended. On a typical day, they would work on agricultural activities in their *parcelas* in the morning. However, most of them made an effort to go to the community room to narrate their stories and bring the documents they had. Some of them are tired after all these years of waiting for a decision. Others still have hope despite the difficulties.

In the meeting, one member of MOVICE explained to the campesinos that it was necessary to gather the stories explaining how they acquired the possession of the land and other relevant information. Two people were gathering the stories. I also helped to collect some of them. We asked about the date of arrival to the finca, when the person began working on the *parcela*, the information about displacement and return, how long they have had the possession of the *parcela*, and information about the adjacent parcelas. We spent the whole day on that activity. Most women and men have lived in la Europa for decades, and some were even born there.

The following day we continued gathering more stories and also documents people had such as birth certificates, sworn declarations, maps of the *parcelas*, and others requested by the Court, such as death certificates. One campesino commented that they had already turned in those documents and the declarations years ago when the process began. Some campesinos did not turn in the documents, and a few others did not even show up. I noticed that some members of the community felt exhausted and have been losing hope in the process due to its excessive slowness and limited results.

The previous description illustrates some aspects that are important for understanding the current relationships between campesino communities and state institutions in the context of the state processes providing reparations to the victims of the armed conflict. Some members of the

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community have become skeptical about the process of land restitution despite the high expectations created by the Law of Victims and Land Restitution in rural communities. The slowness of the process, the lack of clarity of the decisions taken by the judges and other officials, and the endless waiting involved in the process creates uncertainty among members of the community.

In the case of La Europa and other rural inhabitants in Ovejas, the promises and expectations created by the policies promising reparations and justice in the post-conflict transition have been only partially fulfilled or even unfulfilled. There is an ongoing process of land restitution, but there are no results yet after more than six years of waiting. The case of the Finca la Europa may be more complicated than many other cases of land restitution in the municipality, especially those only involving conflicts between campesinos, but the process has been perceived by the community as extremely slow.

After the documentation requested by the tribunal was gathered, campesinos and the lawyer sent it to the Land Restitution Unit in Sincelejo. Before that, officials from that office had visited the community to gather other information concerning some of the parcelas of opponents and to take measures of some of them to respond to the tribunal's request. Months passed after that, and men and women in the community still did not know what was happening within these offices. In my follow up visit to Ovejas, in August 2019, one campesino told me that the process of La Europa finally returned to the Tribunal of Cartagena, after almost one year in the Land Restitution office. Nobody knows how long it will take for the judges specialized in Land Restitution to make a final decision.

In his ethnography of the poor in welfare offices and other state agencies in urban settings in Argentina, Auyero (2012) proposes the concept of patients of the state and the politics of

waiting. The author argues that the waiting of the poor, when relating with the state, is a form of everyday political domination since in making the poor wait, the "state reinforces the uncertainty and the arbitrariness that is already present in poor people's daily lives" (p. 20). The endless delay exacerbates the state of emergency in which they live. The author points out that the manner in which poor people experience their waiting points to the overall mode of relating to the state, which he called the patient model. Although "they are agents, in their interactions with the state, their sense of agency is minimal to nonexistent" (p. 153).

Auyero's analysis is useful for understanding some dimensions of campesinos' endless waiting regarding the resolution of the process of land restitution of La Europa, and especially the effects of this waiting in reinforcing the uncertainty and already precarious conditions faced by these inhabitants. While the members of the community continue waiting for a decision of the tribunal, the process of land restitution continue producing effects in their everyday life by putting them in a kind of state of suspension. For example, while land formalization processes are also taking place in Ovejas, the *parcelas* under restitution processes cannot be formalized before there is a decision of the judges. There are several other communities in this situation in Ovejas. One official from Human Rights United Nations, in an informal conversation, told me that they work with prioritized communities and that La Europa is one of them. However, they have not begun the work they want to do with the community because the tribunal has not made a decision concerning the land restitution process, and they do not want to create false expectations.

In this context, while it cannot be denied that policies of land restitution and collective reparations have led to a greater presence of state processes and officials in rural areas, and that relationships between rural communities and the state have also been reshaped, this has not always translated into a more positive view of these state processes. Campesinos often find themselves in

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the middle of bureaucratic procedures, meetings, discussions, documents, encounters with officials, and workshops, as illustrated above. While all this implies time and emotional investment in these processes, in the end, the delivery of the promises made by the state is very slow to the point that sometimes people perceive that nothing or very little has been done. However, they have to continue waiting. In this way, campesinos sometimes feel trapped in these state processes. Little is delivered in comparison to what is promised. People often evaluate these processes in terms of results and concrete effects. I do not however, intend to say that reparations and land restitution processes are not relevant and necessary component to dignifying the victims and to achieving some justice.

As mentioned above, Auyero refers to the minimal or non-existent agency of the poor while relating with state agencies. Unlike Auyero, at the same time that campesinos of La Europa have been waiting for a decision of the tribunal, they have taken some actions to try to put pressure on the tribunal and the land restitution office to get responses regarding the process, such as public demonstrations. In my follow up visit in August 2019, when I asked one campesino from the *finca* about the challenges and expectations concerning the process of restitution, he replied: "the land claimants should be more organized, the process of unity, the mobilization, to put pressure on the institutions. If communities do not apply pressure to accelerate these processes, they [institutions, state officials] do not have the willingness to untangle these processes; more actions of the communities are required."

Another way to respond to the endless waiting and uncertainty is the defense of the rights to the land from everyday practices in the campesino community. This is done by creating and maintaining conditions in the *finca* that make the permanence of campesinos on the land possible. Examples of this include the cultivation of crops and other agricultural activities essential for

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campesinos' survival and the creation of conditions for peaceful community life. The organization of the community has been and continues to be essential for inhabitants of La Europa. Decisions concerning relevant issues for the *finca*, the resolution of conflicts between community members, or any other problems are often addressed collectively by the Asociación de Campesinos and Campesinas de la Finca La Europa.

5.4 Narratives of state abandonment in the context of processes of reparations

Despite regional authorities' responses regarding some socio-economic needs of the community in the first stages of the defense of the land, such as the rebuilding of the school and the maintenance of the road and water system, there have not been significant actions by state institutions to improve living conditions of women and men in this community in more recent years. The following narrative illustrates the continuity of precarity of living conditions in the community of La Europa, precarity that is also present in many rural communities in the municipality.

In January 2018, I arrived at the house of a campesino located in one of the sectors of La Europa at 11 am. He lives with his wife and kids. His wife offered me coffee while I was waiting for him. She told me that he was still in the *parcela* and that she was going to bring the donkey there. Campesinos had been collecting the harvest of corn. At this time of the year, it is unlikely to find the men in their houses in the morning. Around 1 pm, the campesino finally returned with the donkey loaded with six bags full of corn.

He told me that, by walking, the *parcela* is one hour far away from where we were. It is located in the highlands of the *finca*. He took down the bags and put them in some sort of storage

unit in front of his house. Meanwhile, his wife was cooking while one of the kids was playing around. I asked him if he was going to sell the corn. He replied: "this corn is for the chickens and other animals." After he took a shower, his wife offered us some pieces of *ñame* (yam) and chicken. We sat in the house's living room, which did not have walls and was covered with a roof of palm. For some minutes, we talked about the crops and the drought season, which affected most of them. He was lucky that the season did not kill all his crops. At some point, he told me:

> You have seen the difficulties that we, as campesinos, face in the region, how we have undertaken a social defense of the territory without resources… I think that despite all the mechanisms adopted by the state, the Constitution, we continue in *el abandono estatal* (state abandonment). If you visit our houses, you see how our conditions are [referring to socio-economic conditions], you see that everything that we have done has been the result of our effort… our kids are not studying in schools that guarantee good education. They lack food, they lack educational implements and chairs, things that are a priority for these activities. There are not proper toilets or potable water. How, then, can families return in the post-conflict? … look at all this abandonment in which we are […]

> We will have to continue struggling for the piece of land, for the house… it is contemplated that land must be given to campesinos [in the peace accords], that there must be land restitution [in the Law of Victims]. However, if nobody claims this or struggles for it, this ten years of renovation in Montes de María [referring to the renovation of territory as part of the peace accords with the FARC] will go by, and people will be poorer… The only option that we have is the organization, the defense of the territory through our organizations, so they [governments, institutions] listen to us […]"

Despite this discouraging situation, I also noticed that the campesino supports the peace accords and believes that there are opportunities in this context. He also refers to the abandonment of the state, which was a common narrative in my conversations and interviews with rural inhabitants in the municipality of Ovejas. In this context, state abandonment is associated with the precarity of living conditions and the unwillingness or incapacity of the state to guarantee social and other rights in rural communities. However, narratives of state abandonment do not necessarily imply a passive stance by rural inhabitants. Instead, they mobilize this state image to make claims to their rights to state institutions and demand attention to their socio-economic needs.

It is not that the presence of the state in rural areas does not translate into any results, but in many cases, what is achieved also requires pressing the institutions, knocking on doors, and finding ways to get responses from institutions and officials, as mentioned by the campesino above. In this context, it is not enough that these rights are recognized in the constitution and the law or even that state process aimed at providing rights are underway. This was also the situation in the context of interactions of campesinos and state institutions and officials before the process of land restitution, as shown in previous sections of this chapter.

The limited results of state processes of reparations in the region also accentuate campesinos' perceptions of state abandonment. In the case of La Europa, the limited results are reflected in the lack of a decision regarding the process of land restitution after more than 6 years. In a meeting of the Association of Campesinos and Campesinas from la Finca La Europa in which issues related to an upcoming visit of officials from the land restitution office were discussed, one campesino told us: "since the committee of land restitution is coming to the *finca* we all should be here. There should not be internal problems. The community has been abandoned by the state, and there should not be conflicts between us [the campesinos]". At the same time, community members considered that it was important to plan the official's visit and to evaluate it.

Narratives of abandonment in this context do not mean that state institutions, officials, or processes have not been present in the Finca La Europa, but rather allude to the limited results regarding the promises of reparations, specifically land restitution, and the precarious conditions in which campesinos still live. In this case, these results have been characterized by the slowness of the processes of reparations and the endless waiting for the resolution of the land restitution process, and in consequence, the unfulfillment of their rights to reparations and justice. These narratives also allude to the inadequate provision of rights, services, and goods.

5.5 Conclusions

In this chapter, I examine some continuities of violence as they have unfolded in everyday life in campesino communities after the decline of armed conflict in the region. I also explore how interactions between campesinos and state institutions and officials have taken place during the last decade, particularly in the context of the implementation of the Law of Victims and Land Restitution in the 'post-conflict' transition in the region.

I argue that the continuum of violence and the institutional efforts to reshape relationships between campesinos with the state in rural communities, particularly the victims of the armed conflict have coexisted. This reflects the specific ways in which state institutions have been present in these territories in the 'post-conflict' transition in the region. Greater institutional presence in rural areas in the mountain zone, and efforts to 'undo' or redress some of the consequences of the armed conflict have coexisted with the continuity of structural violence as evidenced by poverty and inequality and the risks and threats that social leaders still face in rural communities.

I explore these questions by focusing mainly on the case study of the Finca La Europa in the municipality of Ovejas, although this chapter is also informed by my fieldwork with other rural communities. This case shows that after the significant decrease of the violence of the armed conflict in the region, other forms of violence continued unfolding in different ways in some campesino communities. Some of these forms of violence have been more localized and have affected some communities more than others, but have persisted over the years.

Land dispossession in the Finca La Europa in the context of the massive land purchases in the region brought other forms of violence related to the defense of the land by the campesinos and the conflict with Arepas Don Juancho, the company that signed purchase agreements and occupied the land. Although La Europa has probably been the community most affected by the

continuation of other forms of violence in the municipality of Ovejas, other communities have also been affected. As reported by the Defensoría del Pueblo in 2012, the risks faced by some communities during the period have been related to processes of land claiming, defense of the territory, and resistance regarding the conflict for the land. These risks take place in a context where campesino economies are in conflict with the interests of the new owners of the land in the region and with the model of development. While the continuity of violence has occurred in a few communities, in the rest of the rural communities the situation has been calmer for several years.

However, death threats against land claimants and other social leaders such as representatives of victims have also continued in the region. These threats often have an effect of intimidating not only the leaders but also their communities. These threats have taken place occasionally during several years and still occur. Some campesinos in Ovejas suspect that some of these threats are related to the continuity of armed groups in the region, which emerged after the demobilization of the paramilitary groups and still operate in some municipalities of Montes de María. These organizations have been linked mainly to drug trafficking.

I also show that structural violence has continued in rural communities in the 'post-conflict' transition. Although there has been some attention to the needs of rural inhabitants by governments and institutions, as in the case of La Europa, precarious living conditions, poverty, and inequality continue in the region. The concept of the continuum of violence is useful because it allows us to see the connections between present and past forms of violence, for example, the connections of the violence of the armed conflict and other forms of violence that are present today as part of the 'post-conflict' transition.

However, 'post-conflict' transitions are not only about whether there is a continuation of violence but also the specific ways in which this continuation takes place. It is also crucial to

examine how interactions and relationships between state institutions and officials and populations are shaped and the kinds of effects that are produced in the context of state processes and policies framed as part of the 'post-conflict' transition. In this chapter, I show that relationships between the community of La Europa and state institutions and officials have been reshaped, particularly in the context of the Law of Victims and Land Restitution. However, these state processes have produced unexpected effects on communities.

In the context of the illegal purchase of the *finca* La Europa, relationships between the community and some local and regional officials were characterized by distrust given that those officials did not protect the campesinos and in some cases even were accomplices in the illegal purchase of La Europa. In the following years, these relationships began to change as a result of several interactions between the community and local, regional and national officials, the community's organization, and the accompaniment of human rights organizations. Some institutions and officials started to take some actions to protect the community and address some of its needs.

However, it was in the context of the Law of Victims and Land Restitution that the case of La Europa was finally treated as a possible case of land dispossession and, in consequence, of land restitution. The bureaucratic apparatuses created by the law, such as the Unit of Land Restitution and the Unit of Victims, have led to a greater state presence in rural areas. While interactions with these bureaucracies and state processes often demand time from rural inhabitants, such as participation in meetings, the fulfillment of the promises of the state regarding reparations has been very slow and results have been limited. This creates frustration and disappointment among campesinos.

I point out that Auyero's discussion about the politics of waiting is useful to understanding some aspects related to the endless waiting of campesinos regarding the resolution of the land restitution process of La Europa. This waiting reinforces the already precarious socio-economic conditions of these rural inhabitants and creates more uncertainty in these communities. This discussion also applies to campesinos' experiences regarding processes of collective reparations in the region, which are also implemented very slowly.

Finally, while it cannot be said that state institutions and bureaucracies have not been present in the community of La Europa, their presence has not translated into a significant change of the community's living conditions or significant social investment. Structural violence continues to be present in rural communities in Ovejas, even though state institutions operate at other levels. The delay in the tribunal's decision regarding the case of La Europa and the continuity of precarious living conditions accentuate campesinos' perceptions of state abandonment.

6.0 The State, Rural Communities and Citizen-state Relationships: Development Plans with a Territorial Focus in the 'Post-conflict' Transition in Montes de Maria

6.1 Introduction

When I arrived in Montes de María in September 2017, campesinos, other rural inhabitants and NGOs had begun talking about the construction of the *Planes de Desarrollo con Enfoque Territorial*, PDET[30] (Development Plans with a Territorial Focus), a component of the peace agreements signed between the Colombian government and the FARC guerrillas in November 2016. The purpose of these plans is to create conditions to build peace, to guarantee the political, social, economic, cultural and environmental rights of rural populations, and to promote the presence of the state in rural areas of the country most affected by armed conflict, institutional weakness and poverty.

Between hope and sometimes skepticism, members of rural communities, including campesinos, began to actively participate in the construction of the plans, in interaction with state officials and other key actors in the territory. Most of my interlocutors from campesino communities saw the PDET as an opportunity to articulate their historical claims to rights to the state processes beginning to take place in the region as part of the implementation of the peace accords. In turn, discourses about renewal, postconflict and welfare for the rural population began circulating in the context of the meetings where these plans were discussed.

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[30] PDET is the acronym in Spanish, as used in the document of the New Final Agreement signed between the government and the FARC guerrillas. From now on I will use this acronym to refer to the Development Plans with a Territorial Focus. I also refer to them as the plans.

However, the formulation of the plans did not take place in a vacuum, but rather in the context of previous state processes, practices, state images, and related inhabitants' experiences. Despite several state and other interventions during the last decade, living conditions of rural populations have not been significantly transformed after the significant decrease of political violence in Montes de María.

In this chapter, I focus on the process of construction of the PDET to examine citizen-state relationships and experiences of the state in campesino communities in the context of implementation of the peace agreement and the 'post-conflict' transition. To shed light on these issues, I focus not only on the participation of campesinos in the formulation of these plans and their related experiences, but I also examine narratives of state abandonment and living conditions in rural areas as important factors that have shaped encounters between rural communities and the state in the region.

I argue that the PDET offers an opportunity to reshape citizen-state relationships and build more trusting relationships with institutions in the post-conflict transition by relying on a territorial approach and opening a space for the active participation of campesinos and other rural communities in the definition of what they consider central for their development. It also offers an opportunity for improving living conditions in these communities, although rural inhabitants' access to rights are still pending since these plans have just begun to be implemented. In a context of previous state interventions in rural communities in the region, previous half-hearted efforts to guarantee the rights of rural populations, images and narratives of state abandonment and the continuity of precarious living conditions evidence some of the challenges to guaranteeing these rights but also constitute an opportunity for change.

I also show that campesinos' reactions, expectations, uncertainties and experiences regarding this process are shaped not only by current encounters with state officials, practices and discourses promising 'postconflict, renewal and welfare' for rural populations, but also by their previous experiences and memories, as well as the effects of past state processes in these communities.

6.2 The PDET in the peace accords, 'territorial peace' and other conceptual considerations

The peace accords signed between the Colombian government and the FARC guerrillas in November 2016 established the Development Plans with a Territorial Focus PDET as a component of the first point of the Final Agreement, the comprehensive rural reform, which seeks to contribute to the structural transformation of rural areas, eradicate poverty and close the gap between the rural and the cities (Final Agreement 2016). The implementation of the rural reform prioritizes the territories in the country most affected by armed conflict, poverty and abandonment, through the PDET. The plans seek to achieve structural transformation of rural areas and to guarantee the "well-being and quality of life for people living in rural areas by enabling them to exercise their political, economic, social and cultural rights and reversing the effects of poverty and conflict" (Final Agreement 2016). Based on levels of poverty, effects of armed conflict, institutional weakness and presence of illicit crops, 16 regions in the country, including Montes de María, were selected for the formulation and implementation of the plans.

The peace agreement, including the PDET, incorporated a territorial approach and differential approaches based on gender and ethnicity. These approaches recognize the social, historical, economic, cultural and environmental particularities, needs and characteristics of the

territories and communities in the areas where they are currently being implemented. During the government of former president Juan Manuel Santos, 'territorial peace' was presented as a key concept reflecting the spirit of the peace agreement.

According to the previous director of the Agencia de Renovación del Territorio ART (Territorial Renewal Agency), territorial peace[31] implies the recognition that peace cannot be reduced to the demobilization of combatants but also involves "the creation of a sense of citizenship" and a "new way of building and implementing territorial development" as the basis for building lasting peace (Escobar 2017). Territorial peace also implies that territorial development and peace are constructed in the regions affected by the armed conflict and with the active participation of rural communities and other key actors in these territories. The ART, created in 2015, is in charge of coordinating the formulation of the PDET and its implementation over 15 years.

In the Final Agreement, rural inhabitants are recognized not only as citizens with rights but as key actors whose participation is the basis for identifying the needs of the territories and communities and the formulation of these plans. In this sense, citizenship notions regarding rural communities, underlying the accords, are in line with definitions associated with access to rights and active participation. The PDET seeks to guarantee the rights of rural populations who have lived in peripheries and margins of the country and suffered the armed conflict (Jaramillo 2014).

In this context, the issue is not the lack of legal citizenship or formal status regarding the rights of inhabitants which are recognized in the Colombian Constitution, but the actual access to these rights and practices of citizenship in territories that have been affected by armed conflict, poverty and 'institutional weakness', and particularly in the rural areas in these territories.

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[31] For other understandings of the concept of territorial peace see Cairo et al. (2018).

Normative notions of citizenship associate it with political membership, a legal status and equal access to rights. According to Lazar (2013), anthropologists have studied the specificity of citizenship in different contexts, including the state practices that constitute "political membership, its relationships to day to day practices of politics and how citizenship is a mechanism for making claims on different political communities" (p. 2). Other scholars understand citizenship as practices that constitute encounters between the state and citizens (Lazar 2008; see also Aretxaga 2003).

Scholars have also studied citizenship focusing on more active forms of engagement rather than passive forms of participation. For Barber (2003), to be a citizen is to participate in a way that "presumes awareness and engagement in activity with others." His concept of strong democracy involves participation and community as a "mode of social being" which constitutes citizenship (p. 155). Isin and Nielsen (2008) develop the concept of acts of citizenship originally proposed by Isin. The authors consider that in order to investigate citizenship it is important not to reduce it to status or practices, but to focus on the acts that produce subjects as citizens. In this way the focus shifts from the "citizen as individual agent to acts of citizenship" which are "collective or individual deeds that rupture social-historical patterns" (p. 2).

Some scholars have also examined citizenship in marginal spaces (Turner 2016), in peripheries (Holston 2008), in zones of social abandonment (Biehl 2005) or in the context of economies of abandonment (Povinelli 2011). According to Turner (2016) the practices and experiences of marginality engender different sites of political struggle, which "provide both disturbances of citizenship" and alternative ways "of accounting for and understanding the political" (p. 151). For the author, marginality is productive of political subjectivity. Not only the claiming of rights but also acts, events and struggles are sites for (en)gendering the political.

In his ethnography in peripheries of Brazilian cities, Holston (2008) proposes the concept of differentiated citizenship to allude to how social differences, such as inequality, distribute different treatment to different categories of citizens. Differentiated citizenship not only creates different types of citizenship but is also a mechanism to distribute inequality. However, these peripheries characterized by precarious and illegal conditions have also became a space of city builders and a new civic participation and the practice of rights. Insurgent citizen movements have been able to question, destabilize and undo regimes of differentiated and inegalitarian citizenship in these peripheries. However, at the same time, insurgent citizenship also perpetuates aspects of differentiated citizenship (p. 4-6).

Everyday life and citizen-state relationships in rural communities in the region during the last decade have been shaped by precarious living conditions, structural violence, and limited participation in decision making, especially concerning policies designed by the national government or institutions for these regions. In this context, access to rights in rural communities, especially socio-economic rights, has been limited or has been low quality. At the same time, claims to rights made to state institutions and governments as well as organization of rural inhabitants to solve their own problems have not been uncommon in the region. However, these claims to rights have often been only partially fulfilled or even completely unfulfilled by governments and state institutions.

The Final Agreement recognizes the relevance of guarantying the presence and effective action of the state, especially in the regions affected by abandonment, institutional weakness, and the effects of the armed conflict, which is presented as a central axis of peace (Final Agreement 2016). Ethnographic research shows that state images such as state absence, weakness, and failure could mean different things for inhabitants in specific contexts, and are used by governments and

other actors with various purposes (Tate 2015; Serje 2013). The 'effective action of the state' is the image of the state that is presented in the context of the peace accords as necessary to overcome abandonment and institutional weakness and violence in these territories.

In line with ethnographic research focusing on the study of the state in everyday life and close encounters between individuals or groups of people and state officials and institutions (Hansen and Stepputat 2001; Aretxaga 2005; Fuller and Harris 2000; Gupta and Sharma 2006), I focus in this chapter on encounters and interactions between officials and members of campesino communities during the process of construction of the PDET. I consider these encounters as sites where citizen-state relationships are shaped in the 'post-conflict' transition.

This chapter analyzes citizen-state relationships in rural communities in the context of state processes taking place as part of the implementation of the peace agreement. These rural areas have been constructed and imagined as marginal and even abandoned due to the precarious access to rights among rural inhabitants and limited participation in decision making. However, in these areas several previous state processes have taken place and rural communities have also been claiming their rights for years in the region. In this context narratives of state abandonment, precarious living conditions, processes of claiming rights and previous experiences of encounters with state processes meet discourses promising transformation and renewal of the territory, a participatory process to formulate the plans, and new opportunities created by the peace agreement.

This chapter relies on participant observation conducted in campesino communities and specifically sites where encounters and meetings between officials, rural communities and other key actors took place in the process of construction of the PDET. I also consider interviews with campesinos and the team of the agency in charge of coordinating the formulation of these plans. I focus on the municipality of Ovejas, but I also attended other events at the regional level.

6.3 State abandonment and precarity of living conditions in rural areas in the context of previous interventions

Upon my arrival to the region, workshops with rural communities organized by NGOs and the ART started taking place. In September 2017, I began participant observation concerning the PDET in five workshops with rural communities in Ovejas, organized by the Corporación de Desarrollo Solidario (CDS), a local NGO, and the Organizations of Displaced, Campesino and Ethnic Populations of Montes de Maria (OPDS), a grassroot organization comprised of several rural organizations from different municipalities in the region. One of these workshops took place in Chengue, where women and men from these *vereda* and surrounding communities participated. I traveled early in the morning from Carmen de Bolivar to Chengue which is located in the rural area of Ovejas.

On my way from the urban area of Ovejas to Chengue on a rainy day, the road, which includes only short segments of *placa-huellas* (concrete strip road pavement) in several parts, was very muddy. Given the poor condition of the road, and since I was traveling by motorcycle, it took me an hour longer than usual to reach Chengue. Nor was I the only one to arrive very late at the workshop; the organizers were also late for the same reason, even though they were traveling by jeep. Before the start of the workshop some inhabitants showed us the area in front of the school where the land was slipping. They told us that even though they had warned the local and regional authorities about the risks to the community associated to the land slipping nothing had been done yet to solve the problem.

The first time that I visited Chengue in the summer of 2015, I was shocked. I had imagined that since Chengue was the place of one of the cruelest paramilitary massacres, state institutions would have done a lot in order to allow the return of members of this community with dignity. I

saw the 14 houses that survived the burning of the massacre in 2001 and two more constructed after this tragic event by its inhabitants. I traveled with a campesino from another rural community of Ovejas who had never visited Chengue but has some friends there. Our reactions to our first visit to the *corregimiento* were similar. We commented that the community and the *caserío* looked very abandoned, as if time had not passed there. In my visit to attend the workshop two years and some months after the first visit, the *caserío* looked very similar, but in addition there was the problem of the land slipping in front of the school.

Figure 10. Chengue, central square. Rural area, Ovejas.

The left side of picture is a structure with stands built under the Program of Rapid Response in 2010, and a road on concrete pavement. The right of the structure is one of the new houses (in green and white) built between 2018 and 2019. On the right of the picture are some of the few old houses that were not burned during the massacre. Photo by the author. August 2019.

Although it cannot be said that nothing has been done regarding the victims of the Chengue massacre, little has been done to reconstruct the *vereda* and to significantly improve the living conditions of the approximately 100 inhabitants who live there today. Only recently, in 2019, new houses were built in the *corregimiento* which I saw in a follow up visit in August 2019 (see Figure 10). However, it took 18 years after the massive displacement of the population for this to happen.

In the middle of the houses there is a structure with stands in front of a soccer field. On one side there is a plaque saying *Programa de Respuesta Rápida* (Program of Rapid Response). This structure, almost falling down, is the living proof of a previous state intervention in the community in 2010. Chengue is also one of the communities in processes of collective reparations in Ovejas, although after several years the plan of reparation has not yet been approved.

Some segments of the road connecting the urban area of Ovejas with Chengue are completely unpaved, although the road appears among the projects of rebuilt roads in the Plan of Consolidation for Montes de María (PODEC 2011) implemented the last decade. The final section of the road entering Chengue is in concrete strip pavement, but it is not very long.

Given the conditions of the tertiary roads, transportation of not only people but also of agricultural products is difficult, particularly during the rainy season. Motorcycles, donkeys and sometimes jeeps are common means of transportation used by rural inhabitants in Ovejas. The highway crossing the municipality (*La Carretera Troncal*) is in good condition, but the tertiary roads, which connect the urban area with *corregimientos, veredas and caseríos* in rural areas, are mostly unpaved and often in bad shape. This is the situation that campesinos in Ovejas face in daily life.

Chengue is probably among the most critical cases regarding precarity of living conditions of rural communities in the municipality, in comparison with the other communities I visited. However, in the context of my fieldwork it became evident that inequality, social exclusion and precarious socio-economic conditions are still prevalent in rural communities in Ovejas and other municipalities of Montes de María, and they still shape citizen-state relationships in these communities.

Many rural communities in Ovejas do not have access to potable water, houses do not meet minimum standards of comfort or dignity, and inhabitants often complain that health and education services are not of high quality. In the *corregimientos* the situation is better in comparison with the *veredas* and *caseríos*. These facts also emerged as relevant in the context of discussions between campesinos in the preparatory workshops and preassemblies, organized respectively by NGOs and the ART, as part of the construction of the PDET. Many other problems were identified in these discussions, including the lack of guarantees for the commercialization of agricultural products, limited access to land, a lack of land formalization, and a lack of health centers and schools, doctors and medicines in rural areas. The effective access to several rights is still precarious.

Representations of the zones prioritized for the implementation of the PDET, as abandoned regions in Colombia, are present in several parts of the Final Peace Agreement. For example, in the first pages the document says:

> […] Appreciating and extolling the fact that the central pillar of peace is the promotion of the presence and the effective operation of the state throughout the country, especially throughout the many regions that are today afflicted by neglect [*abandono* in the Spanish version], by the lack of an effective civil service and by the effects of the internal armed conflict itself; that it is an essential goal of national reconciliation to construct a new territorial-based welfare and development paradigm to the benefit of broad sectors of the population that have hitherto been the victims of exclusion and despair […]

The Comprehensive Rural Reform applies universally, and its implementation prioritizes the territories most affected by the conflict, poverty and neglect [*abandono*], through Development Programmes with a Territorial-Based Focus (Final Agreement 2016:3).

References to state abandonment are also not uncommon in campesinos' narratives in Montes de María. This is illustrated in the following interview with Juan, who lives in rural area of Ovejas.

Because of post-conflict, because of the zone of consolidation, and other things, there were millions and millions for social investment here, but where is that money? ... we have been forgotten, it is just about promises, projects, projects of roads, projects of houses... but these are not decent homes ... we do not have potable water, sewage system. We are in complete abandonment; it is promises and promises. We are completely abandoned by the state.

I told Juan that people often refer to the abandonment of the state and asked what people mean by that. He replied:

The abandonment is everything that has to do with social investment, because the development of a community starts with a good road... but we do not have roads, institutions, education and health are precarious... doctors sometimes come here [when they come]." (Campesino from Ovejas, February, 2018).

Juan refers to abandonment as the scarce social investment and the precarious conditions in which rural inhabitants live. In a broader sense, state abandonment here refers to the incapacity or unwillingness of the state to properly guarantee social and other rights of populations. During my visits to rural communities in Ovejas, in the context of interviews, conversations and even meetings between campesinos and some officials, it was not uncommon to hear them referring to state abandonment. Expressions such as '*El estado nos tiene abandonados*' (the state has abandoned us), '*el abandono del estado*' (state abandonment) or even '*el olvido del estado*' (being forgotten by the state), are used by inhabitants in conversations. I heard these narratives not only from ordinary campesinos but also from community leaders.

Narratives of abandonment can be seen as alluding to an ideal, or what Tate (2015b) has called the aspirational state, which focuses on "the qualities of the state, its affective ties to its

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citizens, and the state as an ideal form: caring, responsive, generous, and abundant, rather than distant, repressive, extortive" (236). The image of state abandonment mobilized by campesinos refers to the state as not fulfilling this ideal form, and also involves an affective dimension in a context where the state is perceived by inhabitants as negligent insofar as it does not fulfill properly the needs of rural communities.

However, narratives of state abandonment in Montes de María also speak of the poor effects of past state policies, and the specific ways in which institutions and bureaucracies have been present in these territories, through their practices and effects. In this sense, narratives of state abandonment do not mean lack of institutional presence or state processes or that nothing has been done by state institutions and officials in rural communities, but rather that these efforts have not translated into a significant improvement of the living conditions of populations. For example, the campesino mentioned above alludes to abandonment but at the same time he refers to the money for social investment that Montes de María has received as part of the Plan of Territorial Consolidation and other interventions in the region during the last decade.

The description of the situation of Chengue presented above is also illustrative. While the living conditions in the *corregimiento* continue to be precarious, only slightly improved by the new houses and some productive projects, state policies and processes had taken place there, such as the Program of Rapid Response, the Plan of Territorial Consolidation and more recently the ongoing process of Collective Reparation.

In his ethnographic study of zones of social abandonment in Brazil, Biehl (2005) points out that at the time that new institutions were established to care for vulnerable and poor populations, he also saw zones of social abandonment emerging in big cities in Brazil such as Vita, where the unwanted people were brought. The author points out that legal authorities and welfare

and medical institutions did not directly intervene in these zones. However, for the author it is clear that in this context the state plays a role in the generation of human misery, while society also forces groups of people considered "valueless into such zones" (p. 21).

While Biehl's study is useful for understanding that zones of abandonment could emerge in a context where state institutions and polices are promoted to care for poor populations and that in fact they coexist, narratives and experiences of state abandonment in rural areas in Montes de María does not refer to zones where state institutions do not intervene. These narratives rather take place in a context where several state processes have taken place in rural communities, even though these state interventions are not necessarily even across different rural communities.

The meaning of the image of state abandonment should be understood within the specific context in which it is constructed and mobilized by campesinos, instead of just relying on theoretical discussions as has been common in some literature alluding to state images (Migdal 2001; Midgal and Schlichte 2005). As some scholars point out, imagination, fantasies and images of the state are important to understand how the state is reproduced in everyday life, and also allow us to locate "the state at the level of everyday experiences of ordinary people" (Friedman 2011:8).

Today, the idea of state abandonment in the mountain zone of Montes de María reflects one of the ways in which the state is imagined and experienced by campesinos in rural areas of Ovejas, in a context of ongoing state processes, policies, and post-conflict reconstruction. In the current context, references to state abandonment are used by some rural inhabitants in Montes de Maria as a powerful image of the state, to question the lack of social investment in rural communities, to refer to the precarity of living conditions in rural areas, or to claim their social, economic and other rights.

In some cases, these narratives are also accompanied by complaints regarding promises by the government and state institutions that are unfulfilled or only partially fulfilled (see also Chapter 5) or by narratives about corruption, especially referring to local and regional authorities or state officials. In other cases, state abandonment could also reflect uneven social investment in the region. In my visits to communities, I observed that state processes have focused on some municipalities, some communities and even some particular families in communities while neglecting others.

Montes de María is a region that has experienced a high degree of intervention, not only by the state, but also by the international cooperation (PODEC 2011). This was clearly expressed by ART's officials in an interview I conducted in Sincelejo in July 2018 with several members of its team, including the manager, the regional coordinator, and other state officials.

Once in the office of the ART, which is located in Sincelejo, the capital city of the department of Sucre and one hour from the urban area of Ovejas by bus, the team of this agency and I sat in one of the rooms. After hearing about the initial work of the ART with communities in Montes de Maria, the different stages and their view regarding some strengths and difficulties in the construction of the PDET, I commented that when I visit rural communities it is common to hear campesinos alluding to state abandonment. One official replied to my comment and told me:

> We felt the abandonment by the state during the worse moments of the violence around 1996 and 2000… there were guerrillas, paramilitary groups…there was not state, if there had been state there would not have been 52 massacres in the region… the term continues today [state abandonment] but not in the sense of that moment, but maybe as *reivindicación de derechos* [claims for rights]… the state appeared [after that], but while [today] the security is restored in other parts of the country with the Peace Agreement, here it was achieved through bullets and also abuses of the state against the civilian population… we were in the middle and we also felt mistreated by the state [...]

> After that there has been a process of creating trust, we have been in that process around ten years… it was a process of believing again in the *institucionalidad* [institutions], not only the *fuerza pública*, but local administrations since they were also accomplices… it

was a very difficult to recover trust in the *institucionalidad*. I believe that today we have achieved it because people already feel that they can claim their rights, but today the distrust towards the state is because of corruption… The investment and the figures in Montes de María have been astronomical, but one goes to the *veredas* and finds the same poverty rates, the same needs.

Today the PDETs are reflecting what people has been asking during the last 10 years, investment by the state… significant works after the war are few, maybe the transverse highway of Montes de Maria, the aqueduct of Carmen de Bolivar. Probably in Sucre we do not see the same response [concerning investment] … The international cooperation I think invested more in Montes de Maria, more than the state. But if we look at the results of that investment, yes today we can demand our rights, we find clear positions in civil society, that is a gain… There has been investment but it was disorganized. The investment was not seen. We as ART are facilitators for the construction of an instrument [the PDET], an instrument that people can defend and we as officials also have to defend it […]"

When the person finished, another official from the ART's team said:

Part of why the term state abandonment continues to be used is due to discontinuity of the interventions. The Colombian state has implemented several strategies in Montes de María but none of them has had continuity in the medium or long term because it depends on the governments in power… The advantage that the PDET has over other state interventions is that it is long-term.

The official points out that state abandonment has a different meaning today than in the past since it refers to claims to rights, in contrast with what she considers as the 'non-presence of the state' during the end of the nineties and the early two-thousands. Rather than only lack of institutional processes or state presence in these communities, narratives of state abandonment reflect also the failure of previous interventions to transform living conditions of populations and how marginality and structural violence in rural communities are reproduced (Gupta 2012; Farmer and Rylko-Bauer 2016).

However, this does not mean that the presence of state institutions and officials in the context of these processes does not produce effects. Some scholars, examining development policies and apparatuses, show that these interventions produce effects on communities (Escobar 2012) or at other levels (Ferguson 1994). For instance, Ferguson contends that the development

apparatus in Lesotho, which he calls the 'Anti-Politics Machine', serves the purpose of entrenching bureaucratic state power, and the depoliticization of development, in a context where failure of development projects seems to be the norm (Ferguson 1994: 8). In Ovejas, in contrast with the past, where state officials and institutions other than the police or the military were barely present in rural areas in the context of the armed conflict, this presence has played a role in the expansion of state presence and the building of more trusting relationships with populations, as mentioned by the official above. However, at the same time, the discontinuity of these institutional processes or their poor results also creates frustration, disappointment and even distrust among rural communities.

It is not my purpose here to explain why previous state processes in rural communities have not produced the expected results. Rather I want to point out that these previous partial failures or half-hearted efforts continue shaping citizen-state relationships and current campesinos experiences of the state.

6.4 "We always have hope, because we want change". Reactions, expectations and uncertainties among campesinos concerning the PDET

The peace agreements created great expectations among women and men regarding what they could bring to rural areas. At the beginning of my fieldwork, there was lack of information among these communities concerning the specific details of the Agreement, and in particular the PDET. In this context, NGOs, officials from the ART and also some community leaders began explaining to rural communities the purpose of the PDET as a central component of the Peace Agreement, the participatory methodology and the different stages of its construction, as I show

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in the next section. Reactions and expectations of campesinos in the context of formulation of the PDET were mixed. Some of my interlocutors were optimistic while others were incredulous. Emanuel, a campesino leader in the rural area of Ovejas told me:

> I agree with the peace accords. I say no to war… Montes de María is a zone of peace today and we could be an example of social investment, but the governments have fallen short. There is poverty, few things have been done... and it has been 10 years since 2008, when the government declared the region free of guerrillas [...]
>
> You have been in the preassemblies [of the PDET], you see that it is our hope, it is our hope, since these are national accords, then one feels that there are more possibilities for this to happen. We expect this, because peace begins with social investment... there are international resources, if there is will and good faith there could be development... The PDET is an opportunity, of course this is an opportunity and we want to take advantage of it […] (Campesino from Ovejas, March, 2018).

The previous excerpt of an interview illustrates the views and perceptions of many rural inhabitants concerning the relevance of the peace accords and how the accords are seen by rural communities as an opportunity for change and to build peace in the region, in particular the PDET. In my fieldwork I found that many rural inhabitants in Ovejas support them. However, these communities are not naïve about the difficulties that the implementation of the plans face. In fact, there was also some skepticism among other campesinos due to uncertainty regarding its implementation and the change of the national government in the context of the presidential elections celebrated in May 2018. These concerns are illustrated in a conversation with Jaime, a community leader, when the preassemblies of the PDET were still taking place. When I asked Jaime about his expectations and opinion concerning this process, he replied:

> The PDET just began. We expect that this mechanism, for which we have been working, will not be as previous ones... we already did our work in the preassemblies. Now the municipal and the regional stages will come, we expect that we will benefit from all this and that the same that has happened in previous processes will not occur, 'la politiquería' (politicking) getting on the way. If things are done well, they [the PDET] must have an impact on socio-economic conditions of populations... But because of policies and the things one has seen before, there is uncertainty, it is on the way that one can find many 'palos en la rueda' [obstacles]

To clarify, I asked Jaime if his concern was that the PDET would be formulated but not implemented. He replied:

> This is the fear. And if they are implemented it could be only about minimal things. If things are done as established in the PDET, it would be something with a great impact, because the communities are the ones defining their problems and solutions. But the questions are: how will these plans be implemented?... My fear is also that after so much study and training, so much investment it will be in limbo.

I told Jaime that I also noticed enthusiasm in members of communities participating in the preassemblies. He said:

> We always keep hope because the leaders, we want change... then now that the preassemblies are taking place, we keep hope that this time it could be different... this is the opportunity for each community to speak out, to be able to express their needs, express their concerns, their possible solutions. The projects implemented here have been always designed '*desde los escritorios en Bogotá*' [from the desks in Bogotá]. Projects have often been born there and when they came to the communities, they said this what we will do here [...] (Campesino from Ovejas, February, 2018).

Based on experiences, memories, and disappointment due to partial fulfillment or unfulfillment of previous promises by state institutions or governments, and previous interventions in the region, most of my interlocutors were aware that this process was not going to be straightforward. Previous claims making by members of rural communities and their organizations also inform encounters with state processes in the current context. The previous interview illustrates how campesinos' reactions and experiences of the state during the construction of the PDET are also shaped by their previous encounters with policies, officials, state processes and their related experiences.

According to Gupta and Sharma (2006), everyday encounters with the state, state practices, and the public circulation of images of the state enable people to imagine "what the state is, what is supposed to do, where its boundaries lie, and what their place is in relation to state institutions" (p. 17). While everyday practices and circulation of images of the state are important to

understanding what the state is and how it is experienced, as pointed out by these authors, it is also important to understand the role of experiences regarding previous state processes, the effects of previous interventions in communities, and how the past is deeply implicated in current everyday practices and images of the state, as suggested in the interviews with the campesinos concerning their reactions to the PDET.

Despite disappointment regarding previous interventions and uncertainty about the future of these plans, there was also hope among campesinos, as illustrated in the two previously described interviews. Many rural inhabitants engaged with the process of formulation of the PDET, while others were incredulous. This engagement took place through the direct involvement of members in the different spaces of participation organized by the ART, NGOs, and grassroots organizations to discuss and formulate these plans, or through participation in conversations and discussions at the level of communities. While there was hope among some campesinos, uncertainty about the compliance of these plans increased with the election of the new president, Ivan Duque, who has been critical of the peace accords and was elected with the support of the parties which voted No in the plebiscite to ratify the peace accords between the Colombian government and the FARC guerrillas held on October, 2016.

In spite of this, the majority of my interlocutors saw the PDET as an opportunity to articulate their historical claims to the state, in a scenario with greater possibilities for compliance, given that these plans are part of the Peace Agreement. However, campesinos and other local actors were also aware that it would require that communities and their organizations demand that the government fulfill its obligations under the plans formulated at the municipal and regional level.

6.5 The participatory process in the formulation of the PDET and implications for citizen-state relationships in rural communities

In this final section of the chapter, I analyze the process of participation by campesinos in the context of formulation of the PDET in the municipality of Ovejas and some implications for citizen-state relationships in rural communities. The construction of the plans relied on participatory mechanisms to define the necessities of the territories and rural inhabitants from a bottom-up approach. The participatory methodology proposed by the ART for the construction of these plans included three stages: the *veredal* and community (*grupo motor*) level, the municipal phase, and the regional level. I focus on these first stages since their emphasis was the participation of members of communities and organizations. I do not analyze the regional level.

In the *veredal* (village) phase, women and men met in pre-assemblies (the ART named them *pre-asambleas*) in order to identify and discuss the opportunities, problems and preliminary initiatives (the ART named them pre-iniciativas) concerning development in their communities by focusing on eight thematic pillars.

The eight thematic pillars, which guided the participatory process in the formulation of the plans, were defined in advance based on the Final Agreement: social organization of rural property and land use; infrastructure and land suitability; health; rural education and early infancy; rural housing and potable water; economic renewal and agricultural production; the right to food; and reconciliation, coexistence and peacebuilding.

I conducted participant observation in the pre-assemblies (*pre-asamblea*) at the *veredal* level in the municipality of Ovejas. The last day of January 2018, I attended the pre-assembly of the UBP Montaña which included the following *corregimientos* and *veredas:* Don Gabriel, Salitral, Chengue, Chaparral, Mancomuján, Los Números, El Tesoro and Buenos Aires. Before 9

am, I arrived at the Centro de Integración Ciudadana located in the *corregimiento* Don Gabriel.

This was the second pre-assembly in this municipality, all of them organized in different rural

areas of Ovejas.

The ART officials and many inhabitants were already there while others were still arriving.

There was a big banner fixed in a central side of the space saying "Renewal of Territory, Colombia

is Reborn, Postconflict and with PDET more welfare for the rural population" (Figure 11). Another

banner summarized the different stages of the PDET. The event finally started. We all sat in chairs

looking in the direction of the big banner while the regional coordinator of the ART was standing

in front of us. The officials were wearing a red vest, with the logo of the ART, to make clear that

they were acting in representation of the state. I observed enthusiasm and engagement of

campesinos during the pre-assemblies and this one was not the exception.

The coordinator of the ART in Montes de María began explaining that the PDET are part

of the implementation of the first point of the peace accords with the FARC guerrillas, the

comprehensive agrarian reform. She also explained in which zones of the country the PDET would

be implemented and its purpose. She said:

> Several agencies have been here and a lot of money has been invested, but we go to the
> communities and there are not appropriate toilet systems in the houses; there are not health
> centers or medical services. Today we are still talking about intervention, public entities,
> private entities, international cooperation, but the same problems continue. But today we
> are going to do a different exercise which comes from the peace accords and is backed by
> the law and the Constitutional Court ... in consequence they will be somehow obligatory
> for mayors, governors and presidents during the following 10 years […]

She also explained the territorial focus of the PDET and the role of participation. Rural

inhabitants were listening. One man raised his hand and said: "today is a significant and historical

day for the communities present here… the accords of the Habana come now to our territory and

this is an opportunity for us. Things have changed in Montes de Maria but the welfare as we want

it, the development of our communities has not been solved […]" After the campesino spoke, another state official told us: "we are going to talk about opportunities, the good things that we have in the territory. We also will identify the problems and we will think of initiatives or proposals to solve them."

Tables and chairs located in different parts of the space were organized around eight banners, which also summarized the key topics relevant to each thematic pillar. Each participant sat around one of the tables according to the pillar assigned previously to the person. There were members from different *veredas* in each group. The official in each group explained more broadly what the participants were supposed to do. There was one official in each table providing guidance during the discussion in each group. Overall, I also saw commitment of the officials regarding the work they were developing with communities.

I moved around to different groups and listened to the discussion taking place among participants. In some groups campesinos seemed to be more informed, prepared and active than in others, but overall the participation was fluid. Some campesinos had met with their communities beforehand to get prepared for the pre-assemblies, in order to identify key issues and to select their representatives who would attend this day. Over about three hours, participants in each group talked about opportunities, problems and pre-initiatives concerning the thematic pillar addressed in that group. Each group received white, blue and pink cards and one member summarized and wrote the information concerning opportunities while the discussion developed. The same exercise took place regarding problems and pre-initiatives, in that order.

At the end, the cards were attached to big sheets of paper. Each group also proposed one delegate and one substitute among their participants, who would participate in the next step of the formulation of the PDET, *the grupo motor*. After the activity finished, the big sheets of paper were

fixed next to the big banner. We all took a break and lunch was offered to all participants. After that, people moved the chairs again in front of the big banner.

The eight campesinos proposed as delegates to participate in the *grupo motor*, two of them women, were standing in front of the assembly. The coordinator proceeded to read the names of the delegate and the substitute of the first pillar. After she asked if the assembly approves them, their members raised their hands expressing their approval. She did the same concerning the representatives of the other pillars. Around 131 inhabitants, including women and men, attended the assembly that day. One member of the pillar social organization of rural property and land use read the pre-initiatives for that pillar. When he finished, the official asked the assembly if there was anything that was not included or any comment regarding the proposals. The same was done regarding the other thematic pillars. There were several comments by members of the assembly and some additions or modifications were made in some pillars. The opportunities and problems were not read but the ART took all the information to transcribe and organize it.

The rural area of the municipality of Ovejas was divided into eight Basic Units of Participation (*Unidades básicas de Participación* UBP), each one comprised of several *veredas* and *corregimientos*. The *UBP* were Montaña, Pijiguay, Carretera Occidente, Canutalito, Canutal, La Peña, Almagra and Flor del Monte. One pre-assembly took place in each UBP, for a total of eight in this municipality. Between 120 and 152 members of rural communities attended each pre-assembly and according to information of the ART a total of 1,095 inhabitants participated in Ovejas during the first stage, 429 women and 666 men. The population in rural areas of Ovejas is approximately 11,400 out of 22,800 inhabitants. Before the pre-assemblies, officials from the ART begun explaining to members of the communities the purpose of the PDET and that they had to

choose a specific number of representatives among members of their community to participate in them.

Figure 11. Pre-assembly in UPB Montaña, veredal phase, January 2018.

Corregimiento Don Gabriel, rural area of Ovejas. 131 women and men attended the meeting. Photo by the author.

In the second phase, the community assembly (*grupo motor*), comprised of 64 delegates of rural communities who were selected by community participants in each pre-assembly met to formulate the Community Agreement of Ovejas. The first day, the delegates organized in groups for each thematic pillar constructed the vision of territory for that topic based on opportunities and problems previously proposed in the pre-assemblies. During the second day, members in each

thematic pillar reviewed, identified common aspects, and based on that, reorganized and reformulated the pre-initiatives previously proposed in the pre-assemblies.

For example, the group Reconciliation, Coexistence and Peacebuilding received the pre-initiatives regarding that pillar proposed in each UPB in the pre-assemblies and organized and formulated several initiatives, reflecting all proposals that came from the first stage. Other activities took place during these days such as discussions by the whole assembly. The meeting of the *grupo motor* lasted two and a half days. Members of the ART coordinated all the activities developed during this stage. Nobody else attended the grupo motor beyond the delegates of rural communities. I was allowed to attend all activities only as an observer without interfering in the discussions or activities developed by the delegates of communities.

A few months later, 32 members of communities selected by the 64 delegates of the *grupo motor*, met with the ART's members, other local state officials, representatives of victims, social organizations, organizations of victims, and other relevant local actors to formulate the Municipal Agreement for Ovejas. The same process took place in each of the 15 municipalities of Montes de Maria, involving significant efforts by members of the ART and also by rural communities in the construction of the plans. The number of UPB and community's delegates varied in each municipality depending on the size of the population.

In the third phase, eight community representatives from each municipality of Montes de María met with local and regional state officials and authorities, members of the ART, members of NGOs, representatives of victims, and other relevant actors at the regional level to formulate the *Plan de Acción para la Transformación Regional de Montes de María* PATR (Plan of Action for Regional Transformation).

Based on these participatory mechanisms and under the coordination of the ART, during the period August 2017 to September 2018, 15 *Acuerdos Municipales para la Transformación Regional* (Municipal Agreements for Regional Transformation) and the PATR of Montes de María were formulated.

Some campesinos and their organizations saw the PDET not only as an opportunity to solve concrete problems regarding development or state abandonment in rural areas, but also to strengthen organizational processes in rural communities given its participatory methodology. The process of participation at the *veredal* and the *grupo motor* level in this municipality encouraged the organization of some campesino communities to discuss about their problems, initiatives to address them, and their visions of *territorio*. It also promoted the involvement of rural women, who often participate less in organizational processes in the region, and stimulated interactions between members of different rural communities. These observations are illustrated in a conversation with Patricia, a *campesina* leader of her community, who participated in the formulation of the PDET and organized meetings with organizations in the community to identify the problems and initiatives before the pre-assembly:

> […] The PDET brought us together [referring to her community]. I first heard of the PDET in Bogotá last year [in May 2017]. I began speaking to our organization about the PDET. I began telling them that we have to work together, and we have to be together because we have to make our development plan and we could not do that as a single organization. We all have to look in the same direction […]

I told Patricia that in the preassembly in which they participated I observed that the groups working on each thematic pillar had a draft with opportunities, problems, and pre-initiatives before the discussion began. She replied:

> We had a draft, and we got together to do that [before the pre-assembly]. All organizations participated… I think there are in total 20 organizations in this *corregimiento*. We are an organization of community development; there are also the *Juntas de Acción comunal*, campesino organizations, organizations of producers, an organization of women… but the

majority of these organizations do not exercise governance. It is necessary to strengthen these organizations. We included that in the PDET. Organizational training is important because the organizations in the territory are not prepared to exercise governance." (Campesina community leader from Ovejas, May 2018).

Patricia's statement does not mean that there have not been organizational efforts among campesino and other rural communities as well as attempts to claim their rights to the national government and local and regional authorities during the last decade. In fact, some networks of campesino and ethnic organizations in Montes de Maria have been working for several years on their views and proposals concerning development in their *territorios*. However, some communities are more organized than others, and in other cases the level of organization is very low. In this context, some of my interlocutors considered that the space of construction of the PDET has been useful to promote the organization of some communities that were not very organized or to reinforce the existence organizational processes. However, this is seen as an ongoing process, as pointed out by the *campesina* leader. During the last decade, ethnic and campesino organizational processes have been slowly recovering from the negative impact of the violence experienced during the armed conflict.

However, not all inhabitants were optimistic regarding the participatory process. In one of the five preparatory workshops organized by CDS and the OPDs I attended in Ovejas in September 2017, one man said the following in front of all the participants: "this exercise [referring to the PDET] could end in more training and workshops, it could be more of the same as it has happened in the past." Other participants also criticized methodological aspects of the participatory process because the times established for discussion, especially in the preassemblies, were limited. Processes of communities often do not match the same times and logics of state processes. While for rural inhabitants these processes require time to discuss and build agreements, each preassembly took place in only one day, according to the methodological design by the ART.

Some rural communities met outside the formal settings organized by the ART to get prepared, identify key issues, and bring them to the preassemblies, and to select the members of the community who would participate in them, as illustrated by the campesina leader above. I saw that this happened in some communities but not in all of them. Overall, participation and the construction of minimum consensus among rural communities was possible in the different spaces of participation in the formulation of the PDET. Members of campesino and other rural communities played an important role in the participatory process and in interaction with state officials and other relevant actors in the municipality and the region.

The design and the practice of the participatory process in the context of formulation of the PDETs also reflect some differences in terms of understandings of participation by the ART and campesino communities. For the ART, the participatory process started with the citizen at the level of pre-assemblies. These citizens in turn selected their delegates among people attending the pre-assembly to participate in the *grupo motor*. Campesino and other organizations were included at the level of the municipal assembly and its preparatory dialogues, where members of the ART met with members of these organizations. This is reflected in the following interview with ART' officials:

> The *veredal* level was to listen the citizen who has never been listened to, this is where new leadership emerges. No organization participated at this level, although there were members of the community that are part of these organizations... in the municipal phase then we saw the presence of these organizations… An organization has a certain level or empowerment, but there are other people who have never been heard. Those people do not have guarantees of participation". Another state official also expressed this view by saying: "we began preparing the people; the idea was not to meet only with the leaders, without ignoring them because they have an incalculable value… there were 150 people in some preassemblies, and some people who had never participated in this kind of activity […] (Interview with team of ART, Sincelejo, July 2018).

The understanding of participation by the ART's officials does not necessarily match the organizational processes of campesinos, since community leaders are the ones who often interact

in a more direct way with state officials and institutions and also with their communities. Some of my interlocutors and especially community leaders, seemed to be concerned about involving the members of communities with more knowledge and expertise in the formulation of the plans. However, communities were in charge of selecting the people who participated in these spaces of discussion. In the preassemblies there were inhabitants who normally do not participate in organizational processes, but community leaders also participated. I attended five of the eight pre-assemblies organized in Ovejas.

Some NGOs, campesino organizations, and ethnic organizations in the region also criticized the design of the participatory methodology in the context of the preassemblies because the participation of these organizations was not allowed at the *veredal* level. These NGOs and grassroots organizations argued that existent agendas and processes of ethnic and campesino organizations in Montes de María, which contribute to the construction of territorial agendas, were not considered in the *veredal* phase. NGOs and grassroots organizations saw it as problematic that organizations of communities were not included from the beginning but only at the municipal level (Fieldnotes, Encuentro PDETs Región Caribe, April, 2018). However, the ART also received feedback from different actors in the region and was also open to adjust some methodological aspects of participation.

NGOs and some grassroots organizations also expressed concern that victims' organizations, and the subjects of collective reparations were not included as participating organizations at the level of the preassemblies, considering that the PDET has also a repairing purpose, making the participation of victims central (Final Agreement 2016). However, I observed that many victims participated in the preassemblies not as organizations, but as members of rural

communities. Victims' organizations and members of subjects in processes of collective reparation

participated in the preparatory dialogues and at the municipal level.

Figure 12. Grupo motor. Formulation of Community Agreement. April 2018, Ovejas.

64 delegates from rural communities, state officials from the ART coordinated and facilitated the different steps.
Wolfi, urban are of Ovejas. Photo by the author.

Both members of the ART and campesinos recognized the relevance of participation in the

formulation of the PDETs, but opinions regarding the specific approach used and how participation

should take place and its meaning were not exactly the same. For the ART this participation starts

with the citizen, understood as an individual in their relationships with the state, although without

ignoring that they are also part of communities. Some women and men rather saw participation as

an opportunity to work together as communities, as mentioned above by the campesina leader. From this perspective the focus was not just their status as the individual citizen, but also their relationships with members of other rural communities. This understanding of participation by communities is closer to theoretical approaches that emphasize active participation and community as a central component of citizenship (Barber 2003).

Of course, campesino communities should not be seen as completely cohesive and harmonious. There were also some disagreements and tensions between members of rural communities in the participatory process. For example, as I observed, in one of the pre-assemblies the participants in each pillar selected only men as the eight delegates to participate in the community assembly, while two women were designated but only as substitutes in case the primary delegates could not attend the assembly. Several members in the pre-assembly reacted to the designation since women were not included as delegates for the next stage. One state official from the ART reminded the participants that the gender approach is a transverse axis in the peace accords, and in consequence it was required to negotiate in order to also include women as delegates. At that point the two women designated as substitutes were included as delegates.

In the *grupo motor* only nine women (out of 32) were designated as delegates to participate in the municipal level. This was out of the control of officials because delegates were elected by the assemblies comprised of members of rural communities, which in turn reflected cultural and, more specifically, gender dynamics within communities. However, the ART also organized a preparatory dialogue only with women in order to include initiatives with a gender approach. In the municipal assembly there was also a heated discussion among delegates of communities regarding how many women should be included regarding the selection of the eight delegates who

would participate in the regional stage, and also whether having more expertise should be a main criterion in selecting leaders or not, also evidencing tensions within rural communities.

The participatory process also took place in a very structured and organized way, as illustrated for example in the description of the pre-assembly. Specific times for each step, clear instructions about how to gather the information resulting from the discussions, the use of white, blue and pink cards to summarize the information of the discussions concerning opportunities, problems, and initiatives, among other aspects, can be seen as part of bureaucratic forms and procedures used in interactions with populations.

In spite of the critiques by NGOs and some grassroots organizations regarding some aspects of the participatory process, the different spaces for participation of rural communities in the formulation of the PDET in interaction with state officials evidenced an effort to include rural inhabitants in the definition of what those inhabitants consider relevant for their territories, also an effort of these communities to engage with these processes.

The concept of acts of citizenship proposed by Isin and Nielsen (2008) is useful in analyzing some of the implications of the formulation of the PDET regarding citizen-state relationships and participation of rural communities. Isin and Nielsen define acts of citizenship as deeds with different overlapping and interconnected components. "They disrupt habitus, create new possibilities, claim rights and impose obligations in emotionally charged tones; pose their claims in enduring and creative expressions; and, most of all, are the actual moments that shift established practices, status and order." The authors consider that acts of citizenship are unique and different from citizenship practices since they are also "actively answerable events, whereas the latter are institutionally accumulated processes" (p. 10). They also ask questions about future

responsibility towards others. In this sense, acts of citizenship are "fundamental ways of being with others" (Isin and Nielsen 2008: 19).

The active participation of members of rural communities in the process of formulation of the PDET to discuss their needs and proposals to solve the existent problems concerning development in these communities can be analyzed as acts of citizenship. Although participation of communities has taken place in the context of previous state polices, it has often been limited or it works more as consultation and does not translate into communities' decision-making regarding the policies designed and implemented in these *territorios*. In this way, the participation that took place during the formulation of the PDET can be seen as a break regarding encounters with state institutions and processes and practices of citizenship taking place in the region.

On the other hand, while claiming rights to state institutions has occurred in rural communities during the last decade, some communities are more active or organized while others are more passive. The process of formulation of the PDET allowed a broader participation of many rural communities through their delegates and an active role in decision making, at least concerning the formulation of the plans.

The formulation of the PDET resulting from the active participation of rural communities and other key actors, including state officials at the regional and especially local level, also created new possibilities and established obligations to local and regional authorities and other institutions regarding the rights of these communities and development in these territories according to what was established in the plans. While institutions and officials have often responded to rights claiming by communities with half-hearted efforts, the broader context of implementation of the Final Agreement could constitute a scenario with greater possibilities for compliance.

However, a different question is whether and in what specific ways the participation of communities will continue during the processes of implementation of the plans during this decade, and how these plans will be implemented in order to reflect what was established in the municipal and regional plans. Another question is whether and how the process of formulation of the PDET could impact citizenship practices in the long term, as implementation unfolds and interactions between communities and state officials and claims to rights related to what was established in the plans continue taking place in the following years.

The discussions by campesinos in the different stages of the formulation of the PDET and observations in communities also show that citizen-state relationships and participation are not only abstract concepts, but are also shaped by the specific context in which they are constructed and acquire specific meanings. The armed conflict in rural communities has had long term effects, even though communities have also done work on social repair (Theidon 2013), sometimes with the support of NGOs and even of state institutions. Members of communities identified problems such as fracture of the social fabric (*ruptura del tejido social*), distrust of institutions and within communities, and stigmatization, among others, which were topics that emerged in the context of the discussions regarding the thematic pillar reconciliation, coexistence and peacebuilding during the preassemblies, the grupo motor and the municipal assembly.

In this context, issues concerning the fracture of the social fabric, rebuilding the ties with the state and building trusting relationships with institutions are relevant. For example, in a discussion among all the delegates of the *grupo motor* concerning opportunities and problems in the pillar reconciliation, coexistence and peacebuilding, one of the participants pointed out that the reconciliation is not only among the communities but also with the government and the institutions. In this context, citizen-state relationships not only involve issues concerning the effective access

to rights or active participation of communities, but also other aspects such as building more trusting relationships between citizens and institutions. Although this work has been taking place in the region for several years, the formulation of the PDET and the spaces of encounters between officials and rural communities became another space to build trusting relationships.

6.5.1 Municipal Agreement for Regional Transformation

I attended the municipal assembly for the construction of the PDET of Ovejas the first week of August, seven months after the first preassembly in this municipality. I arrived early in the morning to the Wolfi a place located in the urban area on the side of the Troncal Highway. There was a banner at the entrance saying "welcome to the municipal phase of Ovejas." I entered the auditorium located on the left side of the place. I saw delegates of communities, members of organizations, officials, and other actors who were already there or arriving. There were banners about the PDET on the walls of the room and other banner of the mayor's office.

The ART official coordinating the event presented the program for the day. The major of Ovejas and the regional manager of the ART sat in front of the auditorium and began the event. To the surprise of several of us, the major spent most of his time presenting an accounting of the municipal finances. He said:

> It is necessary to be realistic about what the municipality can do regarding the initiatives that were included in the Community Agreement of Ovejas… in the context of the Plans for Collective Reparations PRC we see that institutions do not come to commit… it is important not to create false expectations in communities... one day you [talking to members of communities] will get tired of so many meetings. While you make the diagnosis [of the municipality] I already know that, you could have asked me... we know that because the PDET is the same included in the PRC and in the plan of development of the municipality […]

Some campesinos seemed disappointed by his discourse. I was also surprised. I thought that the mayor's words were misplaced. I was expecting a more encouraging discourse even though it is clear that the implementation of the peace accords and the PDET face different challenges. In fact, a campesino leader expressed his discomfort publicly at the end of the first part of the event, by saying: "the PDET are part of the peace accords and the money will come not only from the municipality." The ART's manager presented a more optimistic perspective:

> The PDET is part of the comprehensive rural reform which was born from the peace accords, it has been constructed in a participatory and staggered way. The state has been creating an institutional structure to respond to these needs […]

After the previous speeches, the state official coordinating the event introduced the actors participating in the municipal stage. These included officials from the mayor's office, the 32 delegates of the *grupo motor*, victims including the *mesa de víctimas* (representatives of victims at the local level), members of the subjects of collective reparation, social organizations, members of NGOs, other members of the *institucionalidad* such as the Unit of Victims and the National Land Agency, and members of academia (I and another researcher). She explained:

> Only members of rural communities participated in the *veredal* stage and the *grupo motor* since the purpose of the methodological design of the PDET was the participation from below, from the citizen, but today we are in the municipal level and the PDET is constructed not only there [communities] but by all actors in the *territorio*. We all participate in the construction of PDET because it is for peace […]

She also explained the two parts of the municipal level, the pre-commission and the commission and the methodology. Another state official explained in detail the previous stages and the preparatory dialogues organized before the municipal assembly. These dialogues included different groups, such as youth, women, social organizations, local state officials and other relevant actors at the local level.

In the context of the pre-commission we organized in groups according to each thematic pillar. I joined the group Reconciliation, Coexistence and Peace building. Our group was formed by some delegates of communities, a state official from the Unit of Victims, the *personero municipal*, a state official from the ART, and respectively two members of a humanitarian organization and an NGO. In this stage, I was allowed to participate in the discussions as a researcher working with rural communities, not only as an observer. Based on a draft elaborated by the *grupo motor* in the previous stage and the preparatory dialogues with organizations, we worked on the vision of territory for the next 10 years and discussed the diagnosis of the municipality concerning our pillar. The discussion centered on topics such as victims' rights, gender approach, security for rural areas and social leaders, impact of the armed conflict on the social fabric, convivence, return plans, collective reparations, conflicts associated to land restitution, among others. At the same time, the groups working on the other thematic pillars discussed on the topics relevant for each pillar.

In the afternoon and morning of the following day we continued working in groups according to the different thematic pillars. In our group we examined the eleven and five initiatives proposed for our pillar, respectively, by the *grupo motor* in the Community Agreement and by women in the context of the preparatory dialogues. Groups working on other pillars also did the same. We made the existent initiatives more concrete and unpacked them if they included several initiatives in one. This was more of a technical task, although several other new initiatives were also added based on the discussion among the participants in our group and the five initiatives proposed by participants in the preparatory dialogues with women. In the afternoon of the second day we met in the auditorium and a member of each group summarized the work done concerning the initiatives for each pillar. Finally, after the presentation of the vision for the municipality,

elaborated by some delegates of the *grupo motor*, the pre-commission ended. The municipal vision emphasized the agricultural vocation of the municipality of Ovejas, food sovereignty, reparation for victims and rights to health, education, decent housing, and other elements.

The commission began in the afternoon of the second day. The ART official said that there were 174 initiatives in total concerning all the thematic pillars and a vision for the municipality. During that afternoon participants ranked these initiatives according to criteria related to the concept of poverty. In the morning of the following day, the delegates of the *grupo motor* selected eight of their members who would participate in the PDET at the regional level and six more delegates of communities who would be in charge of social control regarding the implementation of the plans... The 174 initiatives regarding all thematic pillars, the vision for Ovejas and a municipal diagnostic are the components of the Municipal Agreement for Regional Transformation of Ovejas. After the hard work over three days, the event ended with the signing of the agreement by the major of Ovejas and the manager of the ART (Fieldnotes, Meeting for formulate Municipal Agreement for Ovejas, August, 2018).

The skepticism of the mayor regarding the formulation and implementation of the plans was evident, as shown in the vignette. This is not completely unjustified, considering that previous state processes, in particular the collective reparations, have faced problems regarding the lack of commitment of regional and national state institutions and the partial or non-compliance with most measures in these plans.

Even though these plans were approved few years ago, their implementation has been poor, especially regarding issues that go beyond the work done by the Unit of Victims. The Unit focuses more on the processes of social repair in these communities, although it is also in charge of coordinating other institutions. Several other measures included in the approved Plans of

Collective Reparations in Ovejas, especially related to social public policy, such as construction of health centers, the aqueduct for the *veredal* zone, productive projects, which were lost or suffered damage during the war, have seen little progress. Although the PDET, the Plans of Collective Reparations in Ovejas and the Development Plan of the municipality share common aspects, the first one cannot be reduced to the latter, contrary to what the mayor stated.

In addition, the discourse of the mayor disregards the role that participation of rural communities could have in a context where these populations have been marginalized and, in most cases, excluded from decision making concerning development of their territory, particularly concerning policies designed by the national government and institutions. In other cases, participation has been limited. In the context of the peace accords and specifically the PDET, participation of rural communities is seen as a form of inclusion of regions and populations traditionally excluded, and a different form of building citizenship and territorial development.

The vignettes of the preassembly and the municipal assembly presented above, but also the *grupo motor*, also show that the formulation of the PDET involved a multi-level participatory process. It started with rural citizens and incorporated other local actors and organizations at the municipal level through the preparatory dialogues and the participation of some of them in the municipal assembly.[32] The main process of community' involvement in the identification of problems and initiatives took place at the *veredal* and community level (*grupo motor*).

The work done in each thematic pillar at the municipal level was intended to make more concrete the initiatives proposed by communities in the previous stage and incorporate the ones

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[32] The regional level worked in a similar way, but I do not analyze that stage here. This process also included the creation of the Red de Aliados Estratégicos RAE (Network of Strategic Allies) of Montes de Maria, comprised by social and community organizations, academia, NGOs, the private sector and other key actors, who will be in charge of overseeing the implementation of these plans.

proposed in the preparatory dialogues by several organizations. We also added a few others initiatives based on the discussion between the delegates of communities and the other actors participating in each group. Part of the work at this stage was also to make sure that the initiatives incorporated in the municipal agreement reflected the gender and ethnic approach and that the proposals of the organizations of victims and processes of collective reparations were included.

Everyday encounters and interactions between officials and citizens are a scenario where building trust in institutions also takes place. Lazar (2008) notes that citizenship is also built in these encounters. In the context of my observations during the formulation of the PDET, I saw this process not only as a space for participation of communities but also a scenario for building trusting relationships between rural communities, institutions and officials. Respect, the recognition of human dignity and of the capability of these communities to define what is central for their development are also important aspects to rebuilding citizen-state relationships. Rosaldo (2013), for example, considers that human dignity, well-being and respect convey a sense of full citizenship. In Montes de María, where multiple human rights violations, abuses, and humiliation in rural communities took place not only at the hands of illegal armed actors but also at the hands of state agents, human dignity and respect are considered important by campesinos in their interactions with state officials.

Scholars have shown that peacebuilding and reconstruction after armed conflict involve rebuilding not only social but also political relations (Pouligny, Chesterman and Schnabel 2007) between multiple actors, including the state and communities. Rebuilding these political relations also takes place at the level of everyday encounters between officials and citizens and involves building trust, issues concerning respect and the recognition of human dignity of populations that have been victimized. Regarding this topic, one state official from the ART mentioned: "today

society is different and the *institucionalidad* is as well [in comparison with the times of armed conflict in Montes de María]. I feel that what differentiates the *institucionalidad* is also its state officials; one feels that today people relate differently to state officials in the region. It not only depends on the *institucionalidad* created for the PDET, but also on the official who makes of his/her practice a different relationship with the communities" (Interview with team of ART, July, 2018).

In contexts of 'post-conflict' transition and implementation of peace agreements this is not a minor matter since many dimensions of these agreements are implemented by governments and state institutions. However, for rural inhabitants building trusting relationships also involves seeing concrete results regarding state policies, claims of rights by communities, and the fulfillment of the commitments and promises made by institutions and officials to its citizens. For many of my interlocutors, rebuilding relationships with institutions is an ongoing process due to the only partial or non-fulfillment of previous promises in the context of previous state policies or claims to rights.

6.6 Conclusions

One year after the formulation of the Municipal Agreement for Regional Transformation of Ovejas and the Plan of Action for Regional Transformation PATR of Montes de María, I traveled back to Ovejas and met with some campesinos in rural areas during a short follow up visit of three weeks in August 2019. Several interlocutors told me that after almost one year there had not been progress yet regarding the implementation of the PDET.

I also went back to the office of the ART in Sincelejo to talk with the coordinator and other officials. Scheduling the interview was very difficult since several members of the ART's regional team had been in Bogotá attending meetings with the national ART and planning the following steps of implementation of the PDET. Finally, I was able to visit the ART office in Sincelejo. While nothing was happening yet in rural communities in Montes de María regarding the implementation of the plans, the ART office was full of activity that day. Officials were very busy.

The coordinator of the ART told me that there were budget problems but that they have been working on structuring projects related to the initiatives proposed by the communities. The ART was also socializing the plans already formulated with the candidates for mayor and governor participating in the regional elections in October 2019. These local and regional authorities together with institutions of the regional and national level play a central role in the implementation of the PDET.

The implementation of the PDET was taking place at a very slow pace and the contact between the ART and rural communities had been limited during nearly one year since the formulation of the plans, and this increased uncertainty in these communities. However, the ART was planning to organize some meetings with members of the *grupo motor* who participated in the formulation of the PDET in different municipalities to inform them of how the implementation of the plans is going and what is coming to the region. With the exception of a few leaders, several campesinos did not know what was going on in the ART's offices or when the implementation of the plans was going to take place.

The slow pace regarding the implementation of the PDET was also related to the change of the national government in August 2018, elected with the support of the parties which opposed the peace accords. In spite of the initial difficulties associated with the change of government, the

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process of implementation of the PDET recently began in the region. However, it is still too early to evaluate the implementation of these plans since this process is just beginning.

In this chapter, I focus on the process of the formulation of the PDET to examine citizen-state relationships and experiences of the state in campesino communities as part of the implementation of the Final Agreement. Rather than only examining the reactions and experiences of rural communities regarding these plans and the participatory process during their construction, I also explore narratives of state abandonment, and aspects concerning the precarious living conditions and access to rights in rural communities, as central aspects that have shaped experiences of the state and citizen-state relationships in these communities.

I point out that narratives of state abandonment by campesinos speak of one of the ways in which the state has been experienced and is imagined by rural communities in a context where several state processes and other interventions have taken place during the last decade. These narratives refer to the precarious living conditions in which rural inhabitants still live due to the incapacity or unwillingness of the state to properly guarantee social and other rights of populations, but also reflect the effects of past state interventions in rural communities. Narratives of state abandonment do not mean lack of institutional presence in rural areas or that nothing has been done in these communities, but rather that this presence has not translated into a significant change in the living conditions of these populations.

I show that campesinos' reactions and their engagement with the process of formulation of the PDET were shaped not only by the promises of renewal, postconflict and welfare for the rural population and encounters with the ART officials, but also by their previous experiences and encounters with state processes in the region. Although there was hope among some campesinos, given the national character of the peace agreement and greater possibilities of compliance

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regarding its implementation, other inhabitants were also skeptical due to the partial fulfilled or unfulfilled state promises in the context of previous state processes in Montes de María.

The participatory process in the formulation of the PDET not only privileged a bottom-up approach but also relied on a multi-level participatory processes starting with rural citizens and incorporating other local actors and organizations in the municipal and regional level. Despite the critiques by NGOs, grassroots organizations, and campesinos regarding some aspects of the participatory methodology, the formulation of the PDET during one year constituted a real effort to create spaces for the active participation of rural communities in the definition of what they consider central for development in the context of the implementation of the peace accords.

The focus on the visions of territory in rural communities and the participatory process, as part of the territorial approach contemplated in the Peace Agreements, is an important step in reshaping citizen-state relationships in rural areas and building more trusting relationships between communities and institutions. Nevertheless, this also requires the fulfillment of the promises and commitments of state institutions and officials to rural citizens.

I point out that the concept of acts of citizenship proposed by Isin and Nielsen (2008) is useful for analyzing some of the implications of the formulation of the PDET and specifically the participatory process regarding citizen-state relationships in rural communities. The active participation of rural communities and encounters among rural inhabitants and other key actors in the process of formulation of the PDET can be seen as a breakthrough in a context where the participation of communities is often limited and where institutions and officials often respond to claims to rights through half-hearted efforts or only partial compliance.

However, the participation of communities in the formulation of the PDET, understood as an act of citizenship, does not automatically translate into a broader or more permanent change of

citizenship practices, but rather creates new possibilities that could lead to change. In this context, it is important to see how the process of formulation and implementation of the PDET could impact citizenship practices in the long term, as implementation unfolds and interactions between communities and state officials and claims to rights continue taking place. The PDET and the participatory process of communities also established obligations to local and regional authorities and other institutions regarding the rights of these communities and development.

The plans already formulated also created opportunities for rural communities regarding their social, economic, cultural, political and environmental rights, but these rights still need to materialize on the ground. The effective access to these rights will depend on the capacity of these communities to demand the compliance of the plans and the willingness and capacities of national and territorial governments and other institutions to implement what was agreed in the PATR for the region and the municipal agreements. The implementation of these plans not only requires the efforts of the ART but also of several other state institutions, bureaucracies and governments at the national and territorial level.

Finally, the PDET is not only an instrument that rural inhabitants and state officials can defend, but its formulation and implementation can be seen as another dimension where the state is produced and reproduced in the rural areas affected by armed conflict and where the implementation of the peace accords are taking place in the present 'post-conflict' conjuncture. This process has involved encounters and interactions between rural communities, bureaucracies recently created such as the ART, old institutions and authorities, and other regional and local key actors. It has also been also a space for the circulation of discourses of renewal, post-conflict, and welfare for rural communities that at the same time meet images and narratives of state abandonment constructed in the region.

7.0 Conclusions

After decades of armed conflict in Colombia, the signature of the Final Agreement between the government and the FARC guerrillas in November 2016 not only brought hope and opportunities for creating the conditions necessary for building peace and guaranteeing the political, socio-economic and other rights of rural populations, but also marked the beginning of several state processes that have been taking place as part of the 'post-conflict' transition and the territorial approach of the agreements.

However, these more recent state processes do not take place in a vacuum, but rather in the context of previous state practices, images, and the related experiences of inhabitants. Several previous state processes, including those centered on victims of the armed conflict and reparations, have been taking place in the region of Montes de Maria in the post-conflict transition for almost a decade. Montes de María is one of the sixteen regions prioritized of the country to implement the agreements.

As mentioned in the introduction, policy makers and governments have often depicted the state in the regions affected by the protracted armed conflict as weak, ineffective, or even absent, using more or less elaborated versions of these state images. Even the Final Agreement emphasizes the relevance of guarantying the presence and the 'effective action of the state' in regions affected by abandonment, institutional weakness, and the effects of armed conflict. The presence of the state and its effective action is presented as a central axis of peace (Final Agreement 2016).

In this study, I shed light on the workings of the state at the local level and how campesino communities have experienced and interacted with institutions and officials during past and current state processes that are critical to understanding the ongoing post-conflict transition. I examined

relationships and encounters between campesino communities and the state and related experiences during the last decade of armed conflict and the ongoing post-conflict transition in the mountain zone of Montes de María.

More specifically, I examined forms of political violence carried out in campesino communities by state agents and the long-term effects of that violence on communities and their relationships with the state. I looked at how citizen-state relationships and experiences of the state are reshaped in the context of current state processes that are framed as part of the post-conflict conjuncture. I also analyzed some continuities of violence as they unfold in everyday life in campesino communities after the decline of the armed conflict in the region. I also examined state images constructed in these territories by populations and governments and the meanings of those images.

By focusing on these dimensions of analysis, this study contributes to understanding state building from below, with a focus on rural areas, in contexts of transition from armed conflict to post-conflict conjunctures. I presented a selective account of relationships and encounters between campesino communities and state institutions and officials by focusing on localized state processes that are relevant to understanding the ongoing postconflict transition in the region of Montes de María.

I examined the more recent past by focusing on forms of political violence and other practices carried out in campesino communities by state agents during the last decade of armed conflict and militarization in the mountain zone, and on some of the lasting effects of that political violence on campesinos communities and their relationships with the state. I also examined state processes centered on victims of the armed conflict and reparations and the implementation of the Final Agreement, specifically the Development Plans with a Territorial Focus (PDET). These are

the primary state processes unfolding in rural communities in this region as part of the post-conflict transition.

Experiences of the state and encounters with officials in campesino communities in the ongoing post-conflict transition in Montes de María are shaped by current state processes focusing on the victims of armed conflict and reparations, efforts to reshape citizen-state relationships and fulfill the rights of rural communities in the context of the peace accords, and by the different ways in which the violent past is still salient in the present. Memories, lasting effects of violent practices, and claims for truth and reparations are some of the ways in which the past is still present in these territories. However, these effects are not limited to the damage caused to communities, but also involve relationships between communities and the state in the long term.

In this research I also showed that state processes framed as part of the post-conflict transition are also shaped by previous experiences and encounters between populations and institutions and officials and by previous state interventions in rural communities.

The current post-conflict transition and state processes to address the effects of the violent past, provide services and rights, or transform precarious socio-economic conditions of rural populations shape in specific ways current experiences of the state and citizen-state relationships in campesino communities. These processes are an opportunity for change but also for continuity.

In what follows, I summarize the main arguments presented in this study, the primary findings, and the implications for the understanding of some dimensions of state building from below in rural communities in the transition from protracted armed conflict to the 'post-conflict' conjuncture.

7.1 Main arguments and findings

In chapters 3 and 4, I examined how violent state practices carried out in campesino communities during the armed conflict, and especially during the militarization of the zone, have shaped and continue to shape relationships with the state and related experiences in these communities.

I argued that forms of control and state violence carried out in campesino communities during the last decade of armed conflict and the militarization of the region shaped the everyday experiences of these populations in rural areas by constituting them as subjects at the margins of the state. However, some of these forms of violence, their effects, and the damage produced in communities have become less visible in the aftermath of the intense armed conflict in the region in a context where policies centered on the victims of the armed conflict and reparations have been taking place during the last years.

I suggested that the invisibility of these forms of violence began to be produced during the militarization of the zone through the denial of human rights violations by officials and other local authorities and has continued to be reinforced through different mechanisms in the post-conflict transition. However, rural inhabitants also find ways to make these past forms of violence visible, their effects, and the damage produced on communities. They do this through memory practices and in encounters with state officials, particularly in processes of collective reparations and lawsuits against the state.

Among the forms of political violence carried out in campesino communities by state agents during the last decade of armed conflict in the region, I focused on mass arbitrary detentions of campesinos and other inhabitants. I examined the effects of mass detentions on campesino victims and their communities and the specific ways in which this violent state practice have

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continued to shape relationships with the state in the aftermath of armed confrontation in the region. I examined how this practice operated as a mechanism of state terror in a context where not only the guerrillas but also the civil population became the targets of the counterinsurgency strategy in rural areas.

I argued that mass detentions and the incarceration of campesinos have worked on the emotional and affective dimensions of relationships with the state not only through the immediate effects of these practices on the victims and communities, such as producing fear and humiliation, but also through their long lasting-effects and by keeping the victims attached to the state and its processes in the long term. I showed that mass detentions and related experiences have continued shaping relationships with the state through the lasting effects of these practices on campesinos who were detained and incarcerated. Among these effects are the damage to the *hoja de vida* and to campesinos reputations, new temporary detentions after being acquitted at trial or having completed sentences and fear of being detained again. These effects also include affective dimensions in relationships with state actors, long-lasting lawsuits of reparation and claims for truth and reparations.

In chapters 5 and 6, I examined how citizen-state relationships, encounters with the state, and related experiences are reshaped in the context of policies such as the Law of Victims and Land Restitution and the peace accords in the post-conflict transition.

I argued that everyday experiences of some campesino communities in the municipality of Ovejas after the decline of the armed conflict in the region have been shaped not only by the continuity of violence but also by multiple interactions and encounters between bureaucracies and rural communities, and their processes of claiming rights in the attempt to reshape relationships.

The Law of Victims and Land Restitution created opportunities concerning the rights of the victims and has translated into a greater state presence in rural areas through institutional processes and bureaucracies. However, campesinos experiences of the state have also been shaped by the partial or slow fulfillment of state promises of reparations and the continuity of precarious living conditions in rural communities.

The continuation of violence evidenced by the threats to social leaders and the continuity of structural violence has coexisted with institutional efforts to reshape relationships between rural communities, especially the victims of the armed conflict. This coexistence shows the specific ways in which the state has been present in the aftermath of the intense armed conflict in the region.

By focusing on the case of La Finca la Europa, in which land dispossession in 2008 converged with the community's organization in defense of the land, multiple interactions with state institutions, and a process of land restitution since 2013, I examined and illustrated the previous arguments.

I focused on the process of construction of the PDET to examine citizen-state relationships and experiences of the state in campesino communities in the context of the implementation of the peace agreements and the post-conflict transition. While I focused on the participation of campesinos and their experiences and reactions during the formulation of these plans, I also explored narratives of state abandonment and issues concerning living conditions as crucial factors that have shaped citizen-state relationships and encounters with state institutions in these communities in the region.

I suggested that the formulation of the PDET offer an opportunity to reshape citizen-state relationships and build more trusting relationships by relying on a territorial approach and the participation of rural inhabitants in the definition of what they consider to be central for their

development. I showed that the active participation of rural communities could be seen as a breakthrough in a context where it is often limited. However, this does not necessarily translate into a more permanent change of citizenship practices, but rather creates new possibilities for change. In turn, the real access of populations to rights have yet to materialize on the ground since the PDET has only recently begun to be implemented.

This research also sheds light on some continuities of violence in the post-conflict transition and images of the state constructed in the mountain zone of Montes de María mainly by inhabitants, but also by governments. Some chapters address these central concerns in some way.

Regarding the continuities of violence, in chapters 5 and 6, I refer to structural violence as evidenced by the precarious living conditions of campesino communities, social inequality, and overall poverty during the armed conflict and in its aftermath. Although previous state processes have attempted to improve the living conditions of populations in the mountain zone, these measures are often palliatives. They have not involved a significant structural change in rural areas.

Death threats against community leaders have continued in the aftermath of the armed conflict in the region, which are not only limited to the cases of land claimants but also target other social leaders such as representatives of the *mesas de víctimas*. Although after the significant decline of the armed conflict in the mountain zone of Montes de María most rural communities have experienced a relatively calm period, localized conflicts and manifestations of violence have affected some communities to a greater extent, as in the case of La Finca La Europa.

Finally, I also examined state abandonment as an image that has been constructed and is used by rural inhabitants in daily conversations and encounters with officials. Narratives of state abandonment refer to one of the ways in which the state has been and continues to be imagined in the region. In the context of the armed conflict, these narratives by campesinos alluded to the lack

of social investment and the scarce presence of the police, the military, and other institutions in rural areas, and mainly to the presence of state actors unable to show care and protect campesino communities.

The image of state abandonment continues to be used today in the context of a greater institutional presence and other state processes taking place in the region. In this context, narratives of state abandonment are used by rural inhabitants to question the lack of social investment in rural communities, to refer to the precarious conditions in which rural inhabitants still live or to claim social, economic, and other rights. Images of state abandonment should not be confused with images of state absence, which are often mobilized by governments to justify the militarization of territories or other interventions.

I also showed that the image of the weakness of the state was used by the government to justify the militarization of Montes de María and the implementation of measures of states of exception during the 2000s. In turn, the Final Agreement refers to the image of the 'effective action of the state' to overcome abandonment, institutional weakness, and the effects of the armed conflict.

These state images are relevant to understanding how the state is represented by governments and imagined and experienced by inhabitants. These state images also acquire often concrete materiality as they translate into state policies, interventions, and actions of populations who mobilize these images to claim rights or question the ways in which state institutions and officials have been present in these territories.

7.2 State building in contexts of protracted armed conflict and 'post-conflict' transitions

This research contributes to ethnographically analyzing state building from below in contexts of transition from armed conflict to post-conflict conjunctures by focusing on localized state processes and relationships, interactions, and close encounters between campesino communities and state actors in the region. I focused on processes that have been experienced in campesino communities and manifested in their lives through encounters with officials, state practices, and the effects of these practices on rural populations. I also looked at how campesinos have responded to state processes by engaging, questioning, and resisting them. In this way rural inhabitants also participate in the coproduction of these processes.

I also examined state images and explored emotional and affective aspects of relationships between campesino communities and the state as essential dimensions that help to locate the state at the level of everyday experiences of ordinary people (Friedman 2011). However, I examined not only encounters and state processes currently taking place but also some aspects of the recent past, in particular violent practices. Both of them are relevant to understand the ongoing post-conflict transition.

This research showed that in contexts of post-conflict transitions after protracted armed conflict, understanding current relationships, encounters, and interactions between populations and the state requires an examination of the past and the specific ways in which past violence is still present or produces effects in the current context. Although memory of the past is one way in which past violence is still present, in this study I have paid attention to the long-term effects of past violence not only on communities, but also in shaping relationships with the state.

In fact, several current state processes taking place in these territories focus on redressing past wrongs, the long-term effects of violent practices on populations and communities, and

rebuilding trusting relationships. Issues concerning distrust are important when state agents have been incapable of protecting inhabitants from the violence of illegal armed actors and have also carried out significant violence and human rights violations in communities, as in the case of Montes de María.

I studied some relationships between campesino populations and state processes by following them over time and exploring continuities and discontinuities in the transition from armed conflict to the post-conflict conjuncture. This approach reflects in a better way the complexity of state processes taking place in these contexts and also questions the idea of rupture that the categories of armed conflict and 'post-conflict' often imply.

These contexts may experience rapid changes and be unstable in some respects while at the same time, other dynamics seem to remain the same over the years or continue in different ways. Most chapters of this study explore different dimensions of state processes or relationships and interactions between campesino populations and state actors over time.

Some ethnographic research on the state has emphasized on examining the everyday practices of the state and encounters between state institutions, bureaucracies, and populations to understand how the state is constituted and produced in everyday life. For example, according to Gupta and Sharma (2006), everyday practices of the state are relevant to understanding how state institutions are recognized and reproduced through the daily work of bureaucracies. In turn, everyday encounters with the state shape "people's imagination of what the state is and how it is demarcated" (p. 17).

This approach is relevant to understanding several dimensions of state processes and encounters between populations and state actors taking place in the post-conflict conjuncture. However, I call attention to the relevance of exploring how memories of the past, long terms effects

of past violence, and previous experiences of the state also shape encounters and responses of populations in the context of current state processes, and to how the past is implicated in everyday practices and images of the state.

However, post-conflict conjunctures are not only about how the past continues shaping the present but also about how populations, state officials, and other actors transform the effects of past violence, and new possibilities and expectations emerge in these contexts. The circulation of other narratives and images of the state, and other practices and state processes, also change relationships, encounters, and interactions between populations, institutions, and officials in these contexts.

This research also has implications for discussions about political and state violence in contexts of armed conflict and post-conflict transitions. Some anthropologists and other scholars recognize that state building cannot be separated from the deployment of state violence. This is the case not only in contexts of armed conflict, but also in post-conflict transitions.

While in contexts of armed conflict, the analysis of political violence often focusses on seemingly extraordinary or spectacular forms of violence such as torture, political assassinations, extrajudicial executions, massacres, and guerrilla and paramilitary conflict, it is important to analyze how these forms of violence connect with the seemingly ordinary workings of the state such as those taking place within courts, prisons, and other civilian institutions.

This point is important to understanding how forms of political violence carried out against communities can also take place through ordinary workings of the state, how populations experience them, and how their effects can linger in the post-conflict transition. I showed these connections in the case of the mass arbitrary detentions of campesinos that took place as part of counterinsurgency state practices in the region.

Finally, the ways in which the Colombian state is produced in contexts of armed conflict and experienced by populations is not necessarily the same as in contexts where the conflict has not manifested directly. People's specific locations are relevant in shaping their understandings and experiences of the state. In this research, I focused on rural populations that have experienced the state mostly at its territorial and social margins in a context of protracted armed conflict. After the significant decline of the armed conflict in the region, rural communities have experienced the state through the presence of various bureaucracies and institutional processes focusing on reconstruction, the victims of the armed conflict and their rights. However, in this research I also showed that there is room for variation and that not everyone has experienced violence or other state processes in exactly the same way.

7.3 The 'post-conflict' transition

Drawing on some authors, I stated that the category of 'post-conflict' could be problematic because it does not reflect the complex temporalities and experiential layers of conflict, particularly for those who have experienced it (Shneiderman and Snellinger 2014). It often relies on the assumption that the post-conflict period represents a rupture with the past and an entirely distinct new period, or that violence has completely ended (Gagnon and Brown 2014). It is imagined as an exceptional moment where violence and the arbitrariness of the past are left behind (Rojas 2008).

However, rather than ignoring the post-conflict category, I considered it important to examine it critically in order to understand how actors on the ground use it in specific contexts, its meanings, and what kind of effects it produces. I also suggested that studies of post-conflict

transitions should focus on examinations of specific state processes and encounters between populations and state actors taking place in these contexts.

In Colombia, the post-conflict category has been used more broadly since the beginning of the negotiations between the Colombian government and the FARC guerrillas, and especially in the context of the implementation of the peace accords. In Montes de María, allusions to '*el post-conflicto*' became common during the last decade after the dismantling of the guerrilla organizations in the region. The category began to be used even though localized forms of violence continued to occur in some campesino communities and the massive purchases of land began to take place in the region. It is an example of how the post-conflict category can be used to deny ongoing tensions and assert normalcy (Shneiderman and Snellinger 2014).

Some interlocutors were also critical of the use of the post-conflict category during the years that followed the dismantling of the guerrilla organizations in the region and instead associated *el post-conflicto* with the current context of the implementation of the peace accords. From this perspective, the post-conflict transition is not only associated with the cessation of the armed conflict but also with social investment and significant attention to the needs of campesino communities. In the current context of the implementation of the peace accords, the category circulated more broadly among rural communities, particularly in the meetings between members of these communities and officials from the ART during the formulation of the PDET. However, for campesinos, this opportunity for changing precarious living conditions has yet to result in changes materializing on the ground.

Examinations of the relationships between campesinos communities and the state in the context of current state processes and how some violent state practices that took place during the

escalation of the armed conflict have continued manifesting in its aftermath are also key to understanding some aspects of the post-conflict conjuncture in the region.

In this study, I showed that death threats made against social leaders and structural violence related to the persistent inequality and poverty in rural communities have continued in the aftermath of the intense armed conflict in Montes de María. These continuities do not mean that this period has been the same as the armed conflict or that nothing has changed, but rather speak of the transformations of violence in the region.

The timeline or the idea of rupture that the post-conflict concept often implies does not fit the dynamics on the ground in rural communities and their experiences. For example, while the government declared Montes de María free of guerrillas around 2008, mass detentions of campesinos and other inhabitants were still taking place during that year. In the following years, temporary detentions continued in some cases because detention warrants still appeared in the police database even years after acquittal or completion of sentences for rebellion. Also, campesinos who came back from jail continued to be watched, stigmatized, and even persecuted. This shows that the state counterinsurgency practices continued operating after the government declared that the area was free of guerrillas and that Montes de María was a post-conflict zone. However, these practices became less frequent over time in the region.

Finally, the post-conflict category should not be analyzed only in terms of violence. In the first section of these conclusions, I have summarized some of the ways in which citizen-state relationships, encounters with the state, and related experiences are reshaped in the context of state processes such as the Law of Victims and Land restitution and the peace accords. An important point to highlight here is that multiple state processes can take place simultaneously as part of the

post-conflict transition, and can produce different and even contradictory results and effects on communities that are important to study.

7.4 Directions for further research

In this study, I examined issues concerning the invisibility and visibility of state violence in the context of interactions and encounters between state actors and populations after the significant decline of the armed conflict in the region and particularly during more recent years. I pointed out that invisibility and visibility of violence and their effects on populations reflect power relationships on the ground between different actors that can change over time. Further research should provide more in-depth examinations of this issue. It is especially important considering that the work of the Truth Commission and the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, as part of the implementation of the peace accords, could have implications regarding the dynamics of producing invisibility and visibility of violence, and specifically state violence, at the national and also regional and local levels.

The Truth Commission was created as a state institution independent of the government to clarify the patterns of the armed conflict and its causes, satisfy the rights of victims and society to know the truth, and promote coexistence in the territories affected by the conflict. It is currently gathering testimonies from victims of the conflict and other relevant actors and receiving reports from different actors and organizations in the territories affected by the armed conflict, including Montes de María. Given the territorial approach of the Commission, it may play an essential role in producing other truths and making more visible the dynamics of the armed conflict and the violence perpetrated by legal and illegal armed actors that are less known in the region.

Further research should also examine issues concerning memory-making in the Colombian territories that have been affected by armed conflict as an area where the state is also produced. As Krohn-Hansen (2009) points out, "memories give form to the practice of politics and the construction of the state in a deep sense" (p. 11).

Memory-making has been taking place in the Colombian territories affected by armed conflict over several years as a result of the work of grassroots organizations, NGOs, and state institutions. Some campesino communities have participated in these processes, and particularly communities under processes of collective reparations. Further explorations should also look at interactions between state institutions and officials and rural communities regarding memory construction in the context of the state processes taking place as part of the peace accords, particularly the Truth Commission.

In this project, I analyzed the Law of Victims and Land Restitution and the PDETs as state processes through which state institutions and officials have been present in recent years as part of the post-conflict transition in the territories that have been affected by armed conflict. These processes have translated into new bureaucratic apparatuses that interact with rural communities and are scenarios for the circulation of practices and state images and narratives about the state.

I focused on one case of land restitution, but further research could study more broadly the implications and effects of these processes concerning relationships between rural communities and the state. Such research could examine other cases, including those involving only conflicts between campesinos. Future research should also analyze the impact of the collective reparations on relationships between rural communities and state institutions in greater depth and with a more ethnographic orientation. In particular, it is important to further examine how trusting relationships are rebuilt in the post-conflict transition in the region.

The analysis concerning the ways in which citizen-state relationships and experiences of the state are shaped in the context of the PDET focused on the processes of its formulation. Further research is required to analyze the concrete impact of these plans in guaranteeing rights of rural communities and reshaping citizen-state relationships during the implementation of these Plans in Montes María in the following years.

There have been many challenges regarding the implementation of the peace agreements in Colombia, including the continued presence of illegal armed groups in several regions, threats and assassination of social leaders and FARC guerrilla ex-combatants and the opposition of right-wing political parties and other sectors of society to the accords. These dynamics have also affected Montes de María.

The Colombian state is responsible for implementing many components of the agreements. This has already translated into state processes currently unfolding in territories most affected by armed conflict that involve new and old bureaucracies interacting with populations as part of these processes. Despite the challenges mentioned, the implementation of the Final Agreement with the FARC guerrillas continues unfolding in the region of Montes de María. In addition to providing opportunities for state building and improving living conditions in rural communities, the implementation of the Final Agreement also creates conditions that facilitate building peace in the long-term in the context of joint efforts of rural communities, NGOs, state institutions, and other relevant actors in the territory.

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