

**FORCED DISPLACEMENT AND RACIALIZATION: THE COLOMBIAN
EXPERIENCE**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis compares the differential processes of racialization from a Colombian perspective experienced by three groups of displaced migrants in the global North and South. First, internally displaced persons (IDPs) who have been forced to move to the Coffee Region in Colombia after leaving their homes in rural regions between 2000 and 2015. Second, Colombian refugees who had similarly sought asylum in Toronto, Canada, and who migrated between 1997 and 2004. Third, Venezuelan migrants who arrived in the Coffee Region in Colombia between 2014 and 2018 due to the deteriorating living conditions and crisis in Venezuela. This research contributes to further theoretical debates on critical geographies of race, postcolonial geography, and urban geography in relation to forced migration. The objective of this research is to question understandings of race and racism, particularly how space and mobility affect the dynamics of racialization through such diverse experiences of forced displacement. The main argument of this research is that the process of forced displacement (as experienced by the Colombian IDPs and Venezuelan migrants to the Coffee Region in Colombia, and for the Colombian refugees to Toronto), results in spatialities of racialization. While escaping violence and economic hardship, forced migrants are subjected to oppressive and exclusionary processes that make them vulnerable to systemic racism and microaggressions. This comparative research uses a combination of qualitative methodologies, including in-depth semi-structured interviews, participant observation, field diary, and policy and document reviews. The research reveals that despite different experiences of internal displacement or transnational migration, spatial processes of racialization present similar dynamics of white supremacy as the dominant racial ideology.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Colombian social and armed conflict has caused the forced displacement of more than eight million people since the 1980s. About 90% of them have become internally displaced persons (IDPs), while the rest have become refugees in other countries (CNMH, 2015). In addition, more than one million Venezuelans have migrated to Colombia between 2014 and 2018 due to the economic, social, and political unrest that internal and external forces have caused in their country (Gandini et al., 2019). This dissertation research compares the processes of racialization experienced by three groups of people in the global North and South: First, IDPs who have been forced to move to the Coffee Region after leaving their homes in rural or urban spaces in Colombia; second, Colombian refugees in Toronto, Canada; and third, Venezuelan migrants who have arrived at the Coffee Region in Colombia in recent years. My argument is that the process of forced displacement for Colombian IDPs and Venezuelan migrants to the Coffee Region in Colombia, and Colombian refugees to Toronto, results in processes of racialization. Escaping violence and economic hardship, people are subjected to othering processes that make them vulnerable to systemic racism and racial microaggressions. Despite different experiences of internal displacement and transnational migration, these processes of racialization present similar dynamics because they are a manifestation of white supremacy as the dominant racial ideology.

Colombia has experienced a social and armed conflict since the 1940s. There have been multiple attempts to end this conflict peacefully. However, its complexity, the position of its multiple actors, the influence of connected dynamics such as the international drug trade and the United States (US) geopolitical grip on the region have put insurmountable obstacles on the road to peace. This research contributes to the discussion on peace initiatives between the Colombian groups and illegal armed groups, including paramilitary and subversive forces, by following the

national and transnational trajectories of IDPs and refugees and examining structural injustices such as the intersection of race with spatial, social, and economic exclusions. This project builds on previous research I conducted for a MA in Human Geography at York University, *Internalized Racism among Mestizas: Geographies of Inclusion and Exclusion in Public Spaces -Pereira, Colombia-* (Gutiérrez, 2015). One of the main conclusions of this study is that race is a fluid and dynamic category in Colombia and that space, along with the interactions that develop in the microgeographies of daily life, plays an essential role in processes of racialization. People who did not experience racism in the places where they grew up, primarily in rural spaces, experienced discrimination in the urban spaces where they had moved for different reasons, such as education, work, and life circumstances. This research found that the experiences of racial discrimination were even more substantial for people that had been forcibly displaced from their territories, as their material destitution interlocked with racial and class exclusions.

The research *Forced Displacement and Racialization: The Colombian Experience*, was conducted in the metropolitan area of Toronto, Canada, and Pereira/Coffee Region, Colombia. The rationale for researching these two cities/regions is based on the relevance of the problem identified in both spaces and personal experience working and living in these two cities. The Coffee Region is a space that historically has received IDPs in the Colombian social and armed conflict (Toro, 2005). I completed my undergraduate studies in Pereira in 2006, where I have experience researching and working in popular education, community organizing, and peacebuilding with Afrocolombian, Indigenous, and *Mestiza* IDP communities, both rural and urban.

Afrocolombian, Indigenous, and *Mestiza* are very relevant categories in this research. They are understood following legal, formal, and practical categorizations. “Afrocolombian” and “Indigenous peoples” are individuals and communities that are legally recognized as part of a

group, either a collective territory in the case of Afrocolombians, or an Indigenous nation and *resguardo* (reserve) in the case of Indigenous peoples (Presidencia, 1991). A second complementary understanding is giving by the Colombian census (Paschel, 2013), which recognizes self-identification as a source of categorization for people who belong to these groups. Self-identification is important for several reasons: it recognizes that many people identify as Afrocolombians or Indigenous, but are not part of a particular territory; it breaks away from geographical divisions that confine these two groups to rural spaces; it opens space for racial fluidity because one person can self-identify with one category in one census, but can change their racial identification in the following census. The definition of the *Mestiza* category is more complex because it is not defined in the Colombian constitution and therefore does not receive special rights or territories, as in the case of Afrocolombians and Indigenous peoples. Although the *Mestiza* category is recognized in the Colombian census via self-identification. Additionally, this research explores a practical division between *Mestiza campesinas* (rural) and urban *Mestizas*. A division that has important consequences in terms of racialization, which intersects heavily with class in urban scenarios to determine which *Mestizas* are subjected to racism and who are going to be spared from this form of discrimination. This dynamic is connected to the rural/urban division that affects Afrocolombians and Indigenous peoples. Finally, this research problematizes racial categories arguing that racial classifications are not static and that space plays an important role in processes of racial formation and racialization.

On the other hand, Toronto presents the highest population of Latin Americans living in Canada (Veronis, 2010), including many Colombian refugees. I have lived in Toronto for ten years. My work experience in protective accompaniment and community organizing in Toronto and Canada has been primarily with Indigenous communities. However, I have been part of different networks to strengthen solidarity among the Latin American population, social-justice

initiatives in Colombia, and Indigenous struggles in Canada. I completed a MA degree in Human Geography in Toronto with a thesis that included research in Pereira during summer 2014 (Gutiérrez, 2015). I stay connected with this region, visiting at least once every year. The experience of living, working, and studying in Pereira and Toronto provided me with important academic, organizational, and community contacts that facilitate the research and a personal connection with the two spaces.

Another critical reason to conduct this research in Pereira is to challenge a false narrative about the conflict in the Coffee Region. It is widely accepted that Pereira and the Coffee Region are some of the spaces that have been less affected by the armed conflict in Colombia. Two facts contradict this common belief. First, this region has received many IDPs escaping the armed conflict, particularly from the West-Andean Mountains, the Pacific Region, and other regions of Colombia (Toro, 2005). The most recent local government sociodemographic report indicates that between 1997 and 2011, Pereira received close to 32,000 IDPs (Alcaldía de Pereira, 2012). In more recent years, the Coffee Region has received many Venezuelan migrants escaping the economic, political, and social crisis in their nation (Gandini et al., 2019). According to different sources, such as *Asociación de Migrantes Venezolanos* (2021) and *Grupo Interagencial sobre Flujos Migratorios Mixtos* (GIFMM, 2020) there are close to 15,000 Venezuelan migrants in Pereira, and 22,000 in the Metropolitan Area,¹ most of them have migrated after 2014.

Second, Pereira might not have experienced armed combats, genocide, massacres, and forced displacement -common events in the Colombian armed conflict. These actions have taken place in spaces that can be characterized as rural, remote from the urban centers, and racialized. These are spaces racialized by the discourse of tropicity --defined briefly as a discourse that builds a

¹ Pereira's Metropolitan Area includes the municipalities of Dosquebradas, La Virginia, Pereira, and Santa Rosa. All in the department of Risaralda and within Colombia's Coffee Region.

form of environmental Eurocentrism, where racialized people inhabit remote “backward” lowlands and people who claim whiteness live in central “civilized” temperate regions (Castro-Gómez, 2005; Clayton and Bowd, 2006). The discourse of tropicality plays a central role in Colombia’s racial ideology, it connects with racism, exclusion, forced displacement, and the social and armed conflict. Thus it is helpful to explain how *Mestiza campesinas* are racialized in Colombia. This dissertation explores this concept in depth in chapters 3, 5, and 8.-- However, the absence of the horrors of the war does not exclude Pereira and the Coffee Region from experiencing other manifestations of the armed conflict. Alvarez (2015) argues that the appearance of peace and economic prosperity enjoyed by Colombia’s Coffee Region, based mainly on the coffee industry, has historically attracted IDPs to this region, but that this economic prosperity has been founded over illegal economic activities connected to the conflict. These activities include controlling illegal drug trafficking within the city, known as micro-trafficking, and money laundering through legal business. Alvarez (2015) reviews the historical existence of hitmen training locations, drug trafficking, violence, and a culture that tolerates illegality called *narcocultura* (narco-culture) in Pereira’s Metropolitan Area. These pervasive practices were fertile ground for the paramilitary forces that took over the region and the city in the 2000s.

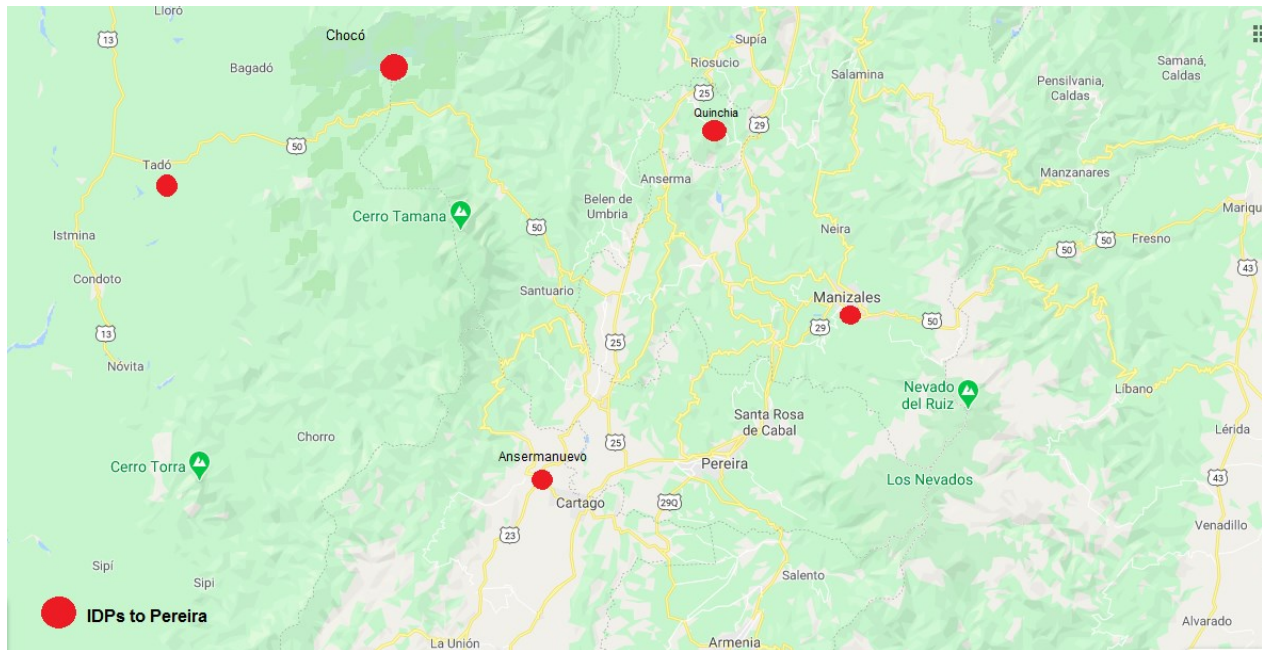
Alvarez’s work (2015) reveals that the same paramilitary groups causing forced displacement in the West Andean Mountains were also controlling urban spaces in Pereira. The urban violence experienced within the city is closely connected to the armed conflict taking place in marginalized and racialized spaces. Networks of violence connect these disparate locations. This dynamic reveals that there is a connection between the violence and forced displacement experienced by Afrocolombians, Indigenous peoples and *Mestiza campesinas* in rural contexts, and the death threats and violence suffered by Colombian refugees in urban contexts. Instead of reading violent events such as urban gangs’ violence and young men working as hitmen, we

should understand these events as manifestations of armed groups exercising territorial control in urban spaces and young men being recruited for the same armed groups. Pereira has never been at the margin of the conflict. It has always been at the center of it. Colombians have been alienated by the geography of the conflict at the national scale, where the horrors take place in faraway places inhabited by racialized people, the imaginary spaces of tropicity. Similarly, the inhabitants of Pereira have been desensitized to the acts of violence that take place in marginalized neighbourhoods in the city. These acts include massacres, selective killings, forced disappearances, forced displacement, and death threats. Only when these acts are moved from marginalized neighbourhoods to urban central spaces, they become exceptional, creating a security crisis and deserving the attention of the local administration and the citizens (Alvarez, 2015).

Map Figure 1: Origin of Colombian IDPs and Venezuelan migrants to Pereira's Metropolitan Area and Colombian Refugees to Toronto



Map Figure 2: Origin of Colombian IDPs to Pereira and the Coffee Region



Note: The maps used for Figures 1 and 2 have been taken from Google Maps and adapted by the author. The yellow dots show the sites or places where Colombian refugees interviewed for this research were living before seeking refuge in Canada. The red dots show the spaces where Colombian IDPs and Venezuelan migrants interviewed for this research were living before being displaced to Pereira and the Coffee Region. Map Figure 2 presents an enlargement of the selected frame in Map Figure 1.

Toronto is the other urban region where this research was conducted. Veronis (2010) distinguishes five waves of Latin American immigration to Canada. The first group consisted of White Latin Americans in the 1950s, primarily Europeans that had migrated to Latin America in previous years. The second group included economic immigrants from the Andean countries of Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru. The third wave was political refugees fleeing from the Argentinean, Chilean, and Uruguayan dictatorships in the 1970s. The fourth cluster was war refugees from Central America in the 1980s. The fifth group is the ongoing immigration of Latin Americans under the skilled worker program, which started in the 1990s. This includes the arrival of Colombian refugees since the 2000s in this last wave. Veronis (2010) notes, 150,000 or 30% of the Latin American population in Canada is located in Toronto. This is the largest

concentration of Latin Americans in the country and explains that their socioeconomic conditions are precarious, “they have lower levels of income and homeownership, and higher rates of poverty, female-headed households and high school dropouts. Politically, the group remains underrepresented in the Canadian processes of decision-making, especially in the higher levels of government.” (177) The collapse of the welfare state and the rise of neoliberalism² have affected the socioeconomic situation of Latin Americans in Toronto, particularly of the last wave.

Osorio (2006) identifies the difficulties that Colombian immigrants and refugees face in Canada. Some of them are inevitable, such as the harshness of winter, the challenge of learning a new language, and adapting to the dominant culture. Some of the difficulties intersect with race and class. These include anti-immigrant sentiment, discrimination in the job and housing markets, a precarious legal status, feeling excluded in the receiving society, poverty and welfare, stigmatization, and difficulties to succeed in the education system. Canada has adopted multiculturalism as a policy (Canadian Multiculturalism Act, 1985; Bannerji, 2000; Thobani, 2007; Dhamoon, 2009), recognizing the nation’s cultural diversity and the contributions of its

² Neoliberalism is a theory of political economic practices. These practices are multidimensional and affect economic systems at the local, national, regional, and global scales. Some of the neoliberal practices and consequences that are relevant to this research, specifically to the contexts where it developed (Pereira/Coffee Region and Toronto), include increasing social divisions based on class, race, ethnicity, gender, among others (Low and Smith, 2006). Deindustrialization, replacement of middle-income jobs with low-wage work (Peake, 1993), and loss of jobs, which in many cases forces people to migrate (Guarnizo and Diaz, 1999). Roll back of labor rights, redistribution of wealth and income in favour of the dominant classes at the national scale and from developing to developed nations at the international scale (Harvey, 2007). Imposition of “disciplinary neoliberalism” and the individualization of risk (Rygiel, 2010, 67) with cutbacks in social programs and emphasis on individual self-sufficiency. Destruction of the regulatory framework to protect the environment, role of the government as guarantee of neoliberal transformations, and criminalization of opposition against these neoliberal initiatives (Harvey, 2007). In short, neoliberalism represents an “assault on liberal welfarism and democratic values” (Gilbert, 2007, 19). There is a relationship between neoliberalism and multiculturalism, that has affected the later orienting it towards competitiveness. There is also a relationship between neoliberalism and ethnicization, where many communities have reclaimed ethnic status to access rights granted by multiculturalism politics (Álvarez and Sachi, 2003; Bretón and Martínez, 2014; Wickstrom and Young, 2014; González, 2015). In some cases, these “ethnic” rights are used to confront neoliberal practices. In other words, parallel to the imposition of neoliberalism, there has been an increase in processes of ethnicization (Restrepo, 2013).

citizens from all backgrounds. Consequently, it has implemented policies that seek to preserve the different cultural heritages present in Canadian society.

Multiculturalism is more present in urban spaces, where the population tends to be more diverse (Amin, 2002; Gilbert, 2007; Almeida, 2012; Basu and Fiedler, 2017). However, multiculturalism's discourse of tolerance (Brown, 2007) does not guarantee that IDPs and refugees are not going to experience racism and discrimination in urban spaces. Multiculturalism and neoliberalism have developed simultaneously during the last decades in Canada. Neoliberalism has affected multiculturalism, transforming its original focus on building a "more inclusionary Canadian national identity" (Gilbert, 2007, 12) for an emphasis on "competition, individual responsibility, and contribution" (Gilbert, 2007, 13). These changes have affected non high-skilled immigrants and refugees in Canada. This research found that in this context, refugees present some competitive disadvantages when compared to economic migrants, who have been accepted based on English and French language proficiency, professional training, and work experience (Veronis, 2010). Additionally, working class immigrants and refugees are pushed to marginal neighbourhoods. They often must relocate in urban spaces that have been ravaged by deindustrialization and neoliberal policies (Dikeç, 2002; Basu and Fiedler, 2017).

The three populations that this research seeks to compare, IDPs and Venezuelan migrants/refugees in Pereira, and Colombian refugees in Toronto present some important commonalities and differences. All three groups have been forced to leave their homes by circumstances that escape their control. IDPs and refugees have been displaced by the same armed conflict, while Venezuelans have been forced to migrate due to their country's social, political, and economic crisis. In this case study, these three populations have ended up in urban centers of Pereira and Toronto. This study therefore sheds light on the impact of the Colombian armed conflict at the national and international scales and refugees' transnational dynamics that

connect Canada, Colombia, and Venezuela. IDPs and refugees are not included in the bodyscape of the nation (Ahmed, 2000), neither in Pereira nor Toronto. They are not seen as part of the normative population. They are categorized as the “Other” in the receiving society, putting them in a vulnerable situation where they are subjected to racism and discrimination. This dynamic fits into the debate about legal or formal and ordinary or substantive citizenship (Gilbert and Dikeç, 2008; Staeheli et al., 2012). It also offers an opportunity to highlight IDPs and refugees’ agency and their reaction to racism and initiatives to resist it and transform it. This research found that Colombian refugees in Toronto were very aware of racial dynamics and confront racism in different ways. While Colombian IDPs, with one exception, and Venezuelan migrants did not pay much attention to racism and how it impacts them.

Table 1: IDPs, Colombian Refugees and Venezuelan Migrants: Commonalities and Differences

Colombian IDPs	Colombian Refugees	Venezuelan Migrants
Forced displacement due to the armed conflict	Forced displacement due to the armed conflict	Migrate because of Venezuelan crisis
Displace mostly from rural spaces	Displace mostly from urban spaces	Migrate mostly from urban spaces
Low levels of education	High school and university educated	High school and university educated
Racialized population: Afrocolombians, Indigenous, <i>Mestiza campesinas</i>	Racialized and non-racialized population	Racialized and non-racialized population
Displace at the national scale	Displace at the international scale	Displace at the international scale
Racialized in spaces they seek refuge	Racialized in the spaces they seek refuge	Racialized in the spaces they seek refuge

This dissertation is organized into three parts and comprises nine chapters. The first part contains Chapter 2: Methodology: Conversation, Participation, and Observation, and Chapter 3: Theorizing Race and Space in a Transnational Context. The methodological chapter discusses the combination of qualitative methods used: mainly in-depth semi-structured interviews,

complemented with participatory observation, field diary, and documents review. The theoretical chapter elaborates working definitions on the ideology of racism and processes of racialization. It argues that white supremacy is the dominant ideology of racism on a global scale and it has influenced the ideologies of racism predominant in North America (white supremacy based on biology and science) and Latin America (*mestizaje*). *Mestizaje* is a key concept in this dissertation. It has multiple meanings, but it can be defined briefly as the dominant racial ideology in Colombia and most nations of Latin America. *Mestizaje* is an ideology that recognizes racial fluidity, but that, as a consequence of European colonialism, privileges White bodies. This concept is explored in depth in chapter 3.

The second part presents contextual chapters. Chapter 4: Historical Context of the Colombian Social and Armed Conflict explains the social reality of Colombia. Chapter 5: Tracing Forced Displacement in Colombia: Conflict and Development Strategies, expands Chapter 4, exploring the dynamics that have caused the forced displacement of IDPs and Colombian refugees. These two chapters as a whole delve into the Colombian armed conflict, the causes of displacement, the power of discipline imposed by the armed actors, and the economies before displacement. Chapter 6: Venezuelan Forced Migrants in Colombia examines the current situation in Venezuela, its government, its economy, its ideology, and the violence that is affecting Venezuelans and forcing them to leave the country. Finally, Chapter 7: Colombian Refugees in Toronto explores the context where Colombian refugees arrive in Canada, their socio-economic situation and transnational activism.

Chapter 8: Racism and Other Forms of Oppression comprises the third section. It analyzes the data obtained from interviews with IDPs and Venezuelan migrants in Colombia and Colombian refugees in Toronto. This chapter analyzes themes of identity and racial identification, tropicality, internalized, structural, and everyday racism. Racism at the workplace,

in academic, and activist spaces; and gender dynamics. The final chapter of this dissertation presents the conclusion. This chapter presents a brief summary of all the chapter, reflections about the key findings, and the contributions of this dissertation.

Argument, Research Objectives, and Questions

The main argument of this research is that the process of forced displacement for Colombian IDPs and Venezuelan migrants to the Coffee Region in Colombia, and Colombian refugees to Toronto, results in processes of racialization. Escaping violence and economic hardship, people are subjected to othering processes that make them vulnerable to systemic racism and racial microaggressions. Despite different experiences of internal displacement and transnational migration, these processes of racialization present similar dynamics because they are a manifestation of white supremacy as the dominant racial ideology. This research aims to contribute to anti-racist studies, to understand better the decades-long effort to build peace in Colombia, and to comprehend how peace initiatives can integrate anti-racist work. On a theoretical level, this research aims at making relevant academic contributions to critical geographies of race, postcolonial geographies, and race studies. This research contributes to the search for peace from different perspectives. First, it follows the national and transnational trajectories of the people most affected by the armed conflict: internally displaced persons and Colombian refugees. The outcomes of this research offer insights about how they see the social and armed conflict and the actions that they have taken, particularly refugees' organizing and transnational solidarity work, to support the peace initiatives advanced between the Colombian government and the subversive groups *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC, Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces) and *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (ELN, National Liberation Army). Second, this research includes Venezuelan migrants who have arrived in

Colombia in the last decade and whose country is experiencing external aggressions that could have catastrophic socio-political consequences in the region. Third, this research addresses structural injustices such as the intersection of race with spatial, social, and economic exclusions.

The questions that guide this research examine processes of racialization connected to forced displacement caused by conflict-related dynamics and has a geographical component related to mobility.

What is the relation between forced displacement and racialization?

- What are the reasons internally displaced persons (IDPs), Colombian refugees, and Venezuelan migrants are driven to leave their homes?
- What are the ideologies of racism and the mechanisms and practices that normalize, promote and reproduce processes of racialization that affect IDPs and Venezuelan migrants in Colombia and Colombian refugees in Canada?
- What are the experiences of racism in the spaces where IDPs, Colombian refugees, and Venezuelan migrants arrive?
- How do IDPs, Colombian refugees, and Venezuelan migrants relate to the peace processes in Colombia? What is the role of anti-racist work in these peace initiatives?

2. METHODOLOGY: CONVERSATION, PARTICIPATION, AND OBSERVATION

Methods

This study seeks to understand the differences and similarities among the experiences of racialization of displaced migrants in relation to Colombia -namely, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and Venezuelan migrants in the Coffee Region, Colombia, and Colombian refugees in Toronto, Canada. Herbert (2009) explains that the comparative approach generates “broad assessments of the relationships between places and various social forces. As one contrasts multiple places, one can catalogue both the factors that generate difference and those that compel similarity [...] such comparative analysis yields theoretical lessons of trans-local consequence.” (77) The three populations included in this research represent multiple locations, as each population has constructed a sense of place in the spaces where they come from and where they have arrived. Mendoza and Morén-Alegret (2013) explain that the sense of place is “built upon everyday experiences and subjective feelings, [it] can be so intense that it becomes a central element in the construction of an individual’s identity” (2).

Forced displacement has shaped the sense of place of these three populations. Mendoza and Morén-Alegret (2013) argue that “transmigrants take actions, make decisions, feel concerns and develop identities within social fields that connect them to two or more societies simultaneously” (3-4). However, despite the fact that their sense of place is “constructed in transnational spaces” (Mendoza and Morén-Alegret, 2013, 8), where space is a general anonymous space, their sense of place is “expressed in places” (Mendoza and Morén-Alegret, 2013, 8), where place is a particular space in which people have experiences and invest feelings and emotions. Ahmed (2000) argues that immigrants constitute home in the motherland, not in the host nation, where

they are the “strangers.” According to Ahmed (2000), these transnational movements contribute to the formation of identity through the exercise of remembering collectively. Ahmed (2000) invites us to theorize identity simultaneously through movement and loss, and to question who travels, when, how and why, and if this movement is voluntarily or forcefully. In this research, IDPs, Venezuelan migrants, and Colombian refugees arrive in urban spaces. There is a dynamic of transnational urbanism because these actors “are materially connected to socio-economic opportunities and political, structural, and cultural practices found in cities at some point in their transnational circuits” (Mendoza and Morén-Alegret, 2013, 8).

This comparative research uses a combination of qualitative methodologies drawn from geographical research (Laurier, 2003; Longhurst, 2003; Butz, 2009; Elwood, 2009; Herbert, 2009; McDowell, 2009; Mendoza and Morén-Alegret, 2013) that allow for the emergence of the sense of place and transnationalism. The qualitative methodologies include in-depth semi-structured interviews as the primary method, complemented with participant observation and entries into a field diary, along with review of policy and other relevant documents. The documents reviewed included census, policy, and NGO reports to access statistical information concerning the three communities.

Table 2: Methodology, Research Questions, and Data

QUESTIONS	DATA	METHODS
1. What is the relation between forced displacement and racialization?	IDPs, Venezuelan migrants (VM), and Colombian refugees (CR) histories of displacement.	In-depth semi-structured Interviews.
1.1. What are the reasons why IDPs, CR, and VM are driven to leave their homes?	IDPs, VM, and CR experiences of racism in the city.	
	IDPs, VM, and CR reactions to racism and anti-racist initiatives.	
1.2. What are the ideologies of racism and the	Notes from participant observation and community engagement.	Participant Observation/ Field Diary.
	Personal reflections.	

mechanisms and practices that facilitate the processes of racialization that affect IDPs and VM in Colombia and CR in Canada? 1.3. What are the experiences of racism in the spaces where IDPs, CR, and VM arrive? 1.4. How do IDPs, CR, and VM relate to the peace processes in Colombia? What is the role of anti-racist work in these peace initiatives?	Review of literature about the Colombian social and armed conflict. Review of literature about race, racism, and racial relations in Colombia (Pereira) and Canada (Toronto). Review of statistical information concerning IDPs and VM in Pereira and CR in Toronto. Review of policies concerning IDPs and VM in Colombia and CR in Canada. Review of NGO and grassroots documents about anti-racist work specifically related to IDPs and VM in Pereira, and CR in Toronto.	Review Documents.
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This study compares the racial dynamics of two different contexts: Pereira/the Coffee Region in Colombia and Toronto in Canada; and the displacement of three different groups: IDPs from Colombia to the Coffee Region, migrants from Venezuela to the Coffee Region in Colombia, and refugees from different regions of Colombia to Toronto. These dynamics present a methodological challenge for this study. The methods used and the questions asked in the design of this research allow to explore the particularities of each context and migration flow, but also to establish the differences and commonalities among these dynamics.

Interviews

The primary method of this research is in-depth semi-structured interviews. Extended interviews complemented with observations over a long period are one of the best methods to understand the context and the relation between people and place and make inferences about dynamics and processes (Elwood, 2009; Herbert, 2009; McDowell, 2009; Mendoza and Morén-Alegret, 2013). Moreover, interviews are a method that allows depth when exploring processes and dynamics that cause particular events, help understand people's actions, human relations, and

delve into interactions, feelings, personalities, structures of power within a “detailed understanding of sociospatial experiences” (Mendoza and Morén-Alegret, 2013, 5).

The initial research plan was to conduct interviews only with IDPs and Colombian refugees, but this plan changed given the impacts of the Venezuelan crisis in Colombia. Since 2014, Venezuelans have migrated to Colombia and other Latin American countries in unprecedented numbers due to the social, political, and economic crisis that their nation is experiencing. While conducting research during winter and summer 2018, many Venezuelan migrants were moving to different parts of Colombia, including the Coffee Region. The reaction of Colombians to this massive migration was discriminatory and racist in many cases. Racial microaggressions were present in People’s comments, social media, and news reports. This dynamic was very relevant to the social reality of Colombia and was closely related to the research subject. Venezuelan migrants were included in this comparative study to understand further the added complexities of how people who are forced to migrate experience racism.

Initially, the research plan was to use written informed consent before conducting interviews in Colombia, but it became evident that it was more appropriate to use an oral informed consent document instead to minimize interviewees’ risks (Clark-Kazak et al., 2017). I presented interviewees with the informed consent document if they felt secure signing it, but I also offered them the oral informed consent document when they were uncomfortable signing it. I read the oral informed consent document aloud in those situations and gave them a copy for their records. This document has the same information as the informed consent document, except that it does not require their signature. This modification respected the needs of some of the interviewees, who preferred not to sign documents for several reasons. Historically, Afrocolombians,

Indigenous peoples, and *Mestiza campesinas*³ distrust forms and documents that require signatures. On some occasions, their forced displacement and dispossession involved deception with signed documents (CNMH, 2015). Some of the interviewees, particularly in the IDPs group, did not have the literacy skills to read and sign the document. Most of the Venezuelan migrants were in the process of achieving legal status in Colombia and did not feel comfortable signing any document before they had regularized their situation. The interviewees received a copy of the oral informed consent document and follow-up information that included support services such as settlement assistance, support for people that have suffered forced displacement and events of racism, physical and psychological health, among others.⁴

Some of the participants were paid to contribute for their time.⁵ These interviewees were independent workers, and the time they dedicated to the interview took away working paid hours. Other participants who were part of a collective initiative saw the interview as an extension of their organizing work. In this scenario, interviewees were already interested in participating in the research, did not expect any inducement to participate, and were not losing valuable working hours. All research was conducted following the Code of Ethics at York University (York University, 2022). A total of 25 individuals were interviewed for this research. They were selected using snowball sampling. These contacts were given by friends, academics, NGO

³ This research uses the term *Mestiza* as a normative category for masculine and feminine categories. Regularly, the termination [o] in Spanish is used to designate masculine gender, while the termination [a] represents feminine gender. Having *Mestiza* as the normative category is a very small step to accept Anzaldúa's invitation to create new masculinities, for men to have "the courage to expose themselves to the woman inside them and to challenge the current masculinity" (1987:106). Normative words are essential in the construction and reproduction of discourse; in this case the use of *Mestizos* as the normative category would reproduce patriarchy, which facilitates "[a] system of social structures and practices through which men dominate, oppress and exploit women" (Gregory et al, 2009, 522). Normative words are present and are imposed through discourse in daily life, thus if we start using alternative words we might be able to challenge oppression in language and practice (Foucault, 1972).

⁴ The different Informed Consent Forms are include in appendices A, B, C, and D.

⁵ Interviewees were paid COL\$30,000 (CAN\$10). This was the regular rate in Colombia for academic interviews in 2018.

workers, and members of grassroots or community organizations. The first interviewees provide new contacts for possible participants.

The interviews were in-depth semi-structured interviews; almost all were individual, except two collective interviews involving three participants each. These collective interviews were spontaneous, as I was prepared to conduct individual interviews, but the interviewees preferred to do a collective interview in both cases. Nine interviews were conducted with Colombian IDPs and eight with Venezuelan migrants in the Coffee Region, and eight with Colombian refugees in Toronto. A brief characterization of the interviewees indicates that most of them self-identified as *Mestizas* (17), White (4), Afrodescendants (3), and Indigenous (1). The *Mestiza* group includes six *Mestiza campesinas*. All Colombian refugees identified as *Mestizas*. The Afrodescendant group includes two Afrovenezuelans and one Afrocolombian. Ages ranged from the 20s to the 60s. There were eight interviewees in their 30s, seven in their 20s, six in their 40s, three in their 50s, and one in her 60s. Sixteen participants identified as women and nine as men. There is a clear division between rural and urban backgrounds as all IDPs were forcibly displaced from rural spaces, while all Colombian refugees and Venezuelan migrants lived in urban spaces before they had to leave their countries. The class and the socio-economic situation of interviewees will be discussed later in the thesis due to the complexity connected to the rural-urban division, legal status, and the timing and place of migration. General information about the participants is presented in Table 3: Interviewees Characterization. All names have been replaced with pseudonyms except for Lina Marcela, who was interviewed as a psychologist in charge of a program of the Unidad de Atención de Víctimas (UAV, Victims Attention Unit), the Colombian government office that attends to IDPs. The following table (Table 3) summarizes the interviewee details.

Table 3: Interviewees Characterization

Interviewee	Interview	Information
Colombian IDPs		
Uriel	Semi-structured	<i>Mestizo campesino</i> , in his 50s, male, informal worker. Displaced to the city of Pereira from Risaralda’s West Andean Mountains.
Eleonora		<i>Mestiza campesina</i> , in her 60s, female, seamstress at a cooperative. Displaced to Pereira Metropolitan Area from the South-East Antioquia department.
Milena		Embera-Indigenous, in her 20s, female, seamstress at a cooperative. Displaced to Pereira Metropolitan Area from Chocó department.
Maura		<i>Mestiza campesina</i> , in her 30s, female, seamstress at a cooperative. Displaced to Pereira Metropolitan Area from Caquetá department.
Lisandro		Afro-Colombian, in his 20s, male, community organizing and ethnoeducator. Displaced to the city of Pereira from Chocó department.
Damaris		<i>Mestiza campesina</i> , in her 20s, female, worker at a gas station. Displaced to the city of Pereira from Risaralda’s West Andean Mountains.
Marco		<i>Mestizo campesino</i> , in his 30s, male, civil engineer and community organizer. His family has experienced at least three forced displacements in the Magdalena Medio region, Caldas and Risaralda departments. They finally settled in Pereira's Metropolitan Area.
Lina Marcela		White, in her 30s, female, psychologist. She works at the UAV (Victims Attention Unit).
Leonardo		<i>Mestizo campesino</i> , in his 40s, male, community organizing and agronomist. Displaced to the city of Pereira from Risaralda’s West Andean Mountains. When the interview took place, he had already returned to Quinchía, the municipality where he was displaced.
Venezuelan Migrants		
Teresa, Karen y Violeta	Collective semi-structured	T: Afro-Venezuelan, in her 30s, female, seamstress worker at a factory. From Caracas. K: Afro-Venezuelan, in her 30s, female, seamstress worker at a factory. From Caracas. V: White, in her 20s, female, seamstress worker at a factory. From Caracas.
Bernarda, Paloma y Agustín		B: White, in her 20s, female, fast food restaurant owner. From Caracas. P: <i>Mestiza</i> , in her 20s, female, fast food restaurant worker. From Caracas. B: <i>Mestizo</i> , in his 50s, male, informal worker. From Caracas.
Camilo		C: White, in his 20s, male, informal worker. From Valencia.
Rebeca	Semi-structured	B: <i>Mestiza</i> , in her 40s, female, hairdresser. From Caracas.
Colombian Refugees		
Soledad	Semi-structured	<i>Mestiza</i> , in her 40s, female, nurse. From Bogotá.
Alba		<i>Mestiza</i> , in her 40s, female, popular educator. From Bogotá.
Muriel		<i>Mestiza</i> , in her 30s, female, filmmaker. From Bogotá.
Simón		<i>Mestizo</i> , in his 40s, male, electric engineer. From Bucaramanga.

Ignacio	<i>Mestizo</i> , in his 40s, male, community worker. From Bogotá
Pilar	<i>Mestiza</i> , in her 30s, female, artist and community worker. From the Coffee Region.
Leandro	<i>Mestizo</i> , in his 50s, male, legal aid worker. From Cali.
Susana	<i>Mestiza</i> , in her 30s, female, community worker. From Bogotá.

The diversity among the interviewees was critical to incorporate an intersectional analysis (Valentine, 2007) that allows this research to remain open to how categories such as gender, sexuality, and class, among others, intersect with the racism experienced by IDPs, Venezuelan migrants, and Colombian refugees. The research took into account privilege and power relations while selecting the interviewees and doing the interviews (McDowell, 2009) and tried to include a diverse group of people in terms of race, ethnicity,⁶ class, gender, and age. I approached the interviewees as an independent researcher without giving the impression that I was a representative of any organization or institution, except for my affiliation to York University. If I had contacted interviewee candidates through organizations or institutions, the pool of participants would have been larger. However, the research did not follow this path as I did not want to be perceived as part of these organizations or institutions for two reasons:

First, people who are beneficiaries of NGO or state programs have shaped their discourse to the organization's needs to get as many benefits as possible (DeHart, 2009). The research does not judge this on ethical grounds because it is aware that this response might be a strategic action born out of necessity. Research wise, this dynamic may hinder the quality and bias of the answers that it would receive and makes it more challenging to address some subjects that they have

⁶ This research understands ethnicity as a social and political construct that is mobilized to obtain political advantages. At the same time, it recognizes the performative and identity dimensions that communities display when they mobilize to obtain ethnic status and special ethnic rights, and the tensions created by different actors in this process. In some instances, this research brings in understandings of ethnicity that respond to the "genetic approach" (Restrepo, 2013, 15), which sees ethnic status as biologically given and closer to the concept of race. This does not mean that this research endorses this understanding, but that it recognizes how this approach has influenced the debate about ethnicity.

deemed, based on their own experience of the relationship between answers and rewards, inconvenient for their interests (Cope, 2003; Jensen and Glasmeier, 2009). Second, people who have benefited or participated in these programs are most likely to be exhausted, even re-traumatized, of talking about the subject. This dynamic is part of the weariness caused by “the interview society” (McDowell, 2009, 162). In some extreme situations, they have felt used by these programs, particularly if they have not received the benefits promised in exchange for their participation (Clark-Kazak et al., 2017).

The research contacted potential interviewees independently to avoid these scenarios. The downside of this approach is that the research had access to a smaller pool of participants and that it was more challenging to get interviews, increasing an already complicated dynamic that most researchers using interviews as a method face, which is identifying, contacting, negotiating, and making appointments; a process that can take weeks for every potential participant (Jackson and Russell, 2009). McDowell (2009) argues that in a sense, “the social researcher is a supplicant, dependent upon the cooperation of interviewees, who must both agree to participate and feel willing and able to share with the interviewer the sorts of information on which the success of the work will depend.” (McDowell, 2009, 161). Despite this disclaimer, the quality of the research was not affected because after completing the interviews with each group, the number of interviews had exhausted the subject, had reached the saturation point, and to continue conducting interviews would have been redundant.

Another challenge that the research faced when trying to convince people to participate was the subject’s sensitivity. People who have been forced to leave their homes are deeply traumatized by the events that caused their displacement. They have painful memories that they are unwilling to share easily (Clark-Kazak et al., 2017). The research tried to be respectful of this situation, to find “[w]ays of reducing distance, of emphasizing interconnection” (McDowell,

2009, 169), and not to force interviews on potential participants that were deeply traumatized by the events. For example, when I visited the San Isidro community project at the edge of Pereira's Metropolitan Area, I was told to interview *Doña Gladys*.⁷ I was accompanied by one of the leaders of the community process to *Doña Gladys*' house. She came to the door to attend to us, but as soon as the leader mentioned that I wanted to interview her about her experience of displacement, she started crying. She said that she does not like to talk about her forced displacement because it is full of painful memories, that she had lost a brother during that time. The situation was very uncomfortable for her and us. After leaving *Doña Gladys*' house, the leader said we could come back in a couple of days with the psychologist, who volunteers at the community center once a week. The leader explained that there are still many traumas that people are dealing with and that the interview could help them process those situations, and the psychologist could help counselling based on the interview development.

I returned to that community and conducted four interviews, with three women and one man that have been forcibly displaced from their homes and volunteered to share their experiences. The community leader did not suggest again to interview *Doña Gladys*, and I decided not to follow up on this potential interview to respect her position. There were a few other situations where potential participants declined to be interviewed because they did not want to remember traumatizing events. The research did not insist on conducting these interviews for ethical reasons. The research provided a list of organizations and institutions that could be helpful to interviewees dealing with trauma on the informed consent form. This list of organizations was collected based on recommendations from people in the field, in some cases members of these

⁷ Her original name has been replaced with a pseudonym to protect her identity. The "*Doña*" title added to Gladys' name in her community has been kept. In Colombia and the Spanish language, *Doña* is a title of respect given to the elderly or people who are highly respected in their communities.

organizations were part of conversations about the research and offered their support if necessary. One of our responsibilities as researchers working with people in contexts of forced migration is to “accept a duty of care” (Clark-Kazak et al., 2017, 12) with our interviewees. Interview questions are available in Appendix E. The questions did not necessarily follow the same order during the in-depth semi-structured interviews.

Building trust with participants was an indispensable aspect of the work given the sensitive topic of this research. The research tried to overcome this obstacle by conducting in-depth semi-structured interviews that allowed participants to expand as much as needed on the more important issues to them without losing the focus of the interview. Interview time ranged from one and three hours; and on some occasions, it was necessary to have more than one session to complete the interviews. The idea was to dedicate as much time as interviewees deemed necessary to build trust, share their stories and experiences. An indicator of the level of trust built in the interview process, which includes all the preparation work, is that on a few occasions, interviewees shared sensitive information on the condition that a particular portion was off-record and not transcribed (Jackson and Russell, 2009). In such cases, interviewees were generous in explaining why they did consider it inconvenient or even dangerous to have that information in writing. The research respected their request because none of these situations represented a legal or ethical breach (McDowell, 2009). Following the guiding principle of self-determination when researching situations of forced migration (Clark-Kazak et al., 2017), the identity of the interviewees is protected using pseudonyms and some details have been omitted with the same purpose. For example, some interviewees have held prominent offices or published academic and journalistic work, but these critical details have been left out to avoid identifying them and compromising their safety and security.

The semi-structured interviews offered a space where the research could interact with the information, modifying the questions according to the information that interviewees were providing and exploring the more relevant areas for the research. This format also allowed for interaction with interviewees. There were moments when the roles changed, and I had to answer some of the questions the research was asking or share my own experiences when interviewees were curious about and the information was relevant to the research. A significant element of this exchange of stories, experiences, and ideas, was being open about my positionality (Haraway, 1988; Jensen and Glasmeier, 2009; McDowell, 2009; Mendoza and Morén-Alegret, 2013). My experience working in the fields of human rights, social justice, popular education, and community organizing was essential to creating rapport with Colombian refugees in Toronto, who in many cases share similar backgrounds. Working in these fields with rural populations or Afrocolombians, Indigenous peoples, and *Mestiza campesinas* allowed me to understand the experiences and dynamics that affect IDPs. My experience as a migrant in Toronto was also a bridge to connect with Venezuelan migrants and Colombian refugees in Toronto.

In all these cases, my positionality and cultural and social capital were critical elements to connect and build rapport with interviewees (McDowell, 2009). Jensen and Glasmeier (2009) argue that it is crucial to recognize our social situatedness, “the perspective of the problem by the researcher and the positionality of the investigator relative to the problem” (82) and reflexivity, looking inward to our identities and outward to our relation with “the wider world” (83). The goal of the interviews was to learn about IDPs, Venezuelan migrants, and Colombian refugees’ histories of displacement and arrival to the urban spaces where they live in the present, their experiences of racism and discrimination in the city, how they deal with these experiences, and how do they resist individually and collectively to this form of oppression. Being open about my positionality and sharing my experiences was a small way to retribute interviewees’ generosity.

The 25 in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted led to an overwhelming amount of data. The transcripts of each interview range between 10 and 25 pages (Calibri type, size 11, single spacing). Altogether, the research yielded almost 500 pages to transcribe, read, organize, analyze, and interpret. It was an exhausting but rich process that helped me get familiar with the material and reinvigorate my excitement about the research. The first step in the process to analyze the data was to transcribe the interviews. Cope (2003) argues that “researchers doing qualitative work spend a lot of time reading and thinking about their material. By approaching the data with an open mind, researchers allow the data to ‘speak’ to them” (449). The second step was coding. At this point, the field diary from participant observation was also included in the data analysis process (Brown, 2008). Coding is a process to get intimate with the data, and the dialogue between theory and data is the base of original academic work (Cope, 2003).

The coding process consisted first in a descriptive stage and second of an analytical stage. In the descriptive stage, the research started to create emerging categories based on the frequency of interviewees’ comments. Fourteen codes emerged in this stage, it included codes such as “discrimination,” “exploitation,” and “peace process,” among others. Each one of these codes was subdivided in the three populations that are part of the research: Colombian IDPs, Colombian refugees, and Venezuelan migrants. In the analytical stage, the research reconciled these categories with more abstract categories based on theoretical ideas in the relevant fields (Cope, 2003; Herbert, 2009; Jackson and Russell, 2009) and the subdivision according to populations was discarded to facilitate an analysis that included all three groups. The research expects that the slow and detailed analysis process made use of all the potential of interviews as a method that illuminate meanings, relationships, and interactions (Elwood, 2009). The final categories used to classify the data build themes reflected in the chapters of this dissertation. This coding process borrows several steps from grounded theory, mainly those that privilege categories that emerged

from data collected on the ground, and reinforcing those categories with theory only when they have already been established (Glaser and Strauss, 1999; Charmaz, 2006).

The analysis of the information presented challenges of interpretation and representation. Representation is always a challenging activity for social researchers, especially when the researcher disagrees with the opinion of the interviewees. The research used triangulation of primary data with other data sources such as field diary, documents review, news articles, and theory to confirm the information (Cope, 2003), and reconcile different points of view or be able to represent them as fair as possible. The research expects that giving so much weight to interviewees' words can downplay the brutal analysis of people's lives as victims of structural inequalities.

Participant Observation and Field Diary

This research uses participant observation and field diary as complementary methods for in-depth semi-structured interviews. While participant observation is the method used to advance the research, the field diary is used to record data. Participant observation as a method is composed of two parts: "participant," which is to do, to act, and "observation," which is to be able to comment. Laurier (2003) recommends taking notes while participating or as soon as possible to record details that later could be forgotten. "Record as much as you possibly can, and even more importantly, try to write straightforward and detailed descriptions of the phenomena you are interested in. Record what you see and can make sense of and what puzzles you or upsets you" (Laurier, 2003, 137). According to this author, the main weakness of participant observation is that it is complicated to grasp its results due to the broad coverage of this method.

During the process of research, I participated in many unplanned activities that became an integral part of the fieldwork. These activities included group discussions, switching an

individual interview for a group interview, participating in community meetings and academic events, presenting the research or a subject related to different groups of people, and supporting community work in retribution for their participation or collaboration with the research. In some cases, I was accountable to a community organization that was the initial contact, but I was dealing with individuals on other occasions. In any case, I tried to be ethically responsible and respectful of the people and community participating in the research (Watson and Till, 2009) and to be aware of my positionality as a researcher (Haraway, 1988; Jensen and Glasmeier, 2009). These activities were not planned, they emerged spontaneously during fieldwork. Despite that these activities were not programmed, they were fundamental to building further insights into the context and people's lives, relationships, and trust with the people and communities willingly supporting the research. This research cannot stress how important it was to remain open to these spontaneous research opportunities.

The field diary kept during participant observation assisted in recording relevant details to improve participation. It was a tool that reminded me to stay alert during fieldwork. One of the advantages of participant observation over other qualitative methods is the opportunity to notice things and observe thoughtfully (Laurier, 2003). Field diary and participant observation allow understanding dynamics in a way that interviews would not permit. They provide an opportunity to contrast the information provided during the interviews, which is a space where participants have the opportunity to elaborate their answers. On the other hand, participants act spontaneously with discourses and practices in daily life, evidencing "what goes on in people's minds" (Jensen and Glasmeier, 2009, 89).

The field diary was used to record observations, spontaneous research opportunities, personal reflections, and even feelings elicited by the research (Butz, 2009), such as enthusiasm, frustration, despair, hope, nervousness, and excitement. According to Pilo (2010), critical human

geography studies that take into account affects and emotions “share a default methodology” that deploys “participation and observation.” (11) The field diary was an appropriate method to reflect on my positionality; it allowed me to blur the line between objectivity and subjectivity. It was a tool to question, criticize, deconstruct, and legitimate what the interviewees and other persons were sharing and my assumptions and reflections. The personal element was fundamental in this research because it affects me to a certain extent (Kobayashi, 2005). As a Colombian immigrant in Canada, I have a personal interest and commitment to advancing this research, creating spaces to bring together my theoretical work with the lived experience of Venezuelan migrants, Colombian refugees and IDPs, and transforming racial dynamics in positive ways. This objective aligns with my experience as a Colombian *Mestizo* living, working, and studying in the global North and with my previous experience in the fields of social justice, peacebuilding, community organizing, local development, and popular education.

Participant observation and field diary function as a bridge to connect with postcolonial geographies (Sidaway, 2000; Nash, 2004; Sharp, 2009; Roy, 2016), particularly its effort to address epistemic racism within the knowledge production complex (Robinson, 2003). This research pays attention to the particularities of the Colombian and Canadian context in a relational way, as it remains aware of the importance of bringing together knowledge produced in the global South and global North to create theories that are local and global simultaneously (Glassman, 2009). As a geographer who occupies an “interstitial place,” I am using my “in-between positioning as an advantage” (Peake, 2011, 762). The Field Diary reflects my “insights” as a member of the society studied in the research. My positionality provides me with a vantage point to challenge representations that reproduce power relations that affect me to some extent and contribute to critical geographies of race, postcolonial geographies, and race studies in Colombia (Butz, 2009). It is necessary to clarify that I am not claiming authority as an “insider”

that holds the “truth,” there might be “multiple truths” within this research, and mine is just one of them. Rather than that, I am using my position as an academic/activist within the margins, having one foot in the society that I am researching in the global South and the other foot in the academic world of the global North (Robinson, 2003; Sidaway, 2000; Butz, 2009; Glassman, 2009; Peake, 2011). This dynamic contributes to the transnational quality of this research.

3. THEORIZING RACE AND SPACE IN A TRANSNATIONAL CONTEXT

Introduction

My argument is that the process of forced displacement for Colombian IDPs and Venezuelan migrants to the Coffee Region in Colombia, and Colombian refugees to Toronto, results in processes of racialization. Escaping violence and economic hardship, people are subjected to othering processes that make them vulnerable to systemic racism and racial microaggressions. Despite different experiences of internal displacement and transnational migration, these processes of racialization present similar dynamics because they are a manifestation of white supremacy as the dominant racial ideology. This research adheres to the understanding that racism is a European invention instituted through the project of colonialism (Quijano, 1999; Escobar, 2003; Wynter, 2003; Dussel, 2004; Mignolo, 2005; Grosfoguel, 2012), contrary to Euro-centric views that locate the origin of racism during the enlightenment and the emergence of modern sciences, nation-states, and the French and Industrial Revolutions (Dewulf, 2015). This view also tends to limit the understanding of racism to biological and biopolitical approaches (Escobar, 2003; Grosfoguel, 2012). Smedley (1999) goes as far as to situate the origin of racism in 17th century United States, transferring notions of Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism to American exceptionalism. This Euro-centric literature is characterized by brushing aside knowledge produced in the global South and limiting its bibliography primarily to literature generated in English. With a great dose of irony, it could be argued that Anglo-centric work about racism reproduces epistemic racism by reinforcing the knowledge production complex,

which tends to ignore research advanced in the global South and other languages than English (Robinson, 2003).

On the other hand, decolonial authors tend to locate the origin of racism much earlier in the 15th century, as a result of Europe's exploration of the Atlantic and Indian oceans, the moment of encounter between Europeans and Indigenous peoples in the Americas, the enslavement of Africans, the expulsion of Jews and Muslims from the South of Europe, and the emergence of the capitalist world system and modernity (Quijano, 1999; De La Cadena, 2000 and 2005; Escobar, 2003; Wynter, 2003; Dussel, 2004; Mignolo, 2005; Grosfoguel, 2012; Restrepo, 2013). These authors favour a more comprehensive interpretation of racism, including religious, cultural, and biological approaches. According to this understanding, racism is a global racial ideology that is foundational to the Americas. However, its relevance is not confined to the past because it has had a remarkable influence through the eras of conquest-colonization, independence, and in the present.

This research explores the processes of racialization that affect internally displaced persons (IDPs), Venezuelan migrants, and Colombian refugees; and the ideologies of racism that dominate across the scales and regions of Latin America and North America. Although attention is given to the local, national and regional scales, the focus is on urban spaces and nations where the populations part of the study are arriving (Pereira, Colombia, and Toronto, Canada). Drawing from Omi and Winant (1994), this study understands the ideology of racism as the hegemonic “way in which society is organized and ruled” to “redistribute resources along particular racial lines” (56), benefiting members of one or more privileged racial groups in detriment of members of one or more oppressed racial groups, which have been deemed racially inferior. An ideology of racism is reproduced in “both social structures and everyday experiences” (Omi and Winant, 1994, 56), this reproduction is what guarantees its permanence. In other words, everyday racism,

including racial microaggressions and actions that might not seem racist at first sight, and structural racism are both necessary to sustain racism. It requires cooperation as much as power to sustain the ideology of racism. It is challenging for a member of the society under the dominance of an ideology of racism to escape from it. This difficulty applies to those that benefit as well as those that are oppressed by it because the ideology of racism is part of the way they understand the world and “make sense of the things they do and see -ritually, repetitively- on a daily basis” (Fields, 1990, 110).

This study understands racialization as “the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed” (Omi and Winant, 1994, 55). Although processes of racialization include all bodies because all humans have been classified in racial categories, it is undeniable that some racial categories are more visible than others. Racial formation is key in the creation of racial categories. It is based on the constant interaction between racial ideology structure and everyday experiences. (Omi and Winant, 1994). This study focuses on the dynamic dimension of processes of racialization and how it determines which bodies are deemed racially inferior and consequently excluded and oppressed within the dominant ideology of racism. A key element is who has power and agency to determine their and others’ racial classification. The literature reviewed and research fieldwork indicates that whiteness is left untouched and invisible at the center (Smedly, 1999; Ahmed, 2000; Thobani, 2007, Dhamoon, 2009; Paschel, 2013; Benjamin, 2019). In contrast, other groups are racialized constantly with the strategic use of physical characteristics, culture, language, traditions, religion, ancestry, marriage, relationships, manner of dress, diet, place of origin and residence, gender, class, among others (Backhouse, 1999; Castro-Gómez, 2005; Rappaport, 2014). Racialization processes are about constructing ideas to discriminate individuals and groups of people based on race and building and reproducing white superiority. Everyday discourse, law and policy, the

ordering and organizing of space are crucial components of racialization processes. This dynamic causes exclusion of racialized individuals and communities. According to Brahinsky et al. (2014), racial projects “classify and assign social and political meaning to difference,” (1139) which is used to allocate goods, services, and resources. Thus, “[r]acial projects historically have focused on endowing or restricting access to property, social privileges, and access to social and geographic spaces” (Brahinsky et al. 2014, 1139).

This chapter is divided into three sections that address critical theoretical concepts and themes of this research: racial ideology, European colonization, racialization, racial formation, white supremacy, and *mestizaje*. The first part explores white supremacy as the dominant racial ideology globally and how functional was the European colonization of much of the world to establish this ideology. The work of Fanon (1986, 2004), Wynter (2003), Quijano (1999), Castro-Gómez (2005), Grosfoguel (2012), among others, is helpful to understand how white supremacy created a line that divides the world population in conjunction with binaries such as White/racialized, colonizer/colonized, possessor/dispossessed, human/non-human. The second part explores *mestizaje* as a racial ideology characterized by racial fluidity. However, the racial transgressions of *mestizaje* do not undermine racism; instead, they reinforce white supremacy by pursuing whiteness. This section also argues that the colonial enterprises in most of Latin America created middle-ground societies, defined briefly as societies where European colonial powers could not isolate completely Indigenous peoples and *mestizaje* became the dominant racial ideology (Veracini, 2011). *Mestizaje* is a subcategory of white supremacy that responded to a particular context where Africans, Europeans, and Indigenous peoples were in constant contact. The Latin American group Modernity/Coloniality (Quijano, 1999; de la Cadena, 2000 and 2005; Escobar, 2003; Dussel, 2004; Mignolo, 2005; Grosfoguel, 2012; Restrepo, 2013) is crucial to elaborate these arguments.

The final section addresses Canada and North America as a world region where European colonization founded settler-colonial societies and developed a particular version of white supremacy based on science and biology. The arguments developed in this section are based on the theoretical work of Indigenous, postcolonial, and anti-racist scholars such as Lawrence (2003, 2005), Coulthard (2007), Thobani (2007), Smith (2010), Walcott (2011, 2015), and Simpson (2014), among others. Racism and its ideologies are causally connected with the history of colonialisms. This study joins Morgensen's (2012) call to conduct studies that account for the specificities of particular contexts, rather than applying general theories of racism and colonialism, "[a]ll such theories must be revisited to ask if they erroneously generalise specific colonial situations, and to provincialise all such situations by positioning them comparatively" (5).

The Globalization of Racism

White supremacy is an ideology that maintains the racial superiority of a particular group of people. Even more damaging, according to authors such as Fanon (1986) and Wynter (2003), white supremacy is an ideology that dictates who deserves to be recognized as human and who is not. Fanon (1986) argues that the world is divided between Blacks/racialized people and Whites, "there are two camps: the white and the black" (2). For Fanon (1986), racialized people and White people have a dialectical relation, "White men consider themselves superior to black men [...] Black men want to prove white men, at all costs, the richness of their thought, the equal value of their intellect." (3) There is a hierarchy of humanity divided by a line of superiority/inferiority, the specifics of how this hierarchy operates are dictated by the particular history of colonialism of each place. In this understanding, racism/white supremacy, or the line that divides human superiority and inferiority, is not just determined by skin colour; it can be

determined by culture, religion, ethnicity, and language, among others. This understanding of racism creates two spaces, a zone of being occupied by those whose humanity is accepted and a zone of non-being inhabited by people whose humanity is not fully recognized (Grosfoguel, 2012). According to Fanon (1986), racialized people are located in the zone of non-being because their humanity has been denied.

The Latin American group Modernity/Coloniality presents a comprehensive understanding of racism that builds over the analysis of Fanon (1986, 2004) and other decolonial authors. Quijano (1999) argues that racism, as we know it today, started more than 500 years ago with the colonization of the Americas and that it was essential to the consolidation of European identity and modernity (Dusell, 2004). Grosfoguel (2012) locates the origin of racism in Spain when the Catholic monarchy put forward the idea of “*pureza de sangre*” (purity of blood) to exclude Jews and Muslims. In a self-preservation effort, more than 300,000 Jews converted to Catholicism to “purify their blood,” avoid the Inquisition and remain in the expanding kingdom (Smedley, 1999). Spain’s unification presented traits of the modern nation-state: one people, one identity, one state, one language, one religion. The imposition of this nation-state runs parallel to the encounter of Columbus with the Americas and the so-called Age of Discovery. Therefore, the unification of Spain, Europe’s exploration of the world, and the conquest of the Americas would inform each other concerning racism and the construction of the Other. The encounter with Indigenous peoples generated the idea of “*pueblos sin religión*” (people without religion), which should be read as people without soul, “more animals than humans.” (Wynter, 2003) This process of dehumanization represents an instance where the quality of humans of many different groups, homogenized under the category of “Indian,” was questioned. Spain was at the time the leading European nation, and these arguments would influence the racial ideology of white supremacy.

The debate that followed in Spain after the encounter with the Americas inaugurated two modern trends of racism. On the one hand, biological racism, with Ginés de Sepulveda arguing that “Indians” did not have soul, private property, and trade. On the other hand, cultural racism, with De Las Casas arguing that “Indians” were barbarians, they did not know God, but their salvation could come with “being civilized” (Wynter, 2003; Grosfoguel, 2012). These discourses persisted and were adapted after the Age of Enlightenment, the historic moment where Anglo-centric understandings of racism locate the origin of racism (Smedley, 1999; Dewulf, 2015). The meaning of “not having a soul” moved from religious to biological grounds and became “not having human genes,” while “being barbarians” evolved to “in need of civilization.” (Wynter, 2003; Grosfoguel, 2012) Simultaneously, Africans entered this debate via slavery. After Indians were deemed “innocent” because they did not have the opportunity to learn about the “one and true God”, they were in need of Christianity, Africans were deemed soulless because they rejected the “real God” and were condemned to slavery. At this point, race as a combination of physical and non-physical characteristics that went beyond skin colour came into the debate creating a division between humans and non-humans, where all the subcategories of the Other, whether Jewish, Muslim, Indian, or Black, informed and reinforced distinct, although articulated, forms of racism that deprived them of their humanity (Wynter, 2003; Grosfoguel, 2012; Wirth, 2014). White supremacy is the ideology of racism, the origin from where racism and all its context-specific ideologies depart. If we ask what it is to be human according to the dominant ideology of racism? The answer is to be Western, imitate its cultures, speak its languages, participate in its economy, follow its political models, and learn their knowledge and sciences. Eurocentrism is the answer imposed by European colonialism.

White supremacy has its roots in the colonial era that saw Europe colonizing most of the world and imposing its claim to racial superiority and its culture, languages, economy, politics,

knowledge, and science. Quijano (1999) connects colonization, modernity, racism, power, and knowledge. He argues that the global division of power installed during the European colonization of the world persists today with few changes. Europe's colonial enterprises created binaries such as possessors/ dispossessed, White/racialized, colonizer/colonized. According to Quijano (1999), colonization also implied a dual process of stealing and denying, taking the knowledge that was useful for Europeans and suppressing the knowledge that was not practical for them, which annihilated entire cultures. This process sought to impose European modernity globally. Quijano (1999) coins the concept of the colonality of power to denote Eurocentric rationality. Like the development of private property, this rationality builds a relationship between Europe and the rest of the world where the first is a subject/owner and the second is an object/property. According to Walcott (2011), one cannot make sense of the present "without taking into account the context of Western global expansion over the last five hundred years, a period in which Europe reordered the globe under its own terms or ways of knowing as the only legitimate way of being [...] and the invention of the modern nation-state in its current liberal democratic form." (15-16) Colombia, Venezuela, and Canada were central to the violent history of conquest, colonization, genocide, and slavery advanced by Europe in the Americas and the formation of nation-states under the European model. The colonial project that established white supremacy as the dominant racial ideology at the global scale was not only imposed through force; it was also made desirable. According to Quijano (1999), "European culture was made seductive: it gave access to power. After all, beyond repression, the main instrument of all power is its seduction. Cultural Europeanization was transformed into an aspiration." (42)

White supremacy is a racial ideology that establishes humans' superiority for those that identify as European descendants/White. This ideology reinforces the supremacy of White bodies

through small and big instances of white privilege on the microgeographies of daily life. Quijano (1999) explains that Western domination operates simultaneously at a global scale.

If we observe the main lines of exploitation and social domination on a global scale, the main lines of world power today, and the distribution of resources and work among the world population, it is very clear that the large majority of the exploited, the dominated, the discriminated against, are precisely the members of the ‘races’, ‘ethnies’, or ‘nations’ into which the colonized populations, were categorized in the formative process of that world power (42).

And at a local scale, even to the point that racialized bodies have internalized this domination, “the relationship between the European –also called ‘Western’ –culture, and the others, continues to be a colonial domination [...] a colonization of the imagination of the dominated” (Quijano, 1999, 42).

Racism (understood as white supremacy) and capitalism share the same origin; they both emerged in the colonial era. Colonialism was the period of capitalism’s original accumulation (Wolf, 1993), and capitalism, in this stage, built the foundations of white supremacy over the different peoples that Europe was encountering during the exploration of the world (Robinson, 1983). Salazar (2002) presents the idea that one of the cradles of capitalism was the mining city of Potosí in today’s Bolivia. The development of this extractive capitalist economy followed the production of the silver mines, it started in the mid 16th century, reached its peak in the 17th century, and collapsed by the end of the 18th century, just about the time that Eurocentric views of modernity located the origin of capitalism in the North of Europe. The emergent capitalist economy of Potosí combined different forms of labour: Indigenous slave labour under the *Mita* system -a system that rotates Indigenous tribute labour from surrounding communities under Indigenous authority, African slave labour, and wage labour under the *Minga* system -originally a system to coordinate collective work for the well-being of the whole community or society (Salazar, 2002). This organization of labour introduced one of the critical elements of capitalism,

the freedom of labour. This element was so influential in Potosí that non-Indigenous bodies participated in the wage-labour market of the *Minga* system along with Indigenous workers. Even Indigenous bodies that worked under the *Mita* system (free voluntary labour) contracted their labour in the *Minga* system during their resting days of the week (Salazar, 2002). Smedley (1999) presents an interesting analysis of the connection between white supremacy and capitalism in the Southern United States. Smedley (1999) argues that the White colonial elite divided the masses of poor along racial lines to prevent the development of class conscience among the working class from all races.

Class divisions diminished in the minds of poor whites and they saw themselves as having something in common with the propertied class, symbolized by their light skins and common origins in Europe. With laws progressively continuing to reduce the rights of blacks and Indians, it was not long before the various European groups coalesced into a white “racial” category whose high-status identity gave them access to wealth, power, opportunity, and privilege (Smedley, 1999, 695).

The Coffee Region in Colombia and Toronto, Canada, have particular racial dynamics at the local, national, and regional scales, although they both share white supremacy as the dominant racial ideology at the global scale. However, these two nations and their corresponding world regions present particular racial ideologies. Colombia and Latin America are dominated by *mestizaje*, while Canada and North America are dominated by a version of white supremacy where science and biology have been historically the dominant factor. White supremacy was imposed via colonizations, a concept that must be plural when addressing spaces that respond to different colonial projects. In Canada and North America, the colonial project created settler-colonial societies, while in Colombia and Latin America created middle-ground societies (Veracini, 2011). These specific colonial projects demanded specific racial ideologies. Settler-colonial societies use white supremacy openly, while middle-ground societies use *mestizaje* as

their racial ideology. These two ideologies have distinct characteristics such as the fluid and static understanding of race, but they both share the belief in the superiority of whiteness.

Veracini (2011) explains that “settler colonial orders often replace previous colonial regimes, denouncing already established and mutually constructed ‘middle ground’ traditions (when indigenous people possess enough power to force non-indigenous interlopers to accommodate some of their social and cultural practices).” (5) The main difference is that in North America, European settlers built societies where indigeneity and blackness were excluded, in the case of Indigenous peoples, even separated geographically as much as possible from colonized spaces. In Latin America, European settlers did not manage to impose a “settler-colonial order” completely, as they never subsumed “mixed settler/indigenous life [...] into the ‘settler’ or the ‘indigenous’ category” (Veracini, 2011, 8). It rather evolved from a “middle ground tradition” that strengthened the *Mestiza* category, which was constructed over the heritage of Indigenous, Afrodescendants, and Europeans, even though it privileged the European ancestry, while racializing and discriminating Indigenous and Afro-descendants. This is the historical background of *mestizaje* as a racial ideology.

White supremacy divided humans into races that dictate superiority and inferiority. These racial categories have the power to form an individual’s and group’s identities, but they are also under a constant tension between their static and fluid character. Riley and Ettlinger (2011) offer two interpretations of racial formation in their study of racism. One framework is named “interpellative” and sees racial identity as static and permanent. The other is called “agentive” and understands racial identity as fluid and mutable. Veninga (2009) emphasizes the agentive character of racial identities using the concept of “slippage,” defined as a body performing a different race than it has been classified, as an act of resistance to racialization and subjectification. This performance is an act that produces and transforms the meaning of race in

everyday life. Many subaltern groups oppressed by racial categories adopt practices identified with whiteness as a survival strategy, an intentional and selective process that can help them to improve their chances in life without denying their identity and culture. There is a constant tension between the static and fluid dimensions of racial identity. One adverse reaction to the fluid character of racial identity that emerge from an essentialist point of view, is the denial of an individuals' capacity to perform actions and roles ascribed to another racial group and pointing to those that do not conform to the racial norms as disloyal to the racial group in which they have been classified (Gutiérrez, 2015). This denial constitutes another form of racial oppression because, in most cases, the target of these critiques are precisely racialized subjects trying to escape their racial confinement, which includes their bodies, cultures, and specific geographic locations.

White supremacy as a racial ideology has a geographic dimension. Fanon (2004) refers to the division between racialized and non-racialized spaces as the “compartmentalized world.” Although Fanon (2004) refers specifically to colonial spaces, his words have explanatory power on a global scale. As Fanon (2004) writes, the “world is divided in two, is inhabited by different species [...] it is clear that what divides this world is first and foremost what species, what race one belongs to. In the colonies, the economic infrastructure is also a superstructure. The cause is effect: You are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich.” (5) Studies about orientalism, understood as a discourse that builds the identity of Europe and its people as a “civilized” continent in a dialectical relation with the “Orient” (Said, 1978), and tropicity - understood as a discourse that similarly constructs the identity of Europe, and by extension Europeans and its descendants that inhabit “the temperate world”, as “moderate and hard-working”, in opposition to the peoples that inhabit the “tropical lands”. In short, a discourse that establishes a form of environmental Eurocentrism. (Clayton and Bowd, 2006)- have addressed

the spatial division between racialized and non-racialized geographies. This division overlaps with the separation between the global North and the global South at the global scale. At the national scale, this division corresponds to a separation between rural peripheral areas and urban centers (Castro-Gómez, 2005; Gutiérrez, 2019), or reserve and off reserve in the Canadian context. Research in urban studies has also addressed the geographic dimension of white supremacy, demonstrating a repetitive pattern where racialized bodies are confined to spaces of neglect and exclusion, while whiteness dominates in spaces of privilege (McCaan, 1999; Nelson, 2000; Keil and Harris, 2006; Veninga, 2009, Shabazz, 2015). Racialized people are confined to the “tropics” or rural areas, and they are seen as out of place in urbanized Colombia.

Castro-Gómez (2005) explains that the knowledge of coloniality (Quijano, 1999) developed a “racial science” in Latin America that claims neutrality and universalism (De La Cadena, 2000, 2005). Different technologies were used in this emergent “racial science”, such as the taxonomy that classified different races in the *casta* system -defined briefly as a hierarchical racial structure created by Europeans to privilege whiteness while oppressing blackness, indigeneity, and other mixtures in between (Friedemann and Arocha, 1986; Wade, 1993; Martínez, 2008; Catelli, 2012) and the discourse of tropicality. The Colombian version of this spatial discourse, classified individuals and groups, assigning moral and physical characteristics according to a region, latitude, and altitude, adapting European ideas of environmental determinism and climatic racism (Wade, 1993; Castro-Gómez, 2005). Tropicality is a crucial concept in Colombia’s racial ideology, but its premises are not confined to Colombia. Tropicality’s ideas, mainly the geographical exclusion from urban spaces of Indigenous peoples, resonate in Canada, where Indigenous people are imagined as belonging to reserves, located mainly in remote rural areas (Gill, 2002). These imaginary geographies that confined racialized people to specific spaces produce a circular logic of confinement, where a space is racialized because the people who

inhabit are racialized bodies, and individuals are racialized because they live in a racialized space (Lipstiz, 2007), are another instance where the absurdity of racism is revealed. The Colombian territory is located entirely between the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn, which constitutes the tropical region of the world. In other words, all Colombians, independently of how they identify racially, or the racial classification they have been subjected to, live in the tropics. Indigenous peoples in Canada populated the whole territory before colonization, and they were forced to move into the reserves by the colonial project. Even under extreme circumstances of exclusion and forced displacement, Indigenous peoples have sustained a historical presence in all urban spaces in Canada. Beyond the absurdity of racial ideologies, the spatial division between racialized and non-racialized territories has very concrete consequences. Racialized people's existence is challenged when they try to transgress racial borders at every scale constantly.

Mestizaje: Racial fluidity and Racism.

According to Smith (1996), *mestizaje* has at least three different but related meanings. First, *mestizaje* corresponds to social and biological processes that create a group of people of mixed heritage; second, *mestizaje* is understood as the identification of an individual or community with the *mestizo* identity at the communal or national scale. This meaning is immediately connected with the third one, *mestizaje* is a political discourse that identifies the political, cultural, and racial character of *Mestizas*. In this study, *mestizaje* is given an additional meaning, it is understood as the dominant racial ideology in Colombia. The origin and history of *mestizaje* started with the violent moment of encounter and the construction of racial hierarchies in Latin America. Racial categories were built into the *casta* system. This hierarchical racial structure represented European anxieties about miscegenation and the need to construct and regulate changing racial borders by pathologizing them (Castro-Gómez, 2005; Catelli, 2012; Rappaport, 2014). The racial

categories created by the *casta* system were not static across space; their meaning changed between the metropole and the colonies. For example, in Spain, religion was the main factor for acquiring *pureza de sangre* (blood purity) certificates that recognized whiteness, while in the Americas, race was more relevant (Castro-Gómez, 2005; Rapaport, 2014). The process of *mestizaje*, understood as social and biological processes that create a group of people of mixed heritage (Smith, 1996), was manipulated by the colonial White elite using the *casta* system to create racial categories that were fundamental to the social and political structure that guaranteed and reproduced White power and supremacy (De La Cadena, 2000, 2005; Gould, 1996; Hale, 1996). Economically, politically, and socially, the *casta* system responded to the need to classify, order, exploit, and control people in order to tax and maintain power relations and social hierarchies reproduced through access to particular spaces, education, and professions. Culturally, it represented racial anxieties and obsessions with whiteness and whitening (Castro-Gómez, 2005; Catelli, 2012; Rapaport, 2014).

Mestizaje became Latin America's racial ideology due to the emergence of *Mestiza* people as the predominant demographic group of Latin America (Wade, 1993). *Mestizas'* primary advantage over the Indigenous population was its spatial mobility. Consequently, many Indigenous people started to embrace a *mestiza* identity, or more precisely, identify with it. This identification must be understood as a strategic action to escape the constraints imposed on Indigenous groups as socio-political units. In some cases, this identification can be understood as a form of denial of Indigenous identity, but it cannot be reduced to that (Salazar-Soler, 2002; Castro-Gómez, 2005; Catelli, 2012). A crucial aspect of this dynamic is that middle-ground societies are as interested in Indigenous labour as they are on Indigenous land, contrary to settler-colonial societies, whose primary goal is to appropriate Indigenous land (Coulthard, 2007, 2014). While Indigenous labour was tied to the land, in many cases as slave labour, *Mestizas* could leave

Indigenous territories and perform wage labour in the cities (Rapaport, 2014). This spatial mobility responded mainly to processes of urbanization, industrialization, and education. The agency of Indigenous people who reclaimed a *Mestiza* identity can be framed as process of *mestizaje* from below, understood as “a *mestizaje* that is not defined by the state but claimed and remade by Indigenous people.” (Alberto, 2021, 239).

Rapaport (2014) explains that it is more accurate to speak of identifications than identity concerning racial categories in the colonial era because the same individual could claim different racial identities through their life (De La Cadena, 2005). The ambivalence of the *Mestiza* category implied that they did not compose an ethno-cultural, collective, and sociological group with privileges and responsibilities such as Indigenous nations, but simply a category of identification that was pretty loose and named many people that could not be denominated otherwise. In this sense, it was an inclusive category that people classified in different races could identify with (Rapaport, 2014). This identification of ordinary people with the category of *mestizaje* was socially accepted and became a central aspect of the ideology of *mestizaje*, which in turn was fundamental to develop nationalist discourses and modernizing narratives in Latin America.

Castro-Gómez (2005) argues in his research about race, science, and the Enlightenment in *Nueva Granada* (the name of the territory that comprises Colombia before independence from Spain) that the imaginary of whiteness was an essential aspect of coloniality and modernity in Latin America. Although he clarifies that whiteness was more than skin colour, it was also related to religion, clothing, heritage, behaviour, and knowledge production (Castro-Gómez, 2005; De La Cadena, 2000, 2005; Catelli, 2012; Rapaport, 2014). Racial classification was a determining factor in an individual's social position. Being able to perform whiteness, which included practicing Catholicism, probing Spanish heritage, dressing and behaving as Spanish, was a

guarantee for receiving White privileges, such as access to public office, the Church hierarchy, intellectual work, and the right to wear particular clothing, while racialized people could only perform manual labour (Castro-Gómez, 2005; Catelli, 2012; Rapaport, 2014). There were tensions within the category of whiteness. Latin American nations' independence struggles were led by the White *Criolla* elite, who, despite being the direct descendants of Europeans, did not have access to some positions of power reserved exclusively for Spaniards due to their place of birth.

Catelli (2012) uses the concept of *Criolla* agencies to address the initiatives that the *Criolla* elite adopted to establish itself as the dominant group in society. Catelli (2012) argues that the *casta* system in place during the colony was used to establish the racial superiority of *Criollas* over racialized bodies (Castro-Gómez, 2005; Catelli, 2012; Rapaport, 2014). Simultaneously, *Criollas* used the discourse of *mestizaje* to connect themselves to an ancestral indigeneity and rescue some cultural elements of Afrodescendants and other subaltern groups that would become part of the emerging national cultures and identities. This strategic actions positioned *Criollas* as the “rightful” leaders of Latin American nations (Wade, 1993; De La Cadena, 2000, 2005). *Mestizaje* as a nationalist discourse was dominated and mobilized by White *Criolla* elites from the moment of independence (Wade, 1993; Smith, 1996). Similar to the role of Whites in settler-colonial societies, where they seek to become the natives of the land (Morgensen, 2012). *Mestizaje* is revealed as a contradictory racial ideology that denied Indigenous presence to deliver the land to White *Criollos*, while at the same time it appropriated Indigenous and Black *Cimarrones* (maroons) anticolonial struggles to claim that the nation was the product of *Criollos* heroic resistance against foreign invaders (Gould, 1996).

There is an interesting discussion about *mestizaje* and its relation to racial identity's static or fluid character. The history and essence of *mestizaje* indicate that it has been a racial ideology

that allows race fluidity. This characteristic is reflected in the present. Different factors such as gender, class, clothing, place of birth, and education, among others, can allow an individual to trespass racial borders and perform a different race than it has been assigned. Rapapport (2014) highlights some interesting gender dynamics concerning the performativity of race during the colonial era. She argues that *Mestiza* women were more likely to be accepted as White Spanish and members of the colonial elite, while *Mestizo* men were relegated to inferior racial and class positions. This gender difference was connected to another racial/gender dynamic. Indigenous males were feminized; they were "like females" who could not defend themselves from conquest and colonization. Females were apt for *mestizaje*, reproducing a pattern that started with *La Malinche* and her "*hijas de la chingada*",⁸ which in turn accentuated the loss of manhood of Indigenous males. In most cases, Indigenous women were forced to participate in these acts of emasculation. However, in some instances, they adapted to the racial ideology of *mestizaje* by rejecting Indigenous partners and selecting light-skin partners that were a pathway to whitening (Gould, 1996).

In the present, the place of birth and residence, class and economic status, education, accent, relationships, and clothing, among others particularities, affect the way people are classified racially. In previous research about internalized racism among *Mestizas* (Gutiérrez, 2015), I observed that individuals could be classified into different racial categories depending on the characteristics mentioned above. For example, an Afrocolombian man born in Chocó, a region

⁸Mexican author Octavio Paz argues that all *Mestizas* are "*hijas de la chingada*" [children of the one that was fucked] (1981, 83). According to Paz, *Mestizas* are the children of the male Spanish European *conquistador*/settler/rapist and the female Indigenous slaved/dispossessed/raped. *La Chingada* is *La Malinche*, a Nahuatl woman enslaved and exploited as an interpreter and as a sexual object by Hernán Cortés, the leader of the Spanish *conquistadores* that took over the Aztec Empire in the early sixteen century. *La Malinche* is the symbolic mother of all *Mestizas* (Anzaldúa 1999). She is an archetype representing the gender violence inflicted over a whole continent, and *mestizaje* results from an imposed openness through conquest and violation.

located on the Colombian Pacific coast and rainforest, a space marked as racialized by the discourse of tropicality, was racialized differently from one born in Medellín, Colombia's second major city. The Afrocolombian born in Chocó was subjected to more intense forms of racial discrimination, while the second could "pass" as a non-racialized body in different contexts and circumstances thanks to his place of birth, education, class, friendships, and marital relationship. Something as simple as clothing allowed a person to trespass a racial border at least temporarily. In the same research, an Indigenous woman shared situations where she could pass for a *Mestiza* when she was not dressed in traditional indigenous clothes. In other occasions, the same Indigenous woman was the target of racial insults when dressing in traditional indigenous clothing. *Mestiza's* clothing made her "normal," part of the ideal bodyscape and racial imaginaries of inclusion in the Colombian nation (Ahmed, 2000).

The instances where the Indigenous woman and the Black man from Medellín were able to "pass" for non-racialized bodies are exceptions, but they occur (Gutiérrez, 2015). In these cases, markers such as education, profession, class, place of birth, living in an urban setting, accent, friends, romantic partners, and clothing are all characteristics that can locate racialized subjects in a blurred space within the racial spectrum. The markers pointed above are constitutive of racial formation in the microgeographies of daily life, they are "racially coded characteristics" that positioned "race as common sense" (Omi and Winant, 1994, 60). Despite these exceptions, most interviewees in that research agreed that class could be changed over time if they managed to improve their economic status, but they could never change their race. This affirmation is not a contradiction with the experiences of racial ambiguity that they shared. It is complementary; it means that racialized people can receive racial privilege when they can perform whiteness, but it does not mean that they would never be subjected to racism over their lives, nor that they have complete agency about how they are perceived and classified in the racial spectrum. They might

have moved the line that separates the zone of being from the zone of non-being temporarily, but they have not erased it permanently.

Mestizaje's fluid character has been criticized for its whitening dimension (Wade, 1993; Moreno, 2010). Whitening practices in the Colombian context echo Thobani's (2007) analysis of immigrants' assimilation into Canadian multiculturalism. In the Colombian case, it is the racialized subject within the nation that has to conform to the ideal body of the nation by performing whiteness. There is a complex contradiction within this idea. Although they constitute the majority of the Colombian population, *Mestizas* are forced to pursue and in some cases perform whiteness while being excluded at the national and international scale from this category of racial privilege. Another instance where *mestizaje* exhibited openly its connection with white supremacy, was during the rise of eugenics, defined briefly as "the science of improving human stock" (Carter, 2009, 467), in Latin America in the early 20th century. At the time, the white *Criolla* elite promoted the migration of White Europeans to Latin American nations with the objective of whitening Latin American societies. Colombia did not manage to attract as many European migrants as other Latin American nations, such as Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, and Venezuela, among others, and in consequence was not very successful with its eugenics' project (Wade, 1993). *Mestizas* exclusion from racial privilege is due to the ascendance of white supremacy as a racial ideology. Thobani (2007) explains that "the colonial encounter was structured as a racial one: the violence necessary to bring into being the colonial order fashioned and propagated a racial order. It organized privileges, rights, and entitlements of juridical subjects through a race status." (38) The caveat is that while this race status has been more fluid in Latin America's *mestizaje*, it has "acted as essential and immutable" (Thobani, 2007, 38) in North America's white supremacy.

The critique of whitening takes place in two realms. First, it becomes an abstract dimension in which ethnic groups are losing their cultural practices and adopting Western culture. This anxiety can be explained by taking into account Western's long history of colonization and domination in the Americas (Galeano, 1988; Quijano, 2009) and the extension of these dynamics in the present. Second, in a practical domain, it is concerned with whitening practices in the microgeographies of daily life, such as hair straightening, clothing, and body aesthetics. This preoccupation is immediately related to the discussion about race as static or fluid and anxieties about (re)defining what is acceptable and what is considered a betrayal of the racial category in which an individual has been classified. Racial borders are blurred in Colombia, which, fortunately, makes their regulation a problematic matter. This research has insisted on the fluid character of *mestizaje* as a racial ideology. Afrocolombians, Indigenous, and *Mestizas* transgress racial borders continuously, reclaiming agency while contesting oppressive racial boundaries in the microgeographies of daily life. On the other hand, many of these transgressions do not challenge *mestizaje's* white supremacy; instead, they reinforce it by aspiring to whiteness. In other words, racialized people in Colombia tried to perform whiteness to access racial privilege, not to dismantle racial hierarchies (Gutiérrez, 2015).

Some academics have idealized *mestizaje* as a racial ideology (Vasconcelos, 1925; Anzaldúa, 1987). This idealization is evident in the concept of the cosmic race (Vasconcelos, 1925). As a nationalist discourse in Latin America, *Mestizaje* has been used to identify the national subjects politically, culturally, geographically, and racially against external forces. First against European empires and later the United States (Vasconcelos, 1925; Paz, 1972; Gould, 1996; De La Cadena, 2005), but this discourse hides internal racial and class differences, while the ruling elites have stayed Europeanized/whitened (Wade, 1993; Smith, 1996). Vasconcelos (1925) developed the theory of the cosmic race in the context of the Mexican revolution. This concept combated racism

with racism because it pitted an idealized “*Mestiza* race” that brought together the best of the White, Indigenous and African races against the “Anglo-Aryan race” predominant in the global North. Understanding *mestizaje* as the emergence of a superior race that brings together the best characteristics of different racial groups is highly problematic. It has led to the imposition of *Mestizas* as the ideal bodies of Latin American nations after the independence from European Empires (Vasconcelos, 1925), excluding Afrodescendants and Indigenous peoples from these national projects (Wade, 1993; Gould, 1996; Hale, 1996). Although *mestizaje* vindicates a racial subaltern group at the global scale, its similarities with Arianism are highly problematic (Dewulf, 2015). Smith (2010) presents an additional critique of the concept of *mestizaje* offered by Anzaldúa (1987) because it “situates Indians and Europeans in a dichotomy that can be healed through *mestizaje*. Anzaldúa positions Indian culture as having ‘no tolerance for deviance,’ a problem that can be healed by the ‘tolerance for ambiguity’ that those of mixed race ‘necessarily possess’” (Smith, 2010, 52). While the fluid character of *mestizaje* might be more tolerant to ambiguity, this fluidity has not healed the dichotomy between Indigenous peoples and Europeans, it has clearly taken sides in this dichotomy as a variant of white supremacy.

The analysis of *Mestizaje* as a racial ideology must include the emergence and construction of *Mestizas* as a racial and cultural category that many Colombians and Latin Americans identify with, as well as the moments of encounter with all its violence, the colonial project, and the development of racism in the past and present of Latin America. One problem with limiting *mestizaje* to the moment of encounter in the contact zone is that it reduces the discussion and normalizes the position of *Mestizas* within this complex dynamic; it subsumes other racial identities within one single category. Walcott (2015) offers the concept of creolization as an interesting alternative to *mestizaje*. Walcott (2015) addresses the moment of encounter in the contact zone without romanticizing it, instead focusing on “the violent process of becoming

through/in modernity,” concluding that “the importance of creolization, conceptually, is that it locates our lives, histories, and experiences between brutality and something different – something more possible.” (10) More than reducing *mestizaje* to the central role of *Mestizas* in the process that followed the moment of encounter in the contact zone, an analysis of *mestizaje* must address the violence that was central to it, the relations of domination and exploitation that framed it, and even current racial relations that are a consequence of these historical dynamics. This elaboration contributes to discussions about *mestizaje* from the ground and decolonial *mestizaje* because it goes beyond the two axes that sustained it as a racial ideology: the state and white supremacy (Alberto, 2021). This reflection is crucial for comprehending *mestizaje* as a racial ideology and the possibilities of racial justice in Colombia.

Biological Racism or North America’s White Supremacy

The racial ideology of North America and Canada is white supremacy, and its colonial project seeks to form a settler-colonial society (Coulthard, 2007; Veracini, 2011; Morgensen, 2012; Simpson, 2014). Lawrence (2003) argues that “the very existence of settler societies is [...] predicated on maintaining racial apartheid, on emphasizing racial difference, white superiority, and “Native” inferiority.” (8) North America developed a particular form of white supremacy that incorporates Europeans from different nationalities into the new nation-state (Wirth, 2014) but excludes Indigenous and Blacks through a strict policy of blood quantum and the one-drop rule (Amadahy and Lawrence, 2009). This inclusion/exclusion dynamic is part of the mythical basis for the “First New Nation” (Wirth, 2014, 40). This racial ideology integrated White bodies independently of their nationality, but it only offered exclusion, colonization, slavery, and genocide to racialized bodies (Dewulf, 2015).

One of the goals of settler-colonialism is to transform settlers/White bodies into the native people of the land (Morgensen, 2012), but it is confronted with the dilemma of the Indigenous peoples, “what to do with their souls, their bodies, their culture, and their difference” (Simpson, 2014, 19). Indigenous peoples are subjected to all forms of elimination, including physical (genocide), cultural (residential schools and prohibition of cultural practices), and statistical (blood quantum and other ‘scientific measures’ to manipulate and reduce the official population of Indigenous peoples). The main purpose of the elimination of Indigenous people is to dispossess and adjudicate their land to White settlers. This elimination does not have to be physical; it can be “arithmetical genocide or statistical extermination” (Lawrence, 2003, 19). The goal is to execute and legitimate the process of land appropriation and privatization by decreasing the official number of “status Indians.” Simpson (2014) explains that “settler colonialism is defined by a territorial project -the accumulation of land- [...] it is not labour but territory that it seeks. Because “Indigenous” peoples are tied to the desired territories, they must be “eliminated”; in the settler-colonial model, “the settler never leaves.”” (19) The process of settlers’ nativization is complemented with a strict regime of immigration and citizenship that regulates the entrance of racialized bodies into the white nation (Lawrence and Dua, 2005).

The ideology of white supremacy in North America has been built in biological terms. Its most prominent feature has been using multiple forms of ‘scientific measures’ to classify people racially, including the systems of blood quantum for Indigenous peoples and the one-drop rule for Black people (Amadahy and Lawrence, 2009). The regulation of indigenous identity presented an absurd intersection of biology, science, racism, and sexism. Blood quantum and patrilineal lineage were used to regulate ethnic membership, imposing gendered violence when granting indigenous status by excluding Indigenous women who married non-Indigenous men and their descendants. Not having status meant not being an official member of a reserve, not having

access to its resources and government funds, not being able to participate in an indigenous communal way of life, with all the consequences that this exclusion carries (Lawrence, 2003; Simpson, 2014).

There was a tipping point in the mid 19th century when Canada's colonial project could have developed into a middle-ground society rather than a settler-colonial society. The Great Lakes area was populated by *Métis* communities that trespassed racial boundaries, "making it difficult for Anglo settlers to maintain clear boundaries between the colonizers and the colonized" (Lawrence, 2003, 8). The colonial government applied technologies to regulate Indigenous identity to reduce the number of those that could claim treaty rights and accelerate the process of land expropriation and the expiration of the bases for Indigenous treaty rights. This process is essential for capitalism. Simpson (2014) argues that "the modern order itself is entwined with capital as this accumulative and acquisitive force further detaches people from places and moves them into other zones for productivity, accumulation, and territorial settlement." (18) These technologies of regulation and exclusion have been forced into Indigenous governance by limiting its resources, to the point that reserve's Band Councils have assumed the role of policing membership in their communities. The racial ideology behind the "first new nation" was not brand-new. Indeed, blood quantum used modern sciences and biology to reinvigorate the old Spanish concept of *pureza de sangre* (blood purity), which was used to expel Jews and Moors from Spain in 1515, even after many of them had converted to Catholicism to avoid execution and be allowed to remain in the nascent European nation (Wirth, 2014).

This chapter section started addressing the situation of two groups that have been targeted with particular malice by racism in North America. Special attention has been given to Indigenous peoples because of their unique role in Canada's history of colonialism and racism. Nevertheless, this does not mean that Indigenous peoples and Afrodescendants are the only

racialized groups that have been oppressed by white supremacy in Canada. Delgado and Stefancic (2012) use the concept of differential racialization to explain how white supremacy in North America racializes non-White bodies differently according to the needs of the dominant group.

Backhouse (1999) studied the Supreme Court debate and decision that concluded that “Eskimos” were “Indians” within the Canadian Constitutional framework on April 5th, 1939. Interestingly, no Indigenous or Inuit were consulted during the discussion of this matter that significantly impacted their lives, as it defined and regulated their identity. This author offers an impressive set of characteristics that have been taken into consideration in processes of racialization within Canadian legislation for Indigenous and Inuit people,

[L]anguage, customs and habits, mode of life, manner of dress, diet, demeanour, occupation, wealth, voting history, religion, blood, skin colour, head shape, hair texture, thickness of lips, beard characteristics, facial features, teeth size, eye shape and colour, nasal aperture, cranial capacity, stature, intermarriage, adoption, legitimacy at birth, place of residence, reputation, and the racial designation of one’s companion (Backhouse, 1999, 55).

As it was explained previously, the use of this combination of characteristics is not new in racialization processes advanced within white supremacy, they all have been used historically in the construction of the wall that separates humans from non-humans, the line that divides the zone of being from the zone of non-being (Fanon, 1986; Grosfoguel 2012). The following literature review explains briefly how different groups have been racialized in Canada and North America. Although it does not cover every single racialized group in this world region, it provides some examples that are effective to understand how white supremacy oppresses and excludes racialized bodies from the bodyscape of the nation (Ahmed, 2000; Delgado and Stefancic, 2012).

Mawani (2002) offers an analysis of colonial anxieties regarding interracial relations and mixed-race children (Indigenous-European). For Mawani (2002) “[t]he European desire for

distinct racial classifications meant that Whites needed to constantly (re)create their own identities and superiority against the bodies of racialized others” (49). These fears could be classified into two realms. First, is the realm of the land, “[s]ince Euro-Canadian rule and the creation of a strong settler society in the province was contingent upon the acquisition and control of land, redefining ‘half-breeds’ as ‘Indians’ was an enormous social and political risk” (Mawani, 2002, 65). Second, colonial anxieties emerged from morality/purity of whiteness as “[l]awmakers were deeply preoccupied with racial (im)purity and the ideological and material consequences of miscegenation” (Mawani, 2002, 57). Mawani’s analysis emphasizes the power relations behind processes of racialization. Since whiteness is never defined, it must determine indianness in order to recognize what it is not. Mixed-race presented a challenge because it trespassed these racial boundaries, technologies such as the liquor prohibition were simply disciplinary techniques to govern mixed-race movement across indigenous and white space. The consequences of the racialization of mixed-race people are evident today as they are still struggling to reclaim native ancestry and identity. Smedley (1999) refers to this as “the tragedy for ‘mixed’ people” (696), arguing that mix-race bodies face the dilemma of not having an identity because white supremacy has conditioned it to belong to one single race. In North America’s racial ideology, culture is understood as a biological set of hereditary characteristics. The biological argument is one of the false beliefs of white supremacy as if having a particular culture was part of our DNA, not something socially learned.

McKittrick (2006) documents Canada’s participation in the slave trade, despite this nation’s claim to innocence in this infamous commerce, where it “is often solely positioned as a safe haven (to U.S. fugitive slaves) and a land of opportunity (for black migrant workers, the Caribbean community, and migrants from the continent of Africa)” (98). The myth of Canadian innocence makes Black bodies and black spaces un-Canadian for those that have been in this

territory long before it was a nation and most European settlers arrive, “reestablishing that “black” has never been believably Canadian” (102), and for those that have migrated, “reasserting that black subjects are perpetually and visibly non-Canadian” (McKittrick, 2006, 102). Nelson (2000) studies the erasing of Africville in Halifax, Nova Scotia, during the 1970s. Africville was an urban settlement created by Black loyalists who were initially given unproductive agricultural land at the end of the 18th century. They eventually moved to an empty lot in the city, from where they could access wage labour and practice self-sustaining activities such as fishing and farming. Nelson (2000) describes the destruction of Africville not as a singular event, but as “a process of ongoing eviction, suppression and denial” that “demonstrate[s] the inconceivability of an enduring black presence to a racist society.” (164) McKittrick (2006) explains that processes of denial such as the one described by Nelson are the norm in Canada, where “subaltern populations have no relationship to the production of space.” (92)

Nelson (2000) introduces a new layer in the analysis of processes of racialization by addressing the construction of the internal other through knowledge-making practices over racialized bodies in space. For Nelson (2000) “the control of space and the control of bodies through control of space become tools for defining a community’s physical and metaphorical boundaries, its character, and how individuals or groups will be determined through such understanding and associations.” (167-168) Africville was constructed as a slum as it is surrounded by rail lines, an oil plant storage facility, a bone mill, a slaughterhouse, a leather tanning plant, a tar factory, a foundry, a prison, an infectious disease hospital, and the city dump. Additionally, its houses were left to deteriorate by not allowing its inhabitants to do renovations and access public services such as water lines, sewerage, garbage collection, and police services. Ironically, these poor conditions were used against Africville inhabitants to justify their eviction.

Nelson (2000) explains how the space of the internal other is necessary “in order to preserve the purity of dominant, ruling space,” (170) but this space of racial marginality has to be central to facilitate the relation with dominant space, still outside “society-community-nation-progress-time-space-history.” (172)

Burman (2007) presents an analysis of the racialization of Caribbean women in Canada that evidences how processes of racialization play out differently for women, men, and children within the same racial category, as it is functional for the white settler nation society. According to Burman (2007) “the conditions of inclusion of deportable subjects: the nation-building project needs people who are identifiable at once as deportable and as salvageable or in need of patronage.” (179) McKittrick (2006) explains that deportable Black bodies do not have a place in Canada, “the hypervisual black subject is dangerously un-Canadian.” (102) On the other hand, the identification of redeemable subjects is necessary to demonstrate the kindness and authority of the host over the white nation.

These socio-spatial histories and conditions, wherein gender, race, poverty, and deportability intersect with the nation and regional (Caribbean) migratory processes, narrow the inhabitable space of Canada and discipline the subject by circumscribing everyday mobility and micromanaging the criminal deemed reformable. Through spatial confinement, bodies are stabilized to make them less threatening in a reproduction of a certain colonial logic (Burman, 2007, 185).

Black bodies have to endure a tension that oscillates between absence and hypervisibility. The absent is redeemable, while the hypervisible is deportable. But those that can stay are subjected to technologies that keep them in place “the spatialization of the underclass, stereotyping blackness, overpolicing black communities, racial profiling, criminalizing black communities, refusing black Canadian citizenship” (McKittrick, 2006, 101).

Keil and Ali (2006) address the racialization of East Asians during the two outbreaks of SARS respiratory disease in March and May 2004, which killed 44 people. According to these

authors, “racialization occurred through the association of the disease with things Chinese, exotic and familiar, that were extraneous to the existing Chinatowns in downtown Toronto and to the formation of new Chinatowns in Toronto’s suburbs, but that were central to tying SARS to Chinese bodies and communities worldwide” (Keil and Ali, 2006, 44). In this case, racialization is a dynamic process that uses events such as epidemics to reinforce white supremacy in a white settler society, “as a biopolitical regulator of a post-national kind to a certain degree [...] border control and internal control of infected bodies [...] we might need the phantasmagorical construction of the pandemic as part of the biopolitical regime of our time?” (Keil and Ali, 2006, 41). This assessment has gained new relevance during the COVID-19 pandemic between that currently affects the world.

Razack (2007) studies the debate about the implementation of Islamic principles, described as Sharia Law by the Islamic Institute of Civil Justice in 2003 Ontario’s Arbitration Act, which allows “individuals to hire third parties to privately adjudicate their conflicts using any agreed upon rules or laws” (5) and had been used by Jews and other groups. According to Razack (2007), this debate reflected social anxieties about Muslims that have become common since the events of 9/11 in 2001. Razack (2007) attempts to balance the rise of fundamentalism and initiatives that negatively affect women’s situation while recognizing the racist dimension of this debate.

Strategies to confront violence against women [...] fail if they mostly work to install the colour line between modern white subjects and pre-modern non-white subjects, between those who help and those who require assistance. Strategies born of such evangelical impulses seldom undermine the structures and practices that both give rise to and sustain violence against women for the simple reason that such structures are not even acknowledged (Razack, 2007, 4-5).

Razack (2007), similarly to Burman (2007), explains how gender intersects with race in processes of racialization. In this case, female Muslim bodies are used strategically to reproduce

the idea that Western culture is superior to cultures where Islam is the predominant religion while reinforcing negative stereotypes about Muslim men and women. The case studies presented by Nelson (2000), Mawani (2002), McKittrick (2006), Razack (2007), Burman (2007), Keil and Ali (2006) exemplify racialization processes advanced within white supremacy in North America. They evidence that racial formation (Omi and Winant, 1994) is a dynamic process. This is the racial ideology that Colombian refugees must face in Toronto.

Conclusion

This chapter begins with a methodological discussion and then proceeds with a discussion on some of the key concepts used in this research such as racism, race ideology, racial formation, racialization, white supremacy, and *mestizaje*. Racism or race ideology is defined as a system that organizes a society on racial terms and divides resources among the racial groups it creates, giving privileges to one group while oppressing and excluding the others. It influences how people think and understand the world, using a combination of force and cooperation to ensure its legitimation and reproduction. Racialization is a central process in race ideology; it is the active process that creates the racial categories based on an absurd and incoherent combination of physical and immaterial characteristics. Racialization is closely connected to racial formation. Everyday experiences and the macro-level structure come together to reinforce racial formation (Omi and Winant, 1994). Racial categorization defines what humans are going to be regarded as superior and, in consequence, receive racial privilege, and what humans are going to be classified as inferior, being subjected to discrimination, oppression, and exclusion.

Europe's exploration and colonization of much of the world gave rise to white supremacy, the dominant global racial ideology. White supremacy and colonization created binaries such as White/racialized, colonizer/colonized, possessors/ dispossessed, establishing the racial superiority

of European descendants and creating a line that divided humans from those whose humanity is questioned. Racism, since its origins, went beyond a biological understanding that was not limited to skin colour; it included culture, religion, ethnicity, language, knowledges, among other characteristics that determined racial superiority/inferiority. Canada and North America are settler-colonial societies and have developed a particular form of white supremacy based on science and biology. Under this racial ideology, culture is understood as part of an individual's race, which is not socially learned because people carry it in their blood. North America's racial ideology incorporates White Europeans from all nationalities, making their race invisible while racializing other groups. Blood quantum and patrilineal lineage were imposed to reduce the official number of Indigenous peoples, which allowed settlers to appropriate their land. Afrodescendants were subjected to slavery and biological racism with the one drop policy, where the trace of any Black ancestor makes people Black automatically. This racial ideology has deep anxieties about mix-people because they are an obstacle to settlers' intentions to control Indigenous land and the purity of whiteness.

Colombia and Latin America are middle-ground societies where *mestizaje* is the dominant racial ideology in many nations. One distinctive aspect of *mestizaje* in Colombia is its racial fluidity. Identification with the *mestiza* category offered the mobility denied to Indigenous and Africans, which compelled many individuals to embrace this category during the colonial era. White bodies enjoyed white privilege, they had access to the best positions in society, which in turn reinforced white supremacy. On the other hand, racialized people could only perform manual labour. Latin American revolutions to achieve independence from Spain did not transform these racial dynamics; they embraced the racial ideology of *mestizaje* to legitimize White *Criollos'* privileged position and exclude Afrodescendants and Indigenous peoples. Fluidity remains an

intrinsic characteristic of *mestizaje*, but because of the influence of white supremacy, the act of trespassing racial borders does not seek to challenge racism; it aims to access white privilege.

The following chapters connect the theoretical concepts addressed in this chapter with the contexts of Colombia, with an emphasis on the social and armed conflict and forced displacement; Venezuela, where Venezuelan migrants to Pereira/Coffee Region are coming from; and Toronto, where Colombian refugees are arriving to.

4. HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE COLOMBIAN SOCIAL AND ARMED CONFLICT

Introduction

The Colombian social and armed conflict started on April 9th 1948, when Jorge Eliecer Gaitán, a popular leftist politician on the path to winning the next presidential elections, was murdered in Bogotá. The intellectual authors of Gaitán's death remained unknown, but it is accepted that the Colombian establishment did not approve of him and was behind his death. Gaitán's assassination sparked a popular revolt that threatened to take over *Palacio de Nariño*, the presidential palace in Bogotá, and civil unrest throughout the country. This fatal event is the most important single action that started Colombia's social and armed conflict (Galeano, 1988; CNMH, 2015).

This research seeks to understand the processes of racialization that are a consequence of forced displacement in Colombia. It is essential to comprehend the armed conflict because it has caused the forced displacement of more than eight million people in Colombia (UNHCR, 2017; Unidad Víctimas, 2020). This research focuses on the development of the Colombian social and armed conflict since 1980. The *Grupo de Memoria Histórica* (GMH-Historic Memory Group, from now on *Grupo*), which preceded the work of the *Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica* (CNMH-National Memory Historical Center, from now on *Centro*), has analyzed the Colombian social and armed conflict from 1958 to 2012 (GMH, 2013). The first 40 years of the conflict correspond to two stages. First, *La Violencia* (The Violence) preceded the conflict and developed during the 1940s and 1950s. This phase is not included in *Grupo*'s periodization. The second period corresponds to the years that *Grupo* correlates with the first stage of the conflict between

1958 and 1982, and correspond to the transition from bipartisan violence to subversive war, and the imposition of the *Frente Nacional*.⁹

There are two main reasons to focus on the social and armed conflict after 1980, and these reasons are highly relevant to forced displacement. First, *Centro* (CNMH, 2015) argues that the 1980s presented a breaking point in the armed conflict; after this decade, forced displacement of the rural poor became the main feature of the conflict. *Grupo* (GMH, 2013) second stage of the conflict develops between 1982 and 1996, which is also the most chaotic war period. During these years, subversive groups grew in size and power, paramilitary groups emerged as another actor in the conflict, the Colombian state was in crisis in spite having passed a new political constitution in 1991, and drug cartels became prominent criminal organizations. The government and subversive groups also advanced several peace processes and dialogues with different results (GMH, 2013). Second, 1980 is the starting year of the forced displacement crisis according to the Constitutional Court's Sentence T-025 from 2004. This Sentence recognizes the magnitude of this problem and declares attention to internally displaced persons (IDPs) a national priority (Ministerio del Interior, 2004).

However, it is crucial to recognize that before 1980 there were events in the armed conflict that made this decade a breaking point. *Grupo* (GMH, 2013) explains that some of the causes of the conflict were the faulty distribution of productive lands, which inherited the system of *latifundios* or *haciendas* from the colonial era (Galeano, 1988; Kay, 2002; Young, 2003) and caused the accumulation of large tracts of land in the hands of the White *Criolla* economic elite.¹⁰

⁹ *Frente Nacional* was an agreement between the Conservative and Liberal political parties, the two main Colombian parties, to alternate political power every four years and excluded other parties from political participation and power. This agreement lasted four presidential periods, from 1958 to 1974.

¹⁰ In the 1980s, *haciendas* over 50 hectares represented nearly 70% of the land dedicated to agricultural production in Colombia. Land concentration had increased steadily from the 1960s (61%), and it continue to increase until the

This translated into the exclusion of the lower classes from political participation and the lack of democratic reforms, the state's territorial and institutional divisions and failed peace processes with subversive groups, at a time when US imperialism in Colombia spread in the international context of the Cold War (Galeano, 1988). Additionally, Colombia's Coffee Region¹¹ was significantly affected during the period of *La Violencia* that originated the social and armed conflict. The Coffee Region presented the highest rate of homicides during those years, i.e., 24,6% of the national total (GMH, 2013). The region inhabitants were also heavily affected by forced displacement and *Mestiza campesina*'s loss of their land. At the same time, the surrounding departments of Antioquia, Tolima, and Valle del Cauca were strongly affected by the conflict. Galeano (1997) explains that “[t]he bloodbath coincided with a period of economic euphoria for the ruling class. But is the prosperity of a class really identifiable with the well-being of a country?” (103) It is worth noticing that between 1950 and 1990, Colombian society lived under a permanent state of exception (Yara, 2017), a figure that was part of the previous National Constitution and that gave legal power to the President as Chief Commander of the Armed Forces to restrict the rights and freedoms of civilians invoking national security. The state of exception was a powerful weapon that gave the Armed Forces autonomy and power to stop any democratic advance of the political left, such as incarcerating workers striking or other people “acting against public order” (Yara, 2017, 93), depriving Colombian society and politics of progressive ideas. The Armed Forces have been characterized by anti-communist ideology (GMH, 2013).

2010s (86%). Land concentration is more evident in *latifundios* over 500 hectares, which represented 29% in the 1960s and jumped to 68% in the 2010s (Guereña, 2017)

¹¹ The Coffee Region is comprised mainly of the departments of Caldas, Quindío, and Risaralda. These three departments were one department called Viejo Caldas from 1905 until 1966.

The decade of the 1980s also marks the apparition of paramilitary groups and the rise of dynamics that became characteristic of the Colombian armed conflict, such as massive forced displacement of rural populations, massacres of civilians, and the entanglement of the armed conflict with drug trafficking. The formation of paramilitary groups and the emergence of powerful drug lords organized in cartels that controlled the world cocaine market added two important actors to the social and armed conflict. The other armed actors of the conflict at the time were the Colombian Armed Forces, the US War on Drugs, and at least four active subversive groups: *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército Popular* (FARC-EP, Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces-Popular Army), *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (ELN, National Liberation Army), *Ejército Popular de Liberación* (EPL, Popular Liberation Army) and *Movimiento 19 de Abril* (M19, April 19th Movement).

This chapter briefly explains these actors' main characteristics and how they have intervened and affected the Colombian social and armed conflict. Before addressing the subversive groups individually, it must be clarified that the rural guerrillas shared some commonalities: they operated in spaces where liberal guerrillas -during the 1950s these groups did not identify with a communist ideology, they were close to the Liberal party and characterized as liberal guerrillas- were active during the period known as *La Violencia*. They worked mainly in two spaces: regions that presented a very well-organized labour force, as well as remote regions, where subversive groups could control strategic spaces with topographies that made it difficult to access but at the same time were connected to strategic corridors. These remote regions illustrate the racialized spaces of the discourse of tropicality, they are inhabited by Afrocolombians, Indigenous peoples, and *Mestiza campesinas*. The control of these spaces by subversive groups reinforces the discourse of tropicality in Colombia because it contributes to its stigmatization and discrimination.

Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército Popular (FARC-EP)

FARC-EP (Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces-Popular Army) was officially founded in 1965 after Guillermo León Valencia's government (1962-1966) bombed the rural town of Marquetalia. Although this military operation used 1.5 million bullets, 20,000 bombs, and more than 16,000 soldiers (GMH, 2013), its only result was to increase the power of its target. FARC was officially founded immediately after the failed operation. The unofficial origin of this subversive group goes back to the liberal guerrillas that emerged in the 1940s, around the time Jorge Eliecer Gaitán, left-wing politician and member of the Liberal party, was killed. FARC was a rural guerrilla that started as a community self-defence group. It evolved from liberal to communist ideology and became a subversive movement in response to government attacks under US Latin American policy.¹² At its peak by the end of the 1990s, FARC counted about 20,000 members and was present over most Colombian territory. FARC was the subversive group that made more attempts to reach a peace agreement with the Colombian government. In 1984, after negotiations with Belisario Betancourt's government (1982-1986), FARC founded the political party *Unión Patriótica* (UP, Patriotic Union). Over 3,000 UP members were killed by a criminal alliance between paramilitaries, the Colombian Armed Forces, and regional elites. This act has been officially recognized as a political genocide (CNMH, 2018). At the end of the 1990s, Andrés Pastrana's Government (1998-2002) and FARC advanced a Peace Process that included the demilitarization of 40,000 hectares in Caquetá department, in the southern part of Colombia. However, the Peace Process failed, surrounded by mutual accusations of bad faith negotiation.

¹² The US anti-subversive plan for Latin America was called LASO (Latin American Security Operation). Colombia's Armed Forces plan to manage public order and consolidate as a neutral force among the two governing political parties, Liberal and Conservative, was called Lazo. It was under Lazo/LASO policy that Marquetalia was bombed in 1964 (GMH, 2013).

In 2016, the Government of Juan Manuel Santos (2010-2018) and FARC finally signed a peace agreement, and the subversive group became the political party *Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común* (FARC, Commons' Revolutionary Alternative Force). This peace agreement was opposed by ex-President and Senator Alvaro Uribe Vélez and its right-wing political party *Centro Democrático*. Surprisingly, this right-wing coalition managed to defeat by a small margin a popular referendum to validate the peace agreement, which gave *Centro Democrático* political capital to sabotage the application of the peace agreement. The fatidical referendum became a significant threat when Iván Duque, *Centro Democrático*'s presidential candidate, won the 2018 elections. After Duque took office, a small dissidence of FARC leaders returned to the arms in response to the Colombia government's neglect to fulfill the peace agreement, declaring the reactivation of FARC as a subversive group in 2019. However, the claim to this brand name seems to be unacceptable when more than 90% of FARC members remained unarmed and committed to the peace agreement.

Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN)

ELN (National Liberation Army) was founded in 1962 by university students inspired by the Cuban Revolution and enraged by the lack of political participation offered by the *Frente Nacional*. Ideologically, ELN was built upon previous liberal guerrillas that operated in the Magdalena Medio region (the center of the oil industry in Colombia), and presented a curious influence of communist ideas and Catholic Liberation Theology. Some of its most famous members have been Catholic priests, including Camilo Torres, Domingo Laín, and Manuel Pérez. In its origin, the magnetic presence of the priest Camilo Torres won the sympathy of students, union leaders, inhabitants of working class neighbourhoods, and poor farmers. Despite its diverse origins, ELN has remained predominantly a rural guerrilla. It has been the second most relevant

subversive group in Colombia, although nowadays, after decades of war, its active members have been reduced to around 3,000. Initially, ELN operated in Santander's Magdalena Medio region, but eventually expanded over the departments of Antioquia, Arauca, Bolívar, Boyaca, Casanare, Cauca, Cesar, Nariño, Valle del Cauca, among others. ELN is the only guerrilla group that has never reached a peace agreement with the Colombian government, in spite that it has been repeatedly involved in peace negotiations since the 1980s (GMH, 2013; CNMH, 2015).

Ejército Popular de Liberación (EPL)

EPL (Popular Liberation Army) was founded by students in 1967 and built over the historical presence of liberal guerrillas that operated in the Alto Sinú region. EPL was an armed dissidence of the Communist Party. Ideologically, it was influenced by the Chinese revolution. EPL struggled against the expansion of *latifundios* at the expense of Afro-Colombians, Indigenous peoples, and *Mestiza campesinas'* lands and the lack of political participation allowed by the *Frente Nacional*. EPL's historic territory, the Alto Sinú region, is located strategically in a triangle that connects Panama and the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. EPL was the third biggest subversive group in Colombia, at its peak, it counted more than 4,000 members and presence in the departments of Antioquia, Bolívar, César, Chocó, Córdoba, Norte de Santander, Risaralda, Santander, Sucre, and Valle del Cauca (Rojas, 2008). EPL reached a peace agreement in 1991 with Cesar Gaviria's government and founded the political movement *Esperanza, Paz y Libertad* (Hope, Peace, and Freedom). After EPL's demobilization, FARC tried to take over its territory of influence. The confrontation that followed between FARC, on one side, and EPL ex-guerrilla members recruited by paramilitary groups and the Colombian Armed Forces, on the other side, ended up strengthening the *Autodefensas Unidas de Córdoba y Uraba* (ACCU, United Selfdefenses of Cordoba and Uraba). This group became one of the main paramilitary groups that

created *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC, United Selfdefenses of Colombia) (GMH, 2013). Besides EPL ex-guerrilla members that joined paramilitary groups, about 10% of its original members did not participate in the peace agreement and remained in arms. This guerrilla group has not regained its previous military and political importance since then. Today, EPL political party has disappeared and the remaining men in arms are classified as a criminal group mainly dedicated to activities related to drug trafficking.

Movimiento 19 de Abril (M-19)

M-19 (April 19th Movement) was founded in 1974 after serious evidence that Conservative presidential candidate Misael Pastrana Borrero (1970-1974) had stolen the presidential elections from General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, who had leaded a military government between 1953 and 1957. Pinilla and its party *Alianza Nacional Popular* (ANAPO, Popular National Alliance), not just accepted the fraud but made political alliances with Pastrana's Conservative Party. A group of dissidents from ANAPO, known as Socialist ANAPO, along with some FARC ex-members, formed the M-19. This subversive group followed a social-democratic and nationalist ideology. It was a subversive urban group, which differentiated it from other Colombian guerrillas. This urban background allowed it to connect with people in urban spaces, including the middle-class. M-19 used spectacular actions that called the attention of the media and captivated the imagination of people. These actions included stealing Simón Bolívar's sword from a museum to represent its nationalist ideology, robbing more than 5,000 weapons from the National Army's most important armoury, taking over the Dominican Republican Embassy in Bogotá and kidnapping the US ambassador in Colombia (GMH, 2013).

In 1985, M-19 assaulted the Palace of Justice, which ended in one of Colombia's most tragic armed conflict events. Most of the guerrilla members, judges, and workers inside the Palace of

Justice died when the Armed Forces took over using tanks and heavy artillery. The few survivors of the armed confrontation were tortured and executed by the Army independently of their role in the assault; many were ordinary workers trapped at the Palace of Justice. Even more tragically, this event sparked retaliation against leftist leaders and politicians, most notably the genocide of the *Union Patriótica*, and demolished any peace initiative advanced by Belisario Betancourt's government (1982-1986) (GMH, 2013). M-19 reached a peace agreement in 1990 with Virgilio Barco's government (1986-1990). It formed the political party *Alianza Democrática M-19* (Democratic Alliance M-19). This party promoted and participated in the redaction of 1991 Colombia's new National Constitution and would become a central founder of the *Polo Democrático Alternativo* (Alternative Democratic Party), Colombia's most influential leftist party. Colombia's next president, Gustavo Petro, was a member of M-19 in the 1980s.

Paramilitary Groups

Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC, Colombian United Self-defence, from now on *Autodefensas*) was a coalition of paramilitary groups that previously were operating independently and simultaneously in different spaces. There are at least three sources of these groups. First, in the early 1980s, the Medellín drug cartel, with the assistance of the Colombian Army and Israeli ex-military and mercenary Yair Klein, founded the paramilitary group *Muerte A Secuestradores* (MAS, Death to Kidnappers) in Puerto Boyacá, Magdalena Medio region (Semana, 2007). According to an official investigation, out of 163 original members of this paramilitary organization, 69 were active members of the Colombian Armed Forces (CNMH, 2015). Second, paramilitary groups known as *La Mano Negra* (The Black Hand) were very active in Colombian cities -- the irony of a racist group that calls itself "black". These groups were run by members of the Armed Forces and civilians. They were dedicated to social cleansing,

targeting people they did not consider fully humans, such as homeless people, street children, drug addicts, petty criminals, and members of the LGBT community. The stigmatization of these individuals was worse when they were racialized bodies. *Mano Negra* groups evolved into groups of hitmen working for the drug cartels (Salazar, 2002).

Third, regional elites, mainly political leaders, cattle ranchers, *latifundistas*, and agro-industrialists, started creating private security groups in rural areas to protect themselves against subversive groups actions, such as theft, blackmailing, and kidnapping. These groups were also used to eliminate the political opposition, union organizing, and landless *campesinos*. In regions such as the Caribbean coast, regional elite's paramilitary groups switched from a reactive to an active role, taking over terrains that belonged to Afrocolombians, Indigenous communities, and *Mestiza campesinas*. Drug cartels in other regions also created private armies to control strategic territories used to grow illegal crops for drug production and traffic drugs and weapons. All these groups were active in different regions of Colombia. Although they initially did not have a centralized hierarchy, they shared an extreme right-wing ideology that coincided with the Armed Forces' anti-communist ideology. This ideology had been legally practiced through mechanisms such as the state of exception and Turbay Ayala government's (1978-1982) Security Statute (GMH, 2013).

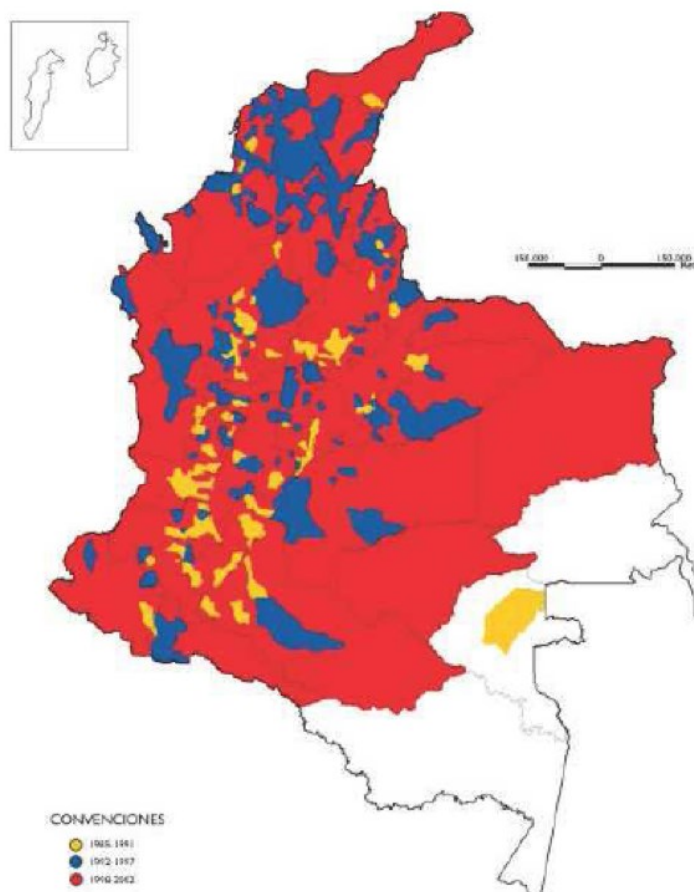
In the early 1990s, Colombia experienced winds of change and peace, which took shape in two crucial events: the new and more democratic 1991 political Constitution replaced the outdated conservative Constitution redacted in 1886, and the guerrilla movement M-19 had reached a peace agreement with Virgilio Barco's government (1986-1990), becoming the political movement Democratic Alliance April 19th. Unfortunately, urban and rural paramilitary groups were strengthened at the regional scale to prevent social, political, and economic changes that would affect local elites. By 1997 those groups unified under the *Autofensas Unidas de*

Colombia. The failed peace dialogues between the Andrés Pastrana's government (1998-2002) and FARC-EP produced a historical opportunity for paramilitary groups to become a mighty military power with relative autonomy from the Armed Forces and its vision of a political, social, and economic project at the national scale, represented in a counter-agrarian reform (Loininsigh, 2002). The status quo feared that the peace dialogues with FARC, if successful, would bring social, economic, and political transformations against their interests. It was not the first time that paramilitary forces were used against a peace process. *Unión Patriótica*, a political movement that emerged after peace negotiations between Belisario Betancourt's government (1982-1986) and FARC, was exterminated violently in less than a decade by paramilitaries (GMH, 2013). Historically, strengthening paramilitary groups has been a regular strategy when negotiations between the government and guerrilla groups advance to prevent its success and any transformation of Colombia's socioeconomic structure.

Loininsigh (2002) has identified three critical moments in consolidating the paramilitary project at the national scale. The first is the confrontation stage. This stage is the most violent moment when paramilitaries enter a territory for the first time. If there are guerrilla groups in the territory, there are combats, which inevitably affect civilians. This moment also presents massacres, forced displacement, forced disappearances, and killings. Economically, the liberation of spaces where the guerrillas were strong facilitates processes of land concentration for *latifundios*, cattle ranching and the agro-industry (Cortés, 2003), and the extension of public services and roads that benefit mainly the new *haciendas*. These new *haciendas* were land taken from Afrocolombians, Indigenous peoples, and *Mestiza campesinas* who have been forcibly displaced, and the land is concentrated in extensive rural properties that belong to the economic and political elite, which includes drug traffickers legalizing their wealth. Politically and socially, paramilitary authority is imposed in the region. The second stage deploys territorial control. This

is the moment when the geography of the conflict as we know it is drawn. According to Cortés (2003), the geography of the conflict shows that subversive groups dominated spaces that are difficult to access, such as the highlands in the Andean mountains and rivers headwaters in the jungles. Paramilitary groups, in open alliance with the armed forces (Oslender, 2007), located in urban spaces such as the capitals of municipalities and departments, close to the Army and Police headquarters, and strategic transit points. This strategic ubication allowed paramilitaries to control the movement of people, planes, food, medicines, and communications.

Map-Figure 3: The Geography of Conflict: Paramilitary Expansion in Colombian Territory between 1986 and 2002



Note: Map 3 shows the expansion of the paramilitary project in Colombia between 1886 and 2002 (Quijano & Díaz, 2004).

In this phase, violence becomes specific, quiet, and normalized, instead of massive, spectacular, and frightening. Armed combats become rare, while hitmen's assassinations, individual disappearances, and death threats increase. Social control slowly replaces armed control. The primary victims during this stage are the political left, union and social leaders, social movements, critical academics, and journalists. Other targets are the usual victims of social cleansing, i.e., homeless people, prostitutes, members of the LGBT community, drug addicts, petty criminals, and young people who do not conform to normative social behaviour (Quijano & Díaz, 2004). This violence is never practiced against privileged people and spaces; it is always exercised in working class neighbourhoods and marginalized spaces, and it is profoundly discriminatory violence. Spatially, there is a re-colonization process during the stage of territorial control, as paramilitaries displace locals and bring people from territories that they have already under control (Oslender, 2007). The coexistence of paramilitaries with the state (Cortes, 2003), and in some cases, its replacement, allows paramilitaries to continue expanding private property and even offer state services, such as road construction, public services, health care, education, and property development. In rural spaces, agro-industrial, livestock, and mining projects create employment in the territory. The socioeconomic dimension of *Autodefensas* allows them to create a paramilitary rearguard with the population that benefits from these actions (Loininsigh, 2002).

Third is the stage of legitimization. At this moment, the violence and weapons of the first two stages are unnecessary. Political opposition has been decimated. The selective killings of union and social leaders and critical academics and journalists guarantee total social control. This stage is when investors appear in the scene, oil palm plantations and mining projects develop the rural spaces previously taken from Afro-Colombians, Indigenous, and *Mestiza campesinas* (Cortes, 2003; Oslender, 2007). Once paramilitaries have achieved territorial control and enter the stage of legitimization, their existence is not justified anymore; they have imposed their right-wing

ideology (Loininsigh, 2002). The state, armed forces, and mass media reproduce the imaginary that “there is security now.” The political left, social movements, critical academics, journalists, and unions are represented as obstacles to development and peace (Chomsky, 2007).

Oslender (2007) has characterized the paramilitary project as a “chain model” that has

[F]our basic elements: (1) armed incursion, with its associated crimes and human rights violations; (2) illegal and violent expropriation of land; (3) forced displacement of owners and population occupying the lands prior to their expropriation; and (4) the planting of [insert here any agro-industrial product] on the ‘conquered’ land. It should be added that as part of step (4) a landless proletariat from other regions is brought in to occupy and work the emptied lands for their new landlords. [...] In this context, displacement must be understood as a development strategy. (759)

According to Oslender (2007), although paramilitaries might have introduced some new steps in the process, this model is not exclusive to Colombia; it is part of a “global capitalist logic of displacement” (762). *Asociación Cívica para la Paz* (ASOCIPAZ, Civilians Association for Peace)¹³ stated clearly the objectives of the paramilitary project for the nation, which includes a vicious opposition to the agrarian reform (Kay, 2002) and reads precisely as neoliberal policy from governments and economic international institutions.

A development model supported by strategic projects should be implemented between 2000 and 2020. This model should be supported by strategic projects that will make possible an integrated region without borders. A region connected to the transnational geoeconomic axis, participating competitively in national and international markets, transforming its comparative advantages into competitive advantages. A region connected to specialized industrial clusters, especially in the mining, logging, agro-industrial sectors, and SMEs (Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises). Using the latest technology to export and supported by adequate infrastructure and a fiscal regime will attract industrial relocation and international investment. [...] Everything seems to indicate that nations like Colombia must evaluate their traditional economic and social model and choose others that emphasize competitiveness and social capital valorization. [...] It is necessary *to create new agriculture, not by using traditional state agencies, poor and uneducated farmers left to their luck, but specialized organizations, with significant business experience, autonomous and independent.* [...] *It is not about making small farmers owners of useless pieces of land, but to*

¹³ ASOCIPAZ was an organization sympathetic to AUC that opposed an initiative to create a demilitarized zone to conduct peace dialogues between Andrés Pastrana’s government (1998-2002) and ELN in the Magdalena Medio region; the birthplace of paramilitary groups in Colombia. ASOCIPAZ was successful, and these peace dialogues could not advance.

generating sources of employment, well-paid jobs, and real possibilities to participate actively, as shareholders or business partners, in modern agro-industrial capital (Loininsigh, 2002, 85-86) Emphasis added.

The War on Drugs and Plan Colombia

The war on drugs has been an important actor in the Colombian social and armed conflict, particularly with the implementation of Plan Colombia, which was enforced from 1999 until 2015. It was conceived during Andrés Pastrana's government in Colombia (1998-2002) and Bill Clinton's in the US (1993-2001), although it spanned different administrations in both countries. During Plan Colombia, Colombia became the fourth world's most prominent receptor of US international aid, only surpassed by Iraq, Israel, and Egypt. With an average contribution of \$500 million US dollars per year between 1997 and 2007, Colombia received more US money than all Latin American countries together during that period (LAWG & WOLA, 2007). After decades of fighting the war on drugs and billions invested in Plan Colombia, the results were poor. The price of marijuana, heroin, and cocaine on US streets decreased year by year, indicating more drugs available (LAWG and WOLA, 2007).

This research argues that the war on drugs has two objectives. First, in nations like Colombia, where the focus of the war on drugs has been aerial fumigation of coca plantations, it has the objective of controlling militarily, politically, and economically territories with valuable natural resources. Similar to the war on terror, the war on drugs represents a unilateral US military initiative to consolidate a geopolitical scenario that primarily serves its interests (Sparke, 2003; Harvey, 2007). Moreover, within the US, the war on drugs also has the objective of managing racialized young people while feeding the prison industrial complex (Gilmore, 2007; Loyd, 2011; McKittrick, 2011; Shabaz, 2015). The war on drugs is part of a profoundly racist strategy that consolidates the US geopolitical position of dominance while favouring private

economic interests. It hammers the two weakest links in drug trafficking. In Colombia, it fumigates and displaces Afro-Colombians, Indigenous peoples, and *Mestiza campesinas*; while in the US, it jails poor Afro-Americans and Latinas (Gilmore, 2007).

The saga of marijuana, heroin, and cocaine trafficking reinforces this argument. Marijuana was heavily fought in Mexico; it was even fumigated with paraquat, a chemical produced by Monsanto. The same company supplies Plan Colombia with glyphosate (known commercially as Roundup) for aerial fumigation. Nowadays, as marijuana is increasingly legalized in many countries, including many US states, the US has become the most prominent world producer of marihuana (El Tiempo, 2007). In 1981, 10 grams of heroin cost \$180 US dollars. After Afghanistan's US invasion in the 2000s, the price of 10 grams of heroin dropped to \$20/\$30 in the streets (LAWG and WOLA, 2007). Cocaine does not escape this trend. Plan Colombia has spent billions of dollars, fumigated millions of hectares with glyphosate, and displaced millions of poor farmers with these fumigations. After all these actions, the street price of 50 grams of cocaine in the US has dropped from \$ 200 to \$ 40 US dollars in the last three decades (LAWG and WOLA, 2007). More than a million hectares were fumigated with glyphosate during Plan Colombia without affecting the production and supply of cocaine. In 2000, more than 43,000 out of 136,000 hectares cultivated with coca were fumigated, while 140,000 out of 144,000 hectares were fumigated in 2005. In other words, while fumigations increased by almost 400%, coca plantations did not decrease; they increased almost 10,000 hectares (LAWG and WOLA, 2007).

The territories fumigated were inhabited by Afro-Colombians, Indigenous peoples, and *Mestiza campesinas*. Their crime was to live in a region where there were coca plantations and, in some cases, cultivating coca plants, the only profitable activity. These are remote spaces where people do not have access to the most basic public services, such as running water, electricity, sewage system, health care, and education. Roads are usually in terrible condition, which

increases the transportation price of agricultural produce, making them too expensive and not competitive in the market (Cortés, 2003; Gutiérrez, 2009). Many poor *campesinas* started growing coca plants because it was the only crop that provided some cash for basic needs such as food, transportation, health care, education, and clothing. Plan Colombia had a counter-effective impact. In many instances, poor farmers started cultivating coca because their legal crops were fumigated with glyphosate by Plan Colombia, and coca became the only alternative to forced displacement (Gutiérrez, 2009). Drug traffickers and armed groups increased coca plantations by offering capital to *campesinas* who participate in the production, expanding a business that offers the first two significant profits (Cortés, 2003).

In regions with coca crops where I worked, such as the Magdalena Medio/South of Bolivar, guerrillas charged a tax for every hectare cultivated with coca. When farmers eradicated coca plants, they were punished and forced to cultivate twice what they had before. The armed forces deployed on the territory charged entry taxes for the supplies to produce cocaine (cement, gas, chloroform, acetone, among others) and exit taxes for the cocaine shipments at checkpoints (Gutiérrez, 2009). Paramilitaries had the most substantial business participation, they charged a tax for every kilogram sold, and controlled the cartels' structures in urban spaces. The geography of the conflict evidences the complicity between the Armed Forces and paramilitaries, which makes paramilitary dominance in drug trafficking possible (Cortés, 2003). On the other hand, the war against subversive groups puts an obstacle to the participation of the guerrillas in the distribution, commercialization, and exportation. The US also takes a clear side in this confrontation. The war on drugs and the war on terror coincide in the US designation of guerrilla groups as terrorist groups (Harvey, 2007), increasing their prosecution and enforcing paramilitaries' position as the dominant actor over the geography of conflict.

I am basing these arguments on my experience working with rural communities in regions with extensive plantations of coca, such as the Magdalena Medio region and Nariño department (Gutiérrez, 2009). This dynamic might change in spaces where guerrilla groups have control over an extensive territory and have access to clandestine landing strips and routes to distribute and export illegal drugs. Nevertheless, paramilitary dominance in the illegal drug business is a common characteristic of the geography of conflict due to the alliance between the US, the Colombian state/armed forces, and paramilitaries against subversive groups (Cortés, 2003; Harvey, 2007; Oslender, 2007, Gutiérrez, 2009). For Afro-Colombians, Indigenous peoples, and *Mestiza campesinas*, it does not matter who controls the territory. If they live in spaces where coca is grown for cocaine production,¹⁴ they are in spaces controlled by armed groups that stimulate coca plantations and punish them if they do not grow it (CNMH, 2015b; Fundación Paz y Reconciliación, 2018).

Plan Colombia's fumigations have had devastating effects on nature, legal crops, and communities. They are dispersed from airplanes flying far from the ground to avoid guerrilla attacks, which makes the spreading of the chemical vulnerable to the wind. While their objective is to burn coca plantations, they poison other legal crops used either for consumption or trade, which significantly affects the economy of already impoverished *campesinas* (Cortés, 2003; Oslender, 2007). Fumigation also affects the surrounding fauna, flora, and water bodies. Many communities not having access to public services, such as running water, are forced to improvise homemade aqueducts using river waters. When these water sources are contaminated, they cause grave illnesses to people, such as skin rashes, flu, dizziness, vomiting, loss of consciousness, and

¹⁴ Coca is a sacred plant for many Indigenous communities. Additionally, many of these communities are experimenting with coca leaves to produce tea, energy drinks, cookies, toothpaste, among many other products.

even death (Gutiérrez, 2009). Plan Colombia's fumigations also contribute to the armed conflict and forced displacement (Cortes, 2003; Oslender, 2007). After a family's farm has been fumigated, they have three options. First, they could eradicate all crops fumigated, wait until the soil has recovered, and start new crops. This option implies that the family has savings to survive for at least a year without producing anything, which is not a real option for impoverished *campesina* families. Second, *campesinas* can take a loan from an armed group to cultivate coca. This option forced *campesinas* to pay back and join the cartel structure, which force them to keep growing coca for cocaine production. But for many families the third option resides in being displaced to other spaces, joining the more than eight million IDPs (Unidad Víctimas, 2020). Forced displacement is a desperate option that Plan Colombia's fumigations have forced many families to take.

Fumigations are a strategy to control militarily, politically, and economically territories with valuable natural resources or strategic for economic projects. Plan Colombia creates business opportunities for Monsanto, which produces glyphosate and transgenic seeds resistant to chemicals such as glyphosate, which can be grown in territories previously fumigated. These seeds cannot reproduce, which forces *campesinas* to keep buying seeds from Monsanto. Plan Colombia has increased the US military presence and influence in Colombia. In 1999, 2,500 Colombian members of the Armed Forces out of 14,000 Latin American military personnel were trained by the US Armed Forces. By 2003, 13,000 Colombian soldiers were receiving military training by the US (LAWG and WOLA, 2007). Simultaneously, US's armed deals in Latin America increased during Plan Colombia. In 1996, more than 90% of weapons were sold through direct deals with companies; by 2005, more than 50% of sales were done through government deals. Plan Colombia played a fundamental role in these changes because its economic aid was conditioned to buying weapons produced by US companies (LAWG and WOLA, 2007). Plan

Colombia is a specific example of how the US has used its position as “alone military superpower” (Sparke, 2003, 381) to consolidate unilaterally policies that serve only its economic interests, without caring much for the devastating effects that this strategy has in the neocolonial nations where it is applied. Sidaway (2000) refers to the US military, economic, and political intervention in Latin America as an “unfinished conquest.” (601)

US economic aid, channelled through Plan Colombia, has the objective of consolidating the US strategic economic and military interests and strengthening the Colombian Armed Forces, which have been trained by the US Army to protect the very same interests (Pearce, 2006). The Colombian Armed Forces are infamous for committing human rights violations, including illegal detention of civilians, rape of women and children, forced disappearances, executions,¹⁵ and forced displacement of rural communities, as well as indiscriminate attacks against civilians during battles, association with drug cartels, and collaboration with paramilitary groups. Usually, after military operations that included aerial fumigation with glyphosate and troops movement on the ground, paramilitary forces would gain territorial control and facilitate external investors’ entrance (Cortes, 2003; Oslender, 2007; Gutiérrez, 2009).

Bill Richardson, Energy Secretary under Bill Clinton’s government corroborates the argument that Plan Colombia’s primary objective was to open space for US investments. When the war on drugs was starting, Richardson “declared in front of an audience that included mining companies, that the USA was going to invest heavily in the mining and energy sectors and that they will triplicate military aid to safeguard those investments” (Loininsigh, 2002, 66). In

¹⁵ This practice is known in Colombia as *falsos positivos*, which consisted in killing civilians, dressing them in camouflage, presenting them as guerrilla members killed in combat, and reclaiming prizes for military results. *Falsos positivos* were part of Alvaro Uribe Vélez’s government (2002-2010) military strategy and they counted with the active collaboration of paramilitary groups. It is estimated that more than 6,402 people were executed under this modality (Semana, 2006; 2019).

general, the approach of the war on drugs is mistaken. As long as there is demand for illegal drugs, there will be supply. If the war on drugs were successful and could manage to eliminate cocaine, heroin, and marijuana, other drugs would appear and replace them because an end of the supply would not end demand. Fundamental economic rules support this argument. Why then the US insists on fighting the war on drugs? Because its objective is not to end drug trafficking but to control militarily, politically, and economically territories with valuable natural resources and manage racialized young people while feeding the industrial prison complex in the US (Gilmore, 2007).

Peace Processes

There have been several peace processes in Colombia. Megoran and Dalby (2018, 252) explain that peace has different meanings depending on who is defining and benefiting; it is affected by “questions of meaning and power.” The peace processes in Colombia have been staged by different actors, usually with the Colombian government on one side and an illegal armed group on the other. Nevertheless, even the Colombian administration is not always the same actor since different governments have contrasting agendas, approaches, and interests related to the kind of peace they envision. This section addresses the two peace processes that have taken place since the 2000s, the demobilization process with paramilitary groups and the Peace Process with FARC.

Paramilitary Demobilization: A Failed Legitimization Stage

Resuming the previous section about the paramilitary project, what should be done with the paramilitary army after the project has been completed? Alvaro Uribe Vélez’s government (2002-2010) advanced a peace process with the paramilitaries that sought to integrate them into civil

society, guarantee impunity for their crimes, ignore the rights of its victims, legalize the wealth that they and their founders have accumulated during two decades of war, and open space for their legal participation in politics. Colombian civil society, the judiciary, human rights organizations, non-governmental organizations, and the international community criticized this process vehemently. The Colombian Constitutional Court did not recognize paramilitaries as legitimate subversive groups. It forced the government to tighten up the legal frame of the demobilization process, particularly concerning demanding confessions to access alternative sentences for their crimes. These changes went against Uribe's intention to allow paramilitaries to participate in politics, pay reduced prison sentences, and avoid prison in some instances (Arias and Rojas, 2007). After the peace process with the paramilitaries faced this obstacle, it became clear that Uribe could not guarantee impunity to paramilitary bosses and they started to reveal their linkages with the economic elite and political and military authorities. These confessions started a political scandal known as *parapolítica*. Most of the politicians involved in this scandal were part of Uribe's government and political party.¹⁶ Uribe proceeded to extradite paramilitary bosses to the US, hampering any attempt of the Colombian justice system to prosecute them, and more importantly, to uncover the structure behind the paramilitary project. This structure included military authorities and political and economic elites at the local, regional, and national scales (GMH, 2013).

The peace process between the Colombian government and paramilitaries is challenging to characterize, mainly because they were not enemies. If there was no conflict between them, how

¹⁶ By 2008, 67 of the 280 congress members were condemned for links with paramilitaries. Including Mario Uribe, President Uribe's first cousin, Carlos García, Uribe's political party president, Alvaro Noguera, Uribe's appointed director of DAS (National Security Department), many governors, mayors, ambassadors, consuls, and other government members. Paramilitary bosses accused them of participating in a project to create a new social contract for Colombia.

could two allies negotiate peace? This process had some elements of the realist approach to peace in the sense that it was not concerned with issues of justice; it was a matter of preservation of the status quo (Megoran and Dalby, 2018). It also has some traits of “authoritarian conflict management, as it rejects international mediation and seeks to establish ‘sustained hegemonic control’” (Megoran and Dalby, 2018, 266). Concerning the armed conflict, despite Uribe’s claims, the peace process between its government and the paramilitaries did not end all paramilitary groups and activities. One of the most significant contradictions of this peace process was that paramilitaries’ natural enemy, subversive groups, were still active and strong. Their demobilization was not the consequence of the defeat of the guerrillas, which was supposedly their goal, but a calculated move that sought to legalize a counter-agrarian reform (Cortés, 2003), which was the primary objective of the paramilitary project (Loininsigh, 2002). The counter-agrarian reform is not a dynamic exclusive to the Colombian social and armed conflict. It has taken place in almost all Latin American nations with the advent of neoliberalism and its transfer of “wealth from the mass of the population toward the upper classes” (Harvey, 2007, 34). It came after a period of diverse agrarian reforms in different nations of the continent following the Mexican revolution, but especially between the 1950s and 1980s (Kay, 2002). The exceptionality of the Colombian case is the violence, brutality, length, and spatial extension of the paramilitary’s project counter-agrarian reform.

Several reasons explain the continuation of paramilitary groups after the demobilization process. The motivations to continue are a profitable illegal economy, the lack of a comprehensive plan to reincorporate demobilized paramilitaries into civil society, the absence of the state in peripheral regions, and the continuation of the armed conflict and guerrilla groups. There are three different types of paramilitary groups after the demobilization process. First, rearmed paramilitary groups that participated in the process and have returned to the arms.

Second, dissident paramilitary groups that were active before and did not participate in the demobilization process. Third, emergent or new paramilitary groups formed after the demobilization process (CNMH, 2015b; Fundación Paz y Reconciliación, 2018). Although the Colombian government insists on classifying these groups as criminal bands, some analysts argue that they represent the third generation of paramilitary groups, presenting some commonalities and differences with the previous generation. The most important differences are that these groups do not present a unified front such as *Autodefensas*. They respond to local and regional interests. The balance between the political and economic dimensions has tipped in favour of the second, particularly concerning drug trafficking, to the point that in some cases, they have made strategic alliances with the guerrillas to advance illegal economic activities (CNMH, 2015b).

Concerning the commonalities, third-generation paramilitary groups still have considerable economic, social, and political power. They are linked to a right-wing agenda that opposes a peaceful end to the social and armed conflict in an alliance with the Armed Forces and regional political and economic elites. They generally replicate old paramilitary activities such as using armed groups to control territories socially, politically, and economically. They reproduce an anti-communist discourse; conduct political persecutions, death threats, selective killings, social cleansing, and forced disappearances; participate in drugs and arms trafficking, and extort business and companies. Third-generation paramilitary groups also displace Afro-Colombians, Indigenous peoples, and *Mestiza campesinas* to open space for agricultural and mining projects (GMH, 2013; CNMH, 2015b).

Peace Process with FARC

After decades of failed peace initiatives, Juan Manuel Santos' government (2010-2018) reached a peace agreement with FARC on August 24th, 2016. Following Megoran and Dalby's

(2018) characterization, this peace process can be typified as liberal peace. It relied on a whole set of national and international institutions, organizations, and the mediation and support of other nations to legitimize it. This peace process used “constitutional peace to ensure democracy and free-trade, and civil peace to ensure freedom and rights within society” (Megoran and Dalby, 2018, 265) and guaranteed the control of force by the state “to underpin a democratic and liberal political, social and economic order, with structural social questions mainly dealt with in terms of ‘democratization’ rather than through the promotion of social justice” (Megoran and Dalby, 2018, 266). President Juan Manuel Santos followed the recipe to achieve liberal “Peaceland” and he was rewarded with the Nobel Peace Prize on October 7th, 2016. Even though the peace agreement between the Colombian government and FARC is a step on the road to peace, this research advocates for a peace process that fits more into an anarchist model -one that recognizes “that violence [is] produced by the exercise of hierarchical (especially state) power, and that it [is] on grass-roots alternatives to the [neocolonial] state system that the foundations of a genuine peace [can] be laid” (Megoran and Dalby, 2018, 255). Such a peace process would include the perspective of the communities more affected by the conflict, implement changes that would affect the microgeographies of the daily life of ordinary people, and build the base for social justice and peace.

However, this peace agreement was historic because it ended more than five decades of armed conflict between the Colombian state and FARC. Based on other experiences where armed conflicts have ended in a peace agreement, the following two years after signing the accord are essential to have a successful post-conflict. This period is known as “stabilization” (PARES, 2018). In consequence, 2017 and 2018 were extremely important to implement this agreement. Sadly, the balance is not very optimistic. On the one hand, FARC was able to participate in electoral politics for the first time, and most indicators of violence at the national scale had been

dramatically reduced after signing the agreement. Forced displacement decreased from 272,000 IDPs in 2012, when the negotiations between the government and FARC started, to 75,000 IDPs in 2017, after they reached the peace agreement. Homicides diminished from 15,957 in 2012 to 12,211 in 2017. Victims of land mines went down from 1,200 in 2006 to 56 in 2017.

Kidnappings reached their peak in the late 1990s with 3,000 per year, while they were 180 in 2017 (PARES, 2018). The reduction in the violence statistics was a glimpse of the peace that three generations of Colombians had not enjoyed in our entire lives.

On the other hand, more than nine million victims of the armed conflict are still waiting for truth, justice, and reparations, as well as political representation in Congress. To make matters worse, since the signing of the agreement, the killings of social leaders have been rampant. On average, every two days, a social leader is being killed in Colombia. Besides, former FARC members that played an essential role as community leaders in the reincorporation process have also been the objective of selective killings. The government has tried to minimize these crimes arguing they are caused by “differences in property boundaries, romance drama, and violence connected to illegal economies” (PARES, 2018, 61). The political character of these killings is undeniable; they target social leaders that organize victims to demand truth, justice, and reparation, leaders that deal with illegal economies, particularly concerning the voluntary substitution of illegal crops for drug production, leaders that demand recognition and fulfillment of collective, cultural, and territorial rights of Indigenous, Afro-Colombian, and *Mestiza campesina* communities, and leaders that head groups that have been historically marginalized from the democratic system (PARES, 2018).

The war on drugs keeps hurting poor *campesinas*, mainly because the government insists on forced eradication by poisoning people and land with aerial glyphosate fumigations -which were suspended between 2015 and 2018. The plans for reincorporating ex-guerrilla members as

civilians have not advanced much because the government has not assigned the resources to develop the different projects designed for this purpose, particularly for municipalities where former guerrilla members are concentrated. Some of the territories that FARC controlled have fallen under “criminal anarchy”¹⁷ or the control of other armed groups, such as FARC dissidents, ELN, and *Grupos Armados Organizados* (GAOs, Organized Armed Groups), which has intensified the conflict in these spaces (PARES, 2018). Under these circumstances, it is undeniable that the Colombian state’s goals for the “stabilization” stage during the post-conflict are in danger. These goals are to achieve territorial security, win the people’s sympathy in the territories that previously were under FARC control, create the conditions in those spaces to move from illegal to legal economies, and establish the presence of state institutions.

The main reason why Santos’ “Peaceland” did not last is that Iván Duque Márquez took office as President of Colombia on August 7th, 2018. His presidency represented the return to power of right-wing political party *Centro Democrático* and its leader Alvaro Uribe Vélez. Before the elections, *Centro Democrático* had declared that they would “tear apart” the peace agreement, dedicating most of its political activity to this goal. Consequently, Duque’s presidency has been characterized by a continuous effort to damage the peace process and the *Jurisdicción Especial para la Paz* (JEP, Special Jurisdiction for Peace). The obsession with destroying the peace agreement has caused Duque’s administration to neglect its governing tasks and caused widespread unrest in the country. Duque and *Centro Democrático*’s idea of peace can be framed as “authoritarian conflict management.” Its effort to achieve peace with subversive

¹⁷ FARC operated as a parallel state in the territories they controlled, administered justice, prosecuted petty criminals, and regulated social life. When FARC abandoned these territories, it created a power vacuum, and there was a hike in common delinquency and conflicts among neighbours.

groups since the presidency of Álvaro Uribe Vélez, the leader of *Centro Democrático* and who has been labelled by Duque as the “eternal president” of Colombia, were characterized by

[T]he prevention, de-escalation or termination of organized armed rebellion [...] through methods that eschew genuine negotiations among parties to the conflict, reject international mediation and constraints on the use of force and rely instead on instruments of state coercion and hierarchical structures of power. [It relied on] a distinct set of norms and practices employed by political elites across three social levels – discourse, space and the economy – with the aim of establishing “sustained hegemonic control” over a part of society perceived to be unstable or engaged in conflict (Megoran and Dalby, 2018, 266).

In response to Duque’s dysfunctional government, social and labor leaders organized the most extensive strike in Colombia’s history on November 21st, 2019. After this day, national protests continued for weeks until the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic stopped them. The government produced a delirious narrative that qualified the strike as a conspiracy of the Sao Paulo Forum, international Castro-Chavismo, and even the Russian government. Initially, the strike was an initiative of the organized labour movement represented by different unions. However, many other social movements joined in the organizing, adding a comprehensive set of demands that challenged Duque’s policies. In some cases, they tried to give direction to a government whose only clear policy was to destroy the peace agreement with FARC.

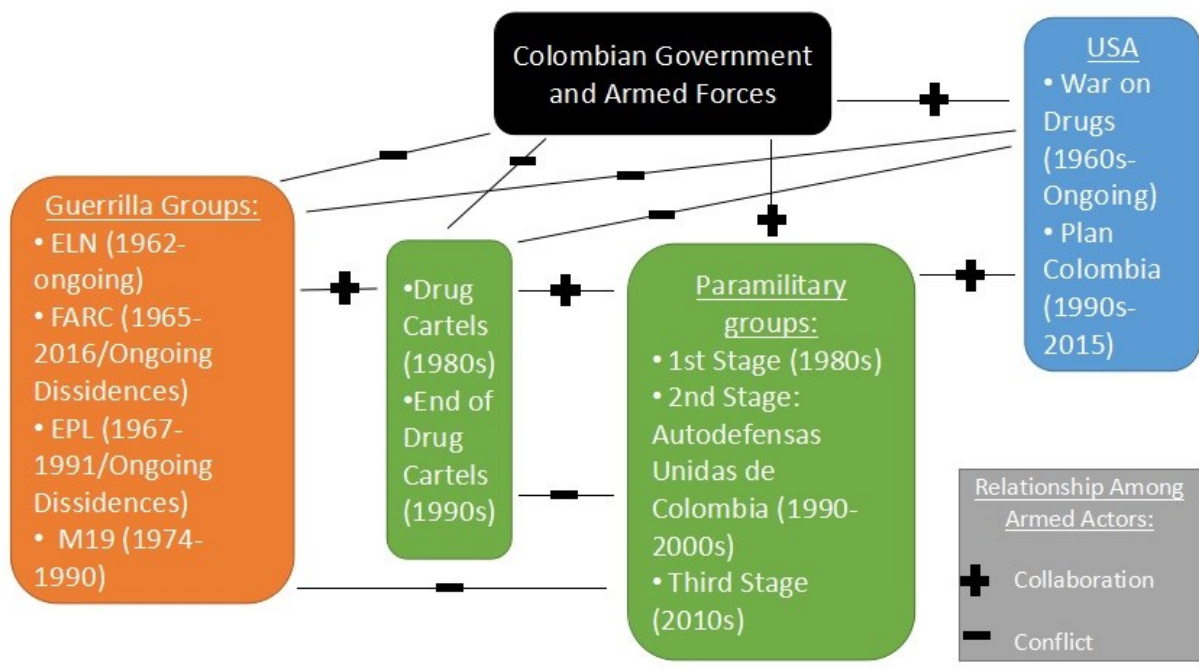
The demands included: first, a challenge to the government’s neoliberal policies, including the tax, labour, and pensions reforms, the selling of public companies, and renegotiating free trade agreements. Second, the accountability of the police for abuses and violent acts, particularly its anti-riot squad. Third, the fulfillment of the government promises with previous strikes advanced by teachers’ unions, the students’ movement, and Indigenous and *Mestiza campesina* communities. Fourth, the continuation of the peace process and the protection of the lives of social and environmental leaders. Fifth, the support for urgent anti-corruption measures presented by opposition political parties, backed by more than twelve million people in a national referendum. Sixth, the review of environmental policies with the inclusion of environmental

organizations in the process. This strike is regarded as a landmark in Colombian democracy. It is argued that it was a direct consequence of the peace agreement with FARC and the manifestation of a new political scenario where it is popularly accepted that protesting peacefully for democratic rights is not associated with armed insurgencies and violence anymore. The diversity of the participants in the protests and the fact that the government has failed to delegitimize the protest with absurd Cold War arguments prove that social protest and democracy in Colombia have reached new levels.

Conclusion

This chapter gave a brief account of the complexities and the main actors of Colombia's social and armed conflict. Diagram 1 presents a visual representation of these actors and their complex relationships. First, the Colombian government, including its Armed Forces, fought historically against the different guerrilla groups and the drug cartels. The Colombian government has received economic and military support from the US government, particularly under its war on drugs policy and strategies, such as Plan Colombia.

Diagram 1: Armed Actors in the Colombian Social and Armed Conflict



Second, the subversive groups, which have antagonistic relations with the Colombian government, the US government, and a complex association with drug cartels because, despite their tensions, they collaborated in the drug business. Third, the drug cartels had a complex connection with the Colombian government and the subversive groups. They were persecuted and exterminated by the government. However, they also were an economic and political power at the local and national scales, with heavy influence over local and national authorities. The interaction between drug cartels and subversive groups was even more complex. Ideologically, they represented opposing ideologies, communism/capitalism, but on the ground, the subversive groups controlled the territory that drug lords needed for their coca plantations. In consequence, they became reluctant business partners in the production of illegal drugs.

Fourth are paramilitary groups, which are divided into three generations. The first generation was heavily financed by the drug cartels. However, the government also supported them because they were fighting subversive groups and the political left, the historical enemies of the economic and political elite that controls the Colombian state. Paramilitaries fought the war with illegal but

effective methods that the Armed Forces could not use. The second generation of paramilitary groups evolved into the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* to gain territorial control at the national scale. They strengthened the alliance with the state by continuing their anti-communist work and joining efforts with the Colombia and US governments to end drug cartels, a task completed by the mid-1990s (Borden, 2001). In exchange, *Autodefensas* occupied a dominant role in the geography of the conflict and took the role of the drug cartels in the production and distribution of illegal drugs. Finally, the US government actively supports the Colombian government in exchange for its loyalty and support of US neocolonial interests in Colombia and the region, such as the ongoing aggression against Venezuela. The US government backed paramilitary groups because they were doing valuable military and security work for multinationals (Loningsigh, 2002; Pearce, 2006; LAWG/WOLA, 2007; WOLA, 2008; Gutiérrez, 2009; GMH, 2013; CNMH, 2015), US economic interests, and its neocolonial agenda. The US government fought against the drug cartels because these did not follow their political agenda and subversive groups because they represent the ultimate threat to its geopolitical interests in Colombia and the Latin American region (Galeano, 1988).

Drug production and trafficking, particularly cocaine, is a transversal issue in the Colombian social and armed conflict. It involves each actor in the conflict. Even though legalization and regulation are the most viable solution to the “drug problem,” the ruling class in Colombia does not even contemplate this option. The US war on drugs would not allow it, and Colombia’s neocolonial status makes it unrealistic to think about this alternative. This reality is an obstacle to any peace process in Colombia -both subversive and paramilitary groups have an economic incentive to remain in arms and keep a share in the business, as we have seen with dissident groups in every peace process. Finally, this chapter argues that the best solution to the social and armed conflict is a peace process led by grassroots initiatives, but this will need coordination at

the local, national, and international scale. The following chapter continues the discussion about the Colombian social and armed conflict with a focus on forced displacement, how the armed actors participating in the conflict cause forced displacement, and how this dynamic is connected to economic development and racism.

5. TRACING FORCED DISPLACEMENT IN COLOMBIA: CONFLICT AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

Introduction

Forced displacement in Colombia can be understood as a consequence of the social and armed conflict of the past decades. There is another argument that contends that forced displacement is a development strategy. This chapter affirms both ideas, arguing that they can be seen as complementary interpretations that are not mutually exclusive as they do not have enough explanatory effectiveness individually. The case for forced displacement due to the armed conflict reveals the causal connection between violence and displacement. However, it cannot explain the social, political, and economic causes of forced displacement. On the other hand, the contention that forced displacement is a development strategy offers significant insights into how the armed conflict, the state, the United States, neoliberalism, paramilitary forces, and the counter-agrarian reform are connected but cannot clarify why subversive groups cause forced displacement. People leave their homes due to the action of one or more armed actors: subversive groups, paramilitary groups, state armed forces, and the US war on drugs. The interviews conducted in this research confirm this analysis.

It is helpful to begin with a brief chronology of the armed conflict and forced displacement in Colombia. *The Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica* (CNMH, 2015) has set 1980 as the year when the current forced displacement crisis started. The ensuing decade was marked by the emergence of drug cartels, the expansion of coca crops for cocaine production, and the creation of paramilitary groups. The number of IDPs increased gradually in the 1990s. It reached its highest numbers in the 2000s during the tenure of the Alvaro Uribe Vélez government (2002-

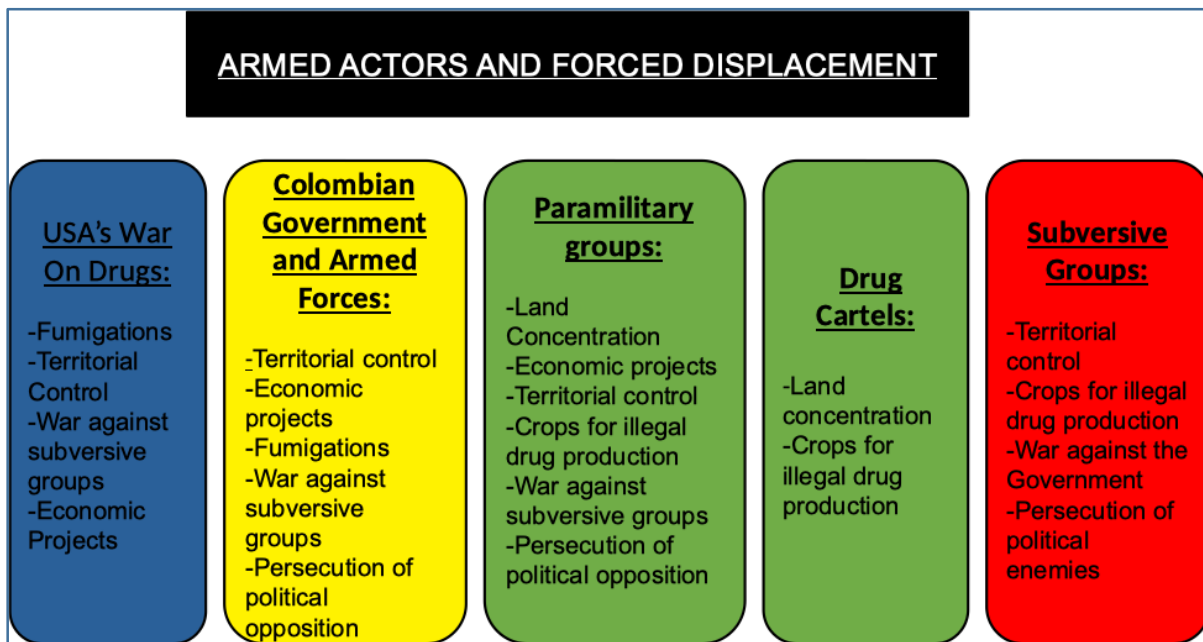
2010), when more than 300,000 people were being forcibly displaced each year on average (GMH, 2013). According to *Centro* (CNMH, 2015), the armed conflict in Colombia displaced more than six million people by 2015, equivalent to 13% of its total population. Additionally, more than 400,000 Colombians applied for asylum in other nations. This number included only official applicants, which were about 50% of the real number. In total, there were over 800,000 Colombian refugees in the world. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2017) calculated that by 2017 Colombia had over 7.3 million IDPs. Data from *Unidad para la Reparación y Atención Integral a las Víctimas* (Unit for Victims' Integral Reparation and Attention), the Colombian government office that attends victims of the conflict, established that by 2019 there were over 8.3 million IDPs in Colombia. According to this office, it does not attend 19% of the total victims of the conflict because they do not fulfill government requirements to access funds for reparations (*Unidad Víctimas*, 2020).

Centro (CNMH, 2015) explains that armed actors caused forced displacement for four reasons: first, to concentrate land for unproductive accumulation;¹⁸ second, to expand capital in the form of economic projects that exploit the land and its natural resources; third, to limit their enemies' offensive capabilities; and fourth, to grow crops for illegal drug production. Escobar (2003) explains that forced displacement has been caused by paramilitary forces (representing 57 to 63% of total IDPs), subversive groups (12-13%), and by the government (armed forces and the war on drugs) and other illegal armed groups (24 to 31%). A key element in the analysis of forced displacement is the geography of the conflict. Paramilitaries control the most populated urban spaces thanks to their alliance with state armed forces and government authorities, while

¹⁸ The accumulation of land for unproductive reasons can only be understood under a precapitalist logic where land is a symbol of status, not a means of production. Some of these lands are located in regions with good access roads and have productive soils, which makes even more absurd this type of unproductive land accumulation.

subversive groups dominate outlying spaces that are not very populated (Cortés, 2003; Oslender, 2007). Some of the remote regions where subversive groups have had historically a stronger presence, and many of these regions overlap with international frontiers, are the Pacific coast (border with Panamá and Ecuador), the Amazon region (border with Ecuador and Perú), the *Llanos Orientales* and the Catatumbo region (border with Venezuela), the Magdalena Medio region and the high Andean mountains. Interviewees' testimonies illustrate to some extent the spatial division of the armed actors and illustrate their alliances, interests, typologies, and reasons why they forced people to leave their homes. *Figure 2* visualizes the different armed actors of the conflict and how they cause forced displacement.

Diagram 2: Armed Actors and Forced Displacement



This research defines “armed actor” as a legal or illegal armed group that participates in the armed conflict and has an internal structure, in most cases a hierarchical one, and a clear set of

goals whose achievement puts them in conflict with one or more armed groups. They participate actively in the armed conflict, and their actions have negative impacts upon civilians. Forced displacement is just one example of those negative impacts (GMH, 2013; CNMH, 2015). This definition is based on the particularities of the Colombian social and armed conflict. Forced displacement epitomizes the perpetuation of colonial dynamics that destroy the traditional ways of life of racialized communities. According to *Centro* (CNMH, 2015), 87% of IDPs are from rural areas, and most of the victims of forced displacement are Afrocolombians, Indigenous peoples, and *Mestiza campesinas*. This process can be understood as a development strategy where three processes come together: forced displacement, a counter-agrarian reform, and the imposition of neoliberalism as the national economic system. This process has caused immense damage to the direct victims of forced displacement and the Colombian people in general.

Forced displacement has produced the de-peasantization of the country. More than eight million hectares have been stolen from Afrocolombians, Indigenous peoples, and *Mestiza campesinas*, yet, only 1% of this land has been returned so far to the owners (CNMH, 2015). On the other hand, forced displacement has benefited the landed class and other private actors such as the mining sector and the agro-industry. Forced displacement has exacerbated Colombia's historical unfair land distribution problem. The roots of this problem can be located in the colonial era, it is one of the causes of the Colombian social and armed conflict, and it has been accentuated by the conflict. Guereña (2017) analyzes Colombia's land census, confirming that land distribution in Colombia is deeply unfair. 111.5 million hectares were covered by this land census. 56.7% of this territory is covered with natural forests. 38.6% or 43 million hectares are dedicated to productive activities. Cattle-ranching represents most of these activities with 34.4 million hectares, while agriculture only occupies 8.6 million hectares. The inefficient use of arable land in Colombia has affected the nation's food security. 22 million hectares are apt for

agriculture, but the land dedicated to this activity is much inferior. Extensive farms of more than 1,000 hectares dedicated 87% of their land to cattle-ranching and only 13% to agriculture. On the other hand, farms smaller than five hectares dedicate 55% of the land to agriculture and 45% to cattle-ranching (Guereña, 2017).

The statistics of land distribution in Colombia are difficult to digest. 1% of the most extensive farms cover 81% of the land analyzed in the census. Within this 1%, 0.1% of these *latifundios* occupied 60%, while 99% of the smaller farms only take 19% of the territory. These numbers make Colombia the nation with the worst land distribution in Latin America, followed by Peru, where 1% of the farms concentrate 77% of the land, and Chile, where 1% covered 74%. On the other extreme, Uruguay presents the most positive land distribution in the region, with 1% of the most extensive farms covering 19% of the land (Guereña, 2017). The evolution of Colombia's unfair land distribution can be seen through the armed conflict. In 1960, farms over 500 hectares covered 29% of the land occupied by farms in Colombia, this percentage increased to 46% in 2002, and 66% in 2017. 42.7% of latifundio owners cannot prove the legal origin of their land (Guereña, 2017). As it was mentioned in the previous chapter, cattle-ranchers have used paramilitary groups to displace peasants and appropriate extensive tracks of land. This accumulation by dispossession has not been legalized. A direct consequence of forced displacement is that cows have more land than peasants. One million rural families live in a share of the land smaller than the one occupied for one single cow (one hectare). This unfair land distribution intersects with gender oppression, only 26% of women who own farms have legal titles of their properties (Guereña, 2017).

The dominant classes have used their political, economic, and (para)military power to appropriate land taken from peasants, public lands, the commons, and other lands that are vital for environmental conservation. While the economic gains of forced displacement are private

(land accumulation for the economic and political elites), the economic losses are assumed by ordinary Colombians because the humanitarian emergency is attended with state funds.

Additionally, most IDPs migrate to the cities, where the demographic influx has presented land speculators a golden opportunity, creating an illegal urban land market to exploit the housing needs of IDPs. The cities have witnessed the construction of slums in terrains vulnerable to slides, floods, and other natural disasters. Slums' residents do not have access to essential public services such as running water, sewage system, energy, health care, and education (CNMH, 2015). This dynamic has increased segregation and marginalization in Colombian urban spaces.

This chapter uses the testimonies of Colombian internally displaced persons (IDPs) and Colombian refugees to review the role of each armed actor in forced displacement. These testimonies¹⁹ address the violence and the feeling of insecurity that forced people to abandon their homes and become IDPs and can generate a theoretical analysis of forced displacement in Colombia. A warning must be made about the content of these testimonies: they might be challenging to read because they narrate the violent and traumatic events that forced people to abandon their homes; they might contain triggers for some readers. This research follows strict ethical guidelines to ensure that the interviews were a safe space where IDPs could share their experiences without causing more harm. The testimonies used in this chapter are valuable to understand the relation between the armed conflict and forced displacement. However, they must be comprehended as a limited sample that helps to understand a larger dynamic. For this reason, they do not cover all the complexity of this relationship and the geographical extent of the problem. These testimonies explain the events that IDPs identified as the causes of their forced

¹⁹ All testimonies have been translated to English by the author. Interviewees' names have been replaced with pseudonyms to protect their identity. Detailed information that could disclose their identity has been omitted for the same purpose.

displacement. The analysis of these testimonies requires a methodology of triangulation that includes journalistic and theoretical work. This step is critical. Most interviewees can narrate the tragic events that caused their displacement. However, they cannot explain the underlying structural conditions that led to their forced displacement, nor they can always identify the armed actor or actors that caused their forced displacement. Some IDPs have studied forced displacement and the social and armed conflict beyond their personal experience, for this reason they are in better capacity to explain the dynamics and the armed actors that affected them, as some of the following testimonies demonstrate.

This chapter is organized into two main sections. The first section is theoretical. Its first subsection explains how forced displacement is part of a development strategy where neoliberalism and a counter-agrarian reform come together. The second subsection addresses the racial dimension of forced displacement, the colonial dynamics that it reproduces, and how it affects particularly Afrocolombians, Indigenous peoples, and *Mestiza campesinas*. This second section is more practical and builds directly on the testimonies of IDPs. It makes a clear distinction between civilians and armed groups. It shows how IDPs can experience multiple displacements. It describes the relation between subversive groups and forced displacement. It details a more complex network of armed actors connected to the state that cause forced displacement, mainly paramilitary groups and the US war on drugs.

Forced Displacement as a Development Strategy: Neoliberalism and Counter-Agrarian Reform

Forced displacement is a development strategy within the armed conflict. The most important feature of this development strategy is the counter-agrarian reform advanced by the paramilitary project (Cortés, 2003). O'Connor (2021) explains that the agrarian reforms attempted by different

national governments in 1936, 1961, and 1994 failed to produce equality and peace in Colombia. O'Connor (2021) argues that the main reasons for the failure of the agrarian reforms advanced in Colombia are that they followed a “passive revolution” model, they promoted land distribution in remote zones where there was no government presence and basic infrastructure, and they created the conditions for economic and political elites appropriation of the farms that peasants had founded with their hard work in these frontier regions. These elites used peasants’ revolts against dispossession as an excuse to use military repression and intensify processes of land dispossession and forced displacement, which in turn has escalated the armed conflict with the creation of subversive groups that support peasants on one side, and paramilitary groups that support economic and political elites on other side.

According to Oslender (2007), paramilitary forces entered territories where subversive groups were present with the excuse of chasing them down. However, the attacks were directed mainly against peasants to vacate the territory. Oslender (2007) argues that in some of these spaces, “no reports ever surfaced of direct combat between the army and FARC guerrillas” (756). This counter-agrarian reform is not an economic dynamic exclusive to the Colombian context; it is a global process that is unfolding in most nations of the global South (Kay, 2002) that Oslender (2007) terms “a global capitalist logic of displacement” (762). Borras et al. (2012) identified three different scales of land-grabbing dynamics. At the global scale, wealthy nations are advancing land-grabs in nations of the global South, mainly in Africa, to prevent food shortages in the future. At the regional scale, Latin American nations are conducting land grabs in other Latin American nations. However, the purpose is not to achieve food security but to develop “flex-crops” economic projects. “Flex-crops” refers to “the interconnection between and implications of the restructuring of agrofood, feed, and fuel complexes” (Borras et al., 2012, 846).

At the national scale, Colombia is one of the nations with the highest impact of land grabs. Colombia is receiving foreign investment (from Brazil and Chile) in crops such as oil palm, sugar beets, sugarcane, rice, corn, and in forestry. These investments are classified as “high” in the Latin American context because they occupy extensive lands of over 20,000 hectares (Borras et al., 2012). Simultaneously, Colombian capitalists are investing in Bolivia and Peru. The particularity of the Colombian context is the armed conflict and the use of paramilitary forces to advance this process, which has magnified the violence of an already violent process. Most of the land where foreign capital land grabs are taking place is classified as “marginal” by the Colombian government (Borras et al., 2012, 13), in spite that most of these lands are inhabited by Afrocolombians, Indigenous peoples, and *Mestiza campesinas* (Wade, 2016). Foreign investment land grabs are contributing to land dispossession and forced displacement in Colombia (Borras et al., 2012).

Alba²⁰ is a Colombian exiled in Toronto. She worked on human rights and popular education in Colombia before seeking refuge in Canada. In an interview, Alba (2017) shares the analysis that she and her colleagues developed at *Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular* (CINEP, Research and Popular Education Center), a well-known and respected research institute in Colombia. “*For us, forced displacement was not a consequence of the war, but a war strategy to dispossess people from their land and obviously to displace them, to exercise not just military control in that space, but also social and economic control*” (Alba, 2017).

Kay (2002) explains that Latin American nations started a period of agrarian reforms in the 1950s. These reforms were initiatives imposed from above by national governments, which pursued different objectives related to social justice, economic growth, and the consolidation of

²⁰ Alba, personal communication, September 25th, 2017.

democracy. Latin American agrarian reforms included redistribution of the land to increase agricultural production and move towards economic and social equity by lowering the cost of commodities and opening local markets to a broader population of consumers. It also intended to modernize the economy by stimulating the consumption of new commodities, such as industrial commodities, which eventually could be produced in the country, rather than imported. It also sought to gain the support of rural populations that historically had been excluded from the democratic system. Although these were the general objectives of agrarian reforms across the region, there were internal differences in the depth of these reforms in each nation according to its government's ideological position. After successful revolutions, countries like Mexico, Cuba, and Bolivia applied radical agrarian reforms (Kay, 2002). Colombia's passive revolution agrarian reforms initiatives did not respond to political transformation towards more progressive governments. Consequently, it was limited to a series of timorous policies that did not pursue structural changes, such as the much-needed redistribution of land concentrated in *latifundios* or *haciendas*²¹ and the modernization of agriculture (O'Connor, 2021). Colombia's last land reform was Law 160 of 1994. According to O'Connor (2021), this is a neoliberal agrarian reform that grants access to land to Afrocolombians, Indigenous peoples, *Mestiza campesinas*, and women by modifying market mechanisms and providing credits, it is "something of a middle ground between the promotion of savage agrarian capitalism and the protection of the various subordinate agricultural communities" (O'Connor, 2021, 167).

In other Latin American nations, agrarian reforms' objectives were reached mainly through the introduction of two new rural actors: cooperatives based on a socialist model of ownership of the means of production (land, technology, and labour-power) and medium land owners that

²¹ Large estates, many of them originated in the colonial era.

embraced ideas of productivity, efficiency, and technology -characteristics that the landed class in Colombia have lacked historically. Kay (2002) explains that Latin American agrarian reforms did not consistently achieve their original goals, but in some cases, brought upon unintended positive changes. For example, Bolivia's "marketed agricultural output in the years immediately after agrarian reform declined as reform beneficiaries increased their own food consumption" (Kay, 2002, 34). In other words, diets of poor farmers improved thanks to the agrarian reform because they prioritized their food security over production for the market. In Colombia, due to the lack of state action, peasants had to assume the role of the government and conducted their small-scale agrarian reform. The following testimony exemplifies how *Mestiza campesinas* took over land and use to achieve food security. Eleonora,²² a Colombian IDP in the Coffee Region, explains that she and her family had occupied some land before paramilitary groups displaced them. "*We grabbed a small piece of land that belonged to the government, and we grew subsistence crops such as tomatoes, onions, plantain, yucca, corn, beans. We survived with that and used any money that we could get to buy the food that we couldn't grow, such as meat, sugar, rice*" (Eleonora, 2018).

The testimony of Eleonora exemplifies how important is for peasants to have access to land and produce crops, not just for selling, but more importantly, for consuming. Eleonora's land reclamation connects to the objectives of agrarian reforms at the regional scale, where peasants aim to achieve food security. Paz (1991) advocated for the institution of the *ejido*²³ as a form of collective property in Mexico, Latin America's first agrarian reform, explaining that "the ejido as a mode of production is inferior to capitalist agriculture, but the ejido is not a system to produce

²² Eleonora, personal communication, February 24th, 2018.

²³ A collective and indivisible terrain, which cannot be inherited or sold. The Mexican agrarian reform institutionalized the *ejidal* system in 1915.

more but to live better” (332). The development of the *ejidos* in Mexico has shown that *campesina*’s access to land granted by agrarian reforms must be accompanied with other measures to support its productivity and protect these properties against other dynamics, such as urban sprawl when they are located near cities.

Kay (2002) distinguishes two unforeseen negative consequences of the agrarian reforms in Latin America. The first one developed during the application of these reforms and presented some contradictory characteristics concerning their original objectives. On the one hand, many *latifundios* were subdivided within the same family into smaller farms to avoid land redistribution. On the other hand, a modernization process caused transformations in the rural working-class population, mainly a shift from permanent workers to seasonal workers and the introduction of new technologies. These changes represented an advancement in capitalist development because they boosted two essential dynamics for capitalist production (Marx, 1959). First was the transformation of a population that works the fields under conditions of servitude that resemble feudalism into wage rural workers. This transformation brought upon one of the two freedoms of labour, peasant-workers’ freedom to contract their labour-power with any capitalist willing to pay wages. The second dynamic is the introduction of technology to replace labour-power. This transformation accelerated the process of competition among capitalist producers since the improvement in production and efficiency caused by the introduction of technology threatened the existence of those producers that did not keep up with technological innovations (Kay, 2002).

These unexpected consequences of the agrarian reforms undermined the objective of land distribution. It caused the opposite effect because competition under the conditions described above caused the dispossession and precarity of small producers (peasants) that did not have the capital to modernize their means of production and contract labour-power (Kay, 2002). Another

obstacle to advancing the agrarian reforms was the solidarity relationship between the landed class and the industrialist class. The agrarian reforms operated under the assumption that they would receive the support of the urban capitalists because this process of modernization would further their ideological and economic interests. However, “political links between landlords and urban bourgeoisie were far closer than commonly thought, and the bourgeoisie generally placed their political interests above temporary economic gains” (Kay, 2002, 29). Additionally, the fear that socioeconomic reforms in rural spaces could translate into the city in the form of urban reform and demands for private enterprises’ collectivization unified the rural and urban elites against the structural changes that agrarian reforms sought.

The second unforeseen consequence of the agrarian reforms in Latin America was exceptionally damaging for the rural population. The period of agrarian reforms was followed by an intense period of neoliberal policies and counter-agrarian reforms. Kay (2002) explains that “neoliberal land policies have shifted priorities away from expropriation, which typified the populist agrarian reform period, towards privatization, decollectivization, land registration, titling, and land tax issues.” (26) In Colombia, this moment was particularly harsh for rural populations. The land reforms of 1936, 1961, and 1994 had not achieved land redistribution or modernization of agricultural production (O’Connor, 2021), which means that when the neoliberal model was imposed, the starting point to roll back social achievements and the socioeconomic situation, in general, was already pretty dire. Neoliberal agrarian policies complemented the process of de-peasantization that the paramilitary project was advancing via forced displacement (Borras et al., 2012).

By the end of the 1980s, the agrarian sector produced more than 90% of Colombians’ basic food products. By 2010, 50% of these products were imported from the international market. More than 2.5 million jobs were lost in this transition (CNMH, 2015, 228). Land distribution

follows a similar pattern. The Gini Indicator for land distribution was 0.839 in 1984 and jumped to 0.897 in 2014. Farms of less than 20 hectares represented 16.7% of total land dedicated to agriculture in Colombia and they only represented 8% in 2014. On the other hand, farms of more than 200 hectares represented 40% in 1984 and 75.1% in 2014 (Guereña, 2017). This period was marked by the emergence of paramilitary forces, which advanced a counter-agrarian reform (Cortés, 2003). This armed actor caused massive forced displacements that have affected mainly Afrocolombians, Indigenous peoples, and *Mestiza campesinas*. The geography of the conflict illustrates the connections between paramilitary forces, the capitalist class, and the government (Cortés, 2003; Oslender, 2007). Forced displacement was stimulated by public policies and funds from US war on drugs that favoured a political shift to the right and economic projects in different areas, such as agro-industry, mining sector, infrastructure construction and oil industry (Loiningsigh, 2002; LAWG/WOLA, 2007, CNMH, 2015). Many of these economic initiatives counted with paramilitary forces' active support and participation, contributing to the illegal economy that founded them (CNMH, 2015).

Multiple forces were behind *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*, a collective of paramilitary groups supported by national and regional economic and political elites. They also counted with the active support of the Colombian government and its armed forces (GMH, 2013; CNMH, 2015). The counter agrarian reform advanced by paramilitary forces benefited the economic and political elites that supported them. Paramilitaries' counter-agrarian reform presents many characteristics of Marx's (1959) process of primitive accumulation. It generated capital accumulation by robbing poor farmers of their land; it conquered new territories for the expansion of capital in the form of industrial agriculture; it shifted agricultural production from peasants' self-subsistence crops to the production of commodities with exchange value. It created a surplus population to work in the emergent agro-industries or in cities where it was displaced. It

could be argued that in some cases, the paramilitary project fulfilled land reforms' empty promise of agricultural modernization in Colombia, although ignoring its democratizing counterpart completely.

Alba (2018) describes the landscape that her research team encountered when they visited North Chocó. Afrocolombians and Indigenous people had been previously displaced, "*the territory was all cultivated with oil palm.*" She further explains that the rural workers that replaced the population that had been displaced were "*coerced civilians that the paramilitaries had transferred from other areas that were under their control.*" Alba's testimony coincides with Oslender's (2007) analysis of the chain model imposed by the paramilitary project in Colombia. According to Oslender (2007), after the illegal and violent expropriation of land by the paramilitary forces, legal owners are displaced, the territory is cultivated with oil palm, and "a landless proletariat from other regions is brought in to occupy and work the emptied lands for their new landlords." (759) Oslender (2007) explains that the oil palm agro-industry plays an essential role in Colombia's national development plan. It is "in this context, [that forced] displacement must be understood as a development strategy." (759) Borrás et al. (2012) include oil palm in the category of "flex-crops," explaining that the expansion of this crop responds to international demand, particularly the European Union transition towards cleaner sources of energy. Colombia is one of the few Latin American nations where the government has prioritized oil palm, and its expansion has been carried out with violence by state armed forces and paramilitaries.

Paramilitaries' forced displacement echoes the violence that Marx (1959) describes in the process of primitive accumulation, "the history of this, their expropriation, is written in the annals of mankind in letters of blood and fire" (715). Harvey (2007) has developed the concept of accumulation by dispossession based on Marx's (1959) primitive accumulation. Harvey (2007)

argues that neoliberalism has been a redistributive economic model that transfers wealth from the working class to the capitalist class at the local scale and from the South to the North at the global scale. Harvey's (2007) accumulation by dispossession includes some practices identified in the Colombian social and armed conflict. These include "the commodification and privatization of land and the forceful expulsion of peasant populations" and the conversion of different forms of property rights "into exclusively private property rights" (Harvey, 2007, 34), leading to the "suppression of rights to the commons," (35) the "commodification of labor power and the suppression of alternative (indigenous) forms of production and consumption" and the "monetization of exchange and taxation, particularly of land" (35), and finally the appropriation of natural resources through unequal power relations between the global North and the global South. According to Harvey (2007), the role of the state in these processes rests in its monopoly of violence. In the global South, where accumulation by dispossession takes the form of colonialism, neo-colonialism, and imperialism, "[T]he role of the neoliberal state quickly assumes that of active repression even to the point of low-level warfare against oppositional movements (many of which can now conveniently be designated as terrorist to garner U.S. military assistance and support)" (39).

Racism and Forced Displacement

Coulthard (2014b) offers an important contribution to Marx's primitive accumulation from an indigenous standpoint. Coulthard (2014b) argues that indigenous struggles are about the land, their main oppression is dispossession, and their struggle is ethnocultural, not simply a class struggle. This argument is relevant in the context of the Colombian social and armed conflict because it highlights the cultural and racial dimensions of forced displacement, which go beyond conventional socioeconomic interpretations of the conflict (Ali and Amórtegui, 2011). Forced

displacement in Colombia affects Indigenous peoples, but it also disrupts the lives of Afrocolombians and *Mestiza campesinas*. Centro (CNMH, 2015) argues that Colombian ethnic communities²⁴ are the most affected by forced displacement because it directly attacks their traditional ways of life. According to CNMH (2015), Afrocolombians, Indigenous peoples, and *Mestiza campesinas* who inhabit rural spaces in Colombia share a way of life in which the land plays a central role. Each family or community builds an autonomous unit of production and consumption based on the land. Forced displacement in these communities is more than the dispossession of an economic asset. It implies breaking up community ties, family and neighbours' relations, eliminating social and political organizations, and the permanent constraint of fear and distrust in their lives. CNMH (2015) qualifies the tragic experience by these groups as an "ethnocide" (352). Forced displacement cannot be located in one single region of Colombia, it has affected the whole nation, but some of the regions that have been more heavily affected are the Amazon (including the border with Ecuador and Peru), the Caribbean (including the border with Panama), the Eastern Plains (including the border with Venezuela) and the Pacific (including the border with Panama and Ecuador).

Lisandro,²⁵ an Afrocolombian leader and IDP in the Coffee Region, confirms the importance of including racial dynamics in the analysis of forced displacement as a development strategy. As Lisandro (2018) suggests "*the core of the violence takes place in Afrocolombian and Indigenous*

²⁴ The meaning of "ethnic communities" is taken from Colombia's National Constitution (1991), which does not define them, but assumes that they are groups of people with a particular culture, territory, and in some cases language. Some of the groups of people recognized as "ethnic communities" by the constitution are Afrocolombian communities, Indigenous nations, Raizal people (Communities from the Caribbean Islands of San Andrés and Providencia), and Roma people. In some instances, the same "ethnic communities" are referred as "minority groups" in the Colombian constitution.

²⁵ Lisandro, personal communication, February 25th, 2018.

villages. The armed actors are interested in Chocó's rich resources, indiscriminate expansion of gold mining, and other natural resources, that's why they dispute to control the territory."

Coulthard's (2014b) critique is on point in the Colombia context, where according to Escobar (2003), "the end goal of the violence [...] is the disappearance of the ethnic groups of the Pacific as distinct cultures" (159). *Centro* (CNMH, 2015) argues that despite the rulings of Colombia's Constitutional Court to impede the physical and cultural extermination of ethnic groups, armed actors' systemic attacks against these groups continue with total impunity. This situation corresponds perfectly with the definition of ethnocide. Escobar (2003) contends that the process of primitive accumulation that is displacing Afrocolombians and Indigenous peoples in the Pacific coast of Colombia is the consequence of "both modernity and development [as] spatial cultural projects that require the continuous conquest of territories and peoples and their ecological and cultural transformation" (157). In this context, the dispossession of land and appropriation of resources are as important as the negation of the alterity of ethnic groups because both dynamics seek to eliminate populations that are perceived as an obstacle to modernity and development (Ali and Amórtegui, 2011; Wade, 2016). The active process of racialization is central to this dynamic because it reinforces a racial ideology that justifies the dispossession and elimination of these groups.

Escobar (2003) identifies some of the combined characteristics of forced displacement that affect ethnic groups in Colombia as a continuous "uprooting of their cultural attachment to place and territory [...] the connection between mega-development projects and ethnic groups in the Pacific [...] the deleterious impact of Plan Colombia on the ethnic territories" (160) and the reproduction of systemic racism. Hence the importance of including an emphasis on the colonial and capital relations in our investigations (Coulthard, 2014b). Escobar (2003) explains that forced displacement is particularly difficult for racialized women in rural areas because they are affected

by racism and sexual violence in the context of the armed conflict. They “live a great part of their lives in their locality, and place-based ties – from home to community – are broken down by displacement, the erosion of solidarity often produces for women a greater sense of loss than for men” (Escobar, 2003, 161).

The racial dimension of forced displacement has a crucial geographical component. Brahinsky et al. (2014) argue that there is a significant relation between racialization, racial projects, and space. Racialization establishes human hierarchies, racial projects determine inclusion/exclusion and access to resources according to that classification, and space is the ground where these dynamics are brought into play. Relate directly to space, tropicality is a geographical concept that helps understand the construction and othering of racialized subjects in Colombia, mainly by establishing a form of environmental Eurocentrism. Clayton and Bowd (2006) define tropicality as

[A] discourse -or complex of Western ideas, attitudes, knowledges and experiences- that, since the fifteenth century, has both created and been shaped by distinctions between temperate and tropical lands, with the temperate world routinely exalted over its tropical counterpart, and tropicality becoming central to the definition of the West as a temperate (moderate and hard-working rather than extreme and indolent) human as well as physical environment (206).

The discourse of tropicality can be employed to understand environmental racism and other forms of environmental determinism that have been used to justify European colonization. This discourse was adopted by European descendants in Colombia during the Enlightenment Era and was fundamental in the imposition of *mestizaje* as the racial ideology of the nation (Castro-Gómez, 2005). According to Parsons (1968), the Coffee Region’s colonization myth sustains that primarily White people colonized the region, who remained in high altitudes, while dark-skinned people lived in the low lands and valleys. Internalized racism through the concept of tropicality justifies an imaginary geographical division between White *Criollas* and urban *Mestizas*, on the

one hand, and Indigenous people, Afro-Colombians, and *Mestiza campesinas* on the other hand. Similar to orientalists, but at the national scale, tropicalists collapse “geographical and ‘civilizational’ divides” to construct identity and otherness (Mezzadra and Brett, 2013, 34). There is a division between the racialized spaces that the discourse of tropicality has represented as darker “barbaric” regions closer to sea level and the normative spaces that have been constructed as whiter “civilized” regions in temperate altitudes (Castro-Gómez, 2005). Tropicality is a key component of racial formation and racialization, it helps to structure Colombia’s racial ideology.

The armed conflict is more intense in racialized spaces than in normative spaces. Wade (2016) argues that the violence that affects the racialized spaces of tropicality is a complex combination “of internal colonialism with its attendant economic interests and its moral judgments about cultural and racial differences” (330). Lisandro (2018) speaks of the problematic relation between center and periphery, normative and racialized spaces, and how armed actors’ atrocious actions are easily ignored in those regions that the discourse of tropicality has constructed as racialized spaces. Lisandro (2018) states “*in rural spaces, in a remote village in Chocó, people don’t talk about that; it doesn’t make national T.V. news.*” Oslender (2007) asserts that the vastness and marginalization of racialized territories make it almost impossible to monitor human rights violations in those spaces. This entanglement between racism and marginalization facilitates the accumulative interests that paramilitaries, *latifundistas*, and agro-business pursue through violence and forced displacement. It allows the nation to ignore the fate of the people who live in racialized spaces (Oslender, 2007; Ali and Amórtégui, 2011; Wade, 2016; van Isschot, 2018).

Fanon’s (1986, 2004) work on racism and decolonization offers an interesting interpretation of the relation between dynamics of primitive accumulation and the annihilation of the racialized, culturally different Other. There is a constructed hierarchy of humanity divided by a line of

superiority and inferiority, which creates two spaces, a zone of being occupied by those whose humanity is accepted and a zone of non-being inhabited by people whose humanity is not fully recognized (Fanon, 1986, 2004; Wynter, 2003; Grosfoguel, 2012; Walcott, 2015). This division influences the way conflicts are solved. In the zone of being, conflicts are solved through mechanisms of regulation and emancipation, such as the law and human rights, and resorting to violence is the exception. In the zone of non-being, violence is the norm, and the application of the law and human rights are rare (Grosfoguel, 2012). Colombian dominant elites and their armed forces -including state armed forces and paramilitary groups- impose violence in the resolution of conflicts, the mechanisms of regulation and emancipation are the exception, open dispossession rules. The discourse of tropicality situates Afrocolombians, Indigenous peoples, and *Mestiza campesinas* in the zone of non-being, a space where their humanity is not fully recognized. Any conflict that develops in this space and concerns these populations can be solved with extreme violence. The testimonies of IDPs interviewed for this research can attest to the violence and disregard suffered by people who inhabit the racialized spaces of the discourse of tropicality.

Civilians vs Armed Groups

Before explaining the relationship between armed groups and forced displacement, it is necessary to separate the armed actors and the people most affected by forced displacement: Afrocolombians, Indigenous peoples, and *Mestiza campesinas* in rural spaces that the discourse of tropicality has racialized; and the working class, union and social leaders, activists, journalists, researchers, and stigmatized populations in urban spaces. A recurrent dynamic of the armed conflict that re-victimizes IDPs is justifying the attacks against them because they support one of the armed groups (Cortés, 2003). In most cases, they are accused of being guerrilla members.

Leonardo,²⁶ a *Mestizo campesino* who was displaced to Pereira from the municipality of Quinchía (CINEP, 2004; CNMH, 2014; 2014b; and 2020; Álvarez, 2015), in the West Andean mountains of the Coffee Region, shares the interaction that he had with a state prosecutor, whose role was to defend Leonardo's rights as a Colombian citizen. In this case, the state representative blamed Leonardo and his community for their forced displacement, accusing them of supporting subversive groups. Leonardo (2018) questioned the prosecutor:

If you live in the countryside and an armed group arrives at 9, 10 pm. Would you kick them out of your farm? -No. -If they ask you for food, would you give them food? -Yes. -And if they say that they are going to camp in your land? -They can stay. -Then you're a guerrilla collaborator. That's the situation that we live in.

Leonardo (2018) felt deeply offended by the prosecutor's accusations. He continues, "we didn't ask to be displaced from our land. Before I was displaced, I had a career; I had political and professional projection. I was working in the local administration; I was going to study in ESAP.²⁷ I lost everything, I couldn't go back to school, I lost my life project."

Lisandro is an Afrocolombian who was displaced to Pereira from Tabo village, Tadó municipality, Chocó department, located in the Colombian Pacific region. He is also a leader in the Afrocolombian movement, has a bachelor's degree in ethnoeducation, and is completing a Master in history. He explains the complexity of his position as a civilian in the middle of the armed conflict and how he and his community were forced into situations beyond their control (Semana, 2013; Verdad Abierta, 2020). Lisandro (2018) states:

I was in charge of the keys of the community center, the Church, and the School. When the guerrilla arrived, they asked for the keys to sleep in the buildings, it was the same with the paramilitaries and the Army. I explained to the commandants that I was just keeping the keys, that every time an armed group arrived, they demanded the keys, and I would give them to the armed group. I would give the keys to anyone who demanded them and had a weapon in his hands.

²⁶ Leonardo, personal communication, March 10th, 2018.

²⁷ *Escuela Superior de Administración Pública* (Public Administration College).

Maura²⁸ is a *Mestiza* woman who was displaced to Pereira from San Antonio de Getuchá, Milán Municipality, Caquetá department, in the Colombian Amazon region. She explains that they were between a rock and a hard place, receiving multiple accusations of collaborating with all armed groups (Europapress, 2006; González, 2007; CNMH, 2020). Maura (2018) explains:

*Every time the Army entered and left the territory, there were deaths. When the guerrilla returned, they would say, "you're a snitch." We were under a constant threat. We were lucky that we managed to leave before the paramilitaries arrived, they came, and they did a terrible massacre.*²⁹

Afrocolombians, Indigenous peoples, and *Mestiza campesinas*, those that inhabit the racialized spaces created by the discourse of tropicality, affirmed their neutrality in the armed conflict. Any attempt to connect them to a particular armed group must be understood as a justification of the human rights violations that all armed groups have committed against them and another step in the racist dehumanizing process of forced displacement and dispossession (Escobar, 2003; Oslender, 2007; Gutiérrez, 2009; Ali and Amórtegui, 2011; GMH, 2013; CNMH, 2015; van Isschot, 2018).

Multiple Displacements

Forced displacement is not always a singular event. In some cases, it keeps haunting people, either in the place they call home or in the new spaces that they arrive searching for safe haven. Marco,³⁰ a *Mestizo* from the Coffee Region, explains that his family had suffered multiple forced displacements, even before he was born. A guerrilla group caused the first forced displacement of

²⁸ Maura, personal communication, February 24th, 2018.

²⁹ According to CNMH (2020), there were two massacres in Maura's village. The first one was executed by paramilitary forces, who killed 5 people on August 15th, 1989. The second one was done by FARC, who assassinated 4 people on February 17th, 1997. Given that Maura was displaced in the mid-1990s, it seems that she is confusing paramilitary and subversive groups in this testimony.

³⁰ Marco, personal communication, April 28th, 2018.

his family in the early 1970s in the Magdalena Medio Region (Loningsigh, 2002; CINEP, 2004; Suárez et al., 2005; Gutiérrez, 2009). According to his family story, “*the guerrilla was displacing everybody who owned a farm*” (Marco, 2018) in that region. Paramilitary groups caused the second forced displacement in the 1990s in the municipality of Anserma (CINEP, 2004; González, 2007), Valle del Cauca department, an area that is part of the Coffee Region. Marco (2018) explains that his mother found employment in the local administration building, but this put her in trouble with another woman hoping to get the same job. This woman was married to a paramilitary fighter whose group controlled this area. “*They went to our house threatening to shoot all of my family. We had to leave after that.*” Marco’s family finally settled in San Isidro when he was ten years old, an outlying neighbourhood in the municipality of Pereira.

In other cases, people returned to the places they were displaced initially, just to be displaced by the same or a different armed actor. This dynamic affects people who live in rural spaces under dispute by multiple armed actors, who use these communities as pawns in the armed conflict. Lisandro (2018) explains that after his first forced displacement from Chocó to Pereira to avoid being recruited by a subversive group. He returned to Chocó in 2007, but during that time, as Lisandro (2018) explains,

There was a terrible wave of violence, all the families from the rural areas of the municipality [Tadó] were displaced. I was displaced with my mother and five siblings to Pereira. My father remained in Chocó. Later, when the situation was better, my mother returned with two of my siblings. The rest of us stayed in Pereira studying.

Multiple displacements are a problem that affects IDPs in urban spaces, a dynamic known as intra-urban forced displacement (GMH, 2013). None of the IDPs interviewed for this research has suffered this form of displacement but at least two Colombian refugees interviewed in Toronto reported that they had to displace inside and across Colombian cities before claiming asylum in Canada. Álvarez (2015) explains that Pereira and the Coffee Region are not spared

from this dynamic. The same paramilitary forces that seized rural areas such as Quinchía causing massive forced displacements in the early 2000s, captured Pereira around the same years, taking absolute control of the illegal economies and causing intra-urban forced displacements.

Subversive Groups and Forced Displacement

According to the testimonies shared by interviewees, the main reason why subversive groups cause forced displacement is related to forced recruitment. The following testimonies by three interviewees who had to leave their homes to avoid being recruited by guerrilla groups exemplified this argument.

According to Maura (2018), two main events caused the forced displacement of her family. First, the killing of her father by FARC; and second, her imminent forced recruitment by the same armed group, “*when I was 14 years old my mother was always worried, she said anytime they are going to take you.*” Before Maura’s father was killed, her mother was already worried that the subversive group would recruit Maura. Forced recruitment was a dynamic that affected people in her village,

They recruited children after they were 12, 13 years old, many children. The girls wanted to join the guerrilla too, which didn’t think twice to take them. I knew many girls my age that the guerrilla seduced, 13, 14 years old. They never came back; we never heard from them again. Sometimes they wanted to leave the guerrilla, but if the guerrilla found out, they’d kill them; they weren’t allowed to leave. (Maura, 2018)

Maura’s mother’s anxieties became real when her husband was killed. After this event, FARC’s efforts to recruit Maura and other children increased. “*The guerrilla gathered all the village. They said that if we didn’t take arms, we had to leave town. We had to leave empty-handed; we left everything we had.*” (Maura, 2018) Around this time, Maura married and left with her husband for the Coffee Region.

Milena³¹ is an Indigenous woman in her 20s. She was forced to flee to Pereira from Planes del Chocó, located in the foothills where the West Andean Mountains meet the Pacific region, Chocó department (Escobar, 2003; CINEP, 2004; Oslender, 2007). Milena narrates that the territory where she grew up became a “red zone”, or territory in dispute, between subversive groups on one side and the Armed Forces and paramilitaries on the other. Due to these combats, there were continuous assassinations in the territory. The guerrilla started to recruit people from the area, Milena (2018) explains “*they recruited my siblings first and then I had to go with them too.*” To avoid forced recruitment, Milena escaped to the municipality of Cartago, located in the North of Valle del Cauca department, part of the Coffee Region. Milena (2018) continues, “*I was terrified. I left at 3 am. I didn’t bring anything with me. We didn’t go back. After you leave, you lose everything that you had. They take everything.*”

Lisandro was displaced to Pereira from Tabó, a small village in the municipality of Tadó, Chocó department. Lisandro (2018) remarks that he and his family have suffered multiple forced displacements. He explains that the territory where he grew up has had the presence of subversive groups for a long time. He shares one of his first interactions with FARC.

In a meeting in the village, I was very small. I asked them why they kill poor people if they are the Ejército del Pueblo [Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army]. I was only 12 or 13 years old. Immediately, a guerrilla commander got up and told me to shut up. Later, he looked for me and told me that it was a good question. (Lisandro, 2018)

According to Lisandro (2018), this interaction was the opening door for recruitment. After this conversation, they started looking for him. His family had already experienced forced recruitment. Lisandro’s older sister was recruited and became a member of FARC for more than 12 years. She was imprisoned on sedition charges in 2018, when this interview was conducted.

³¹ Milena, personal communication, February 24th, 2018. Milena was not able to identify the Indigenous nation that she belongs to. The region where she grew up and was displaced from is inhabited by the Embera people, more precisely the Embera Katio people.

Lisandro explains that FARC organized meetings frequently in his village. Attendance at these meetings was mandatory, and people felt compelled to obey because they were disarmed while the subversive group had weapons. These were informative meetings where FARC shared its ideology, war policy, and strategy to receive support from the people. Lisandro admits that he and his half-sister made the mistake of receiving material gifts from FARC without knowing that they agreed to join the armed group by accepting them. Lisandro (2018) narrates the consequences of this mistake.

When the day that we had to report to them arrived, we hid first under a bed for four hours, but then I hid in a water tank for another half hour. This tank wouldn't fill to the top, and I used the little space left for breathing. They arrived, and they asked my mother for my sister and me; she said that she wasn't sure, that we might be visiting family nearby, and they left. The next morning they weren't in the village; my sister and I displaced to Pereira.

Despite the circumstances that forced Lisandro to be displaced, he argues that the armed and social conflict is more complex than people think. He explains that FARC has had a presence in the territory where he grew up for a long time but had not committed as many crimes as the state. He considers the state armed forces more criminal than subversive groups. Lisandro's position might seem contradictory, but it can be understood if we consider the origin of the communist guerrillas in Colombia. Most of the subversive groups were built over the remnants of the liberal guerrillas that were active during *La Violencia* in the 1940s and 50s. These were rural communities' self-defence groups that identified strongly with the people living in the territories where they operated. Most of its members were volunteers from these areas originally (GMH, 2013). The other roots of the subversive groups were in the Communist party and in radical students' movements whose main goal was to overthrow the national government and install a socialist government. For Afrocolombians, Indigenous peoples, and *Mestiza campesina* communities located in racialized regions that historically had been exploited and discriminated by the state, subversive groups' political project might be perceived as a promising idea. The

contradictions of subversive groups that are sympathetic to the people in the territories where they operate and cause forced displacement due to forced recruitment, extortion, killings, massacres, among many other causes, are just an example of the complexity of the Colombian social and armed conflict (Cortés, 2003). Lisandro's testimony clarifies that despite the problematic relation that subversive groups have with rural communities, these are not part of the guerrilla organizations and should not be targeted by paramilitary or state armed forces under any circumstance (GMH, 2013; CNMH, 2015).

Paramilitary Groups and Forced Displacement

Some of the interviewees became IDPs and refugees due to the actions of paramilitary groups. Many of these testimonies make a clear connection between paramilitaries and state armed forces. Lisandro's (2018) testimony mentioned his first forced displacement, but he also noted that he had suffered other displacements due to the actions of paramilitary groups. He explains that in Tadó, the primary urban center of his municipality, paramilitary groups, the Army, and the Police, acted as a single force. This testimony confirms the geography of the conflict that indicates that paramilitary groups control urban spaces and transportation infrastructure with the support of the state armed forces (Córtes, 2003; Oslender, 2007). Lisandro (2018) recalls:

We witnessed how paramilitaries were friends with the state armed forces, the Police and the Army; they helped each other. They moved in the same cars, motorbikes. Sometimes, when they were searching for somebody, they would go, kill, do whatever they had to do, and return together to the urban center.

Other interviewees have confirmed this dynamic. Leonardo (2018) explains that subversive groups became a problem in his municipality of Quinchía because they started to act more like organized criminals than as subversive groups. His community turned to the state for help, but

rather than receiving the support of the state's institutions, including its Armed Forces, paramilitary groups took over the municipality (CINEP, 2004; Álvarez, 2015; CNMH, 2020). Leonardo (2018) shares, *“they arrived at a house, and they killed everybody that was there, that was one of the causes of forced displacement in the municipality. When I was forcibly displaced, there were about 43,000 inhabitants, and when I returned, the population was about 29,000.”* Massive forced displacement by paramilitary groups is a practice that has been widely documented. This war strategy is known as scorched earth, the objective is to remove everybody from the territory, and it is part of paramilitaries counter-agrarian reform (CINEP, 2004; GMH, 2013). In recent years, mining company Minera Quinchía has taken a concession to search for gold in the municipality (Minera Quinchía, 2020), which raises questions about the connection between forced displacement and this mining project.

Interviewees identified forced recruitment, selective killings, massacres, and death threats as some of the paramilitary actions that cause forced displacement. According to interviewees, paramilitaries count on the active collaboration of state armed forces and institutions. Hence, it is necessary to merge testimonies that attribute their forced displacement to paramilitary groups with those who blame the state armed forces. Eleonora is a *Mestiza campesina* in her 60s. She was displaced to the Coffee Region from the village of Damasco, Santa Barbara municipality, Antioquia department, after paramilitary groups took over on July 5th, 2001 (CINEP, 2004; CNMH, 2020). Eleonora (2018) narrates in detail the circumstances that forced her to leave the place she called home for more than 40 years. According to her, paramilitary groups entered the village using the private road leading to farms of wealthy families. They were between 40 and 50 men *“armed to the teeth”* that took over Damasco without any resistance. Eleonora (2018) says they installed checkpoints at *“every truck and person who came to the village, the paramilitaries took the valuables and buried the men in a mass grave.”* She describes that before, the village

was tranquil and peaceful. They did not have a police service because they did not need it; they only had an inspector to solve conflicts among its inhabitants. As Eleonora (2018) recalls, *“people danced, people lived, there was not a single policeman, there was only a female inspector to solve problems within the community.”* When the paramilitaries took over, people looked to the village authorities for protection, such as the Catholic priest and the inspector. However, they could not do anything against the armed group to protect the people.

“Paramilitaries killed people in the park, right in front of the Church, in the presence of the priest and whoever was there. The park had pools of blood every morning.” (Eleonora, 2018)

Eleonora (2018) narrates that some people tried to sell what they had and leave the village, but the paramilitaries always ambushed them once they have collected the cash. She notes, *“the paramilitaries took the money and killed the people. They were all buried in a mass grave in Cordoncillo place; more than 30 bodies were found there.”*³² The situation was becoming more tense in the village because there were subversive groups nearby. The community was expecting armed combat between paramilitaries and subversives at any time. Paramilitaries started to recruit youngsters from the village. Eleonora (2018) explains that paramilitaries arranged for multiple meetings to evaluate all young men and decide who could be recruited. She had five sons; they were 5, 10, 12, 14, and 16 years old at the time. Although the youngest was not fit for combat yet and the oldest suffered from epilepsy, she was still very nervous that the paramilitaries would take her other children. This stress caused her nightmares and high blood pressure. As Eleonora (2018) shares: *“one day, I lay on my bed, I was like half-slept half-awaken, and I saw a platoon coming inside my house and grabbing two of my sons. I stood up immediately and went to the*

³² CNMH (2020) registers a massacre executed by paramilitaries on January 18th, 2020, where four people were assassinated. CINEP (2004) records multiple assassinations and forced disappearances by paramilitaries in Eleonora's village, along with the finding of a mass grave on August 13th, 2003.

door. The paramilitaries were marching in front of my house.” Eleonora (2018) recalls that dead people hanging from barb-wire fences on the road to the village became a common sight. After a fourth meeting where the paramilitaries announced that they would recruit all unemployed young men, she and her family decided to flee Damasco for good.

Damaris³³ is a *Mestiza campesina* woman in her 20s. She was displaced to Pereira from the municipality of Quinchía. As Leonardo (2018) explained previously, this municipality was taken by paramilitary groups in the early 2000s, causing massive forced displacements that drastically reduced the local population. Damaris’ father was killed during the years that paramilitaries took over this territory, and her family had to displace shortly after this event. Damaris could not identify the armed group that executed her father nor discern if it was an armed group or individuals acting in their interest. Damaris was only seven years old when her father was killed and therefore can not identify her father’s assassins or explain the larger context that caused her forced displacement. Her life circumstances after this event pushed her to focus on surviving, which had not allowed her to learn more about the larger socio-political context. She remains quite traumatized by this crime. During her interview, something that caught my attention was that she was extremely reserved and remembered very little about her youth growing up in Quinchía, the context, and the circumstances of her forced displacement. However, when she talked about the night that her father was killed, she could remember specific details. Damaris (2018) narrates the event that changed her life and caused her family’s forced displacement.

My father was called to the door. My sister and I were very close to him. We couldn’t sleep until he was not sleeping; he always lay next to us until we fell asleep. That day, we watched the 8 pm news on T.V. My sister had fallen asleep, I was still with him. Two men came knocking on the door and asked my father to come out to talk. He asked who they were, but they didn’t answer. He went out, and I followed him, as I always did. I took his hand. Our house had a handrail surrounding the yard, a pile for laundry, and a guava tree. My father dropped my hand and told me to stay behind, I wanted to go with him, but he told me to stay

³³ Damaris, personal communication, March 8th, 2018.

put. They took him next to the guava tree, they whispered something, and he was like frozen, then they shot him. I was standing there; I was frozen too. When I heard the second shot, I snapped out. I went running to my mother, screaming, “mom, they kill dad, they kill him.” My mother didn’t believe it; she thought I was confused. And I kept yelling, “mom, they kill dad, they kill him.” She said that I couldn’t stop yelling. She got scared. She was breastfeeding the baby, my brother was sleeping in the other room, and my other sister was sleeping next to me. My mother grabbed all of us, took us to a corner, and covered us. She hugged all of us and started crying. She was very scared because there was a group of people who came to the farms and massacred the whole family during those days. I remember. There was a tall and a shorter man. One was skinny, and the other one was muscular. They both had balaclavas. One had a small handbag, and the other had a big mochila.

After this event, Damaris’ family left the farm but remained in Quinchía. Her mother married an abusive man who beat her, so she then decided to displace to Pereira to escape this relation and the traumatic past. Some of the elements of Damaris’ testimony (2018) coincide with Leonardo’s account (2018) and allow us to infer that the two men who killed Damaris father were members of the paramilitary group that were taking military control of Quinchía during those years (CINEP, 2004; Álvarez, 2015; CNMH, 2020).

Leandro³⁴ was a researcher, journalist, professor, and social leader in Colombia. He was forced to exile in Toronto in the early 2000s by the state armed forces and paramilitaries because of his investigations. He explains that he had to conduct his work in Colombia following strict security measures, which kept him separated from his family for long periods. While he was doing his work, he was continually under threat from different armed groups, but he was mainly harassed by the Army, who treated him as if he was part of a subversive group. As Leandro (2017) explains: *“they brought me for an interview, which was an interrogation truly. They searched my books, page by page, my agenda, my notebook. I explained that I was doing an*

³⁴ Leandro, personal communication, October 19th and 26th, 2017. Leandro’s book is not cited correctly to protect his identity.

investigation and that I was also teaching a seminar. They were accusing me of being part of a subversive group.” In 2001, Leandro published his research about the genocide of the Patriotic Union, a political party that was created as part of the peace negotiations between FARC and the Colombian government (CNMH, 2018). Leandro systematically organized the information about the killings of every member of the Patriotic Union, providing dates, detailed information about the victims, and, more importantly, naming some of the people accused of being responsible for those crimes. Leandro (2017) argues that corporate media had obscured this information, the assassinations were undercounted, some of the social leaders that have been killed remained anonymous, and the people responsible for these crimes were powerful men with connections with the state, the armed forces, and paramilitary groups. After this publication, Leandro and his family started to receive death threats. They applied for asylum in Europe, but given the urgency of the situation, they decided to move to Canada with a visitor visa that they already had. Although the original plan was to remain in Canada until things were better in Colombia, they applied for refugee status. During this time, some of Leandro’s friends were assassinated in Colombia by the same paramilitary groups and state armed forces threatening him. These events made him and his family realize how dangerous their situation was and forced them into an exile that has not ended.

Pilar³⁵ is a Colombian refugee in Toronto. She was a lawyer in Colombia, working as Family Commissioner in a municipality in the Coffee Region. She created a child protection center to attend vulnerable children, mainly homeless children and the children of sex workers. In the early 2000s, social cleansing was a common practice in Colombian cities and towns. As Pilar (2017)

³⁵ Pilar, personal communication, December 2nd, 2017. Pilar asks not to write down the name of this municipality to remain anonymous.

explains, *“members of the police would turn off public lights and would distribute leaflets announcing a curfew after 9 pm. They would kill whoever was caught disrespecting the curfew.”*

In practice, this threat only applied against those who did not have a home. A kid who was part of the child protection center was assassinated. Pilar used her position to start a public discussion about social cleansing, arguing that *“the police committed these actions with the approval of some wealthy families in the municipality. The predominant idea was that homeless people were desechables [disposable human beings] that must be eliminated to clean the town.”* (Pilar, 2017) She did not realize how much power was behind the social cleansing squads. Her request for justice was not just ignored, but she was also put on a death list. At this point, she started an exile that took her to the US and Canada. Eventually, she was granted asylum in Canada.

Soledad³⁶ was a union leader in *Telecomunicaciones de Bogotá* (Bogotá Public Telecommunication Company). Her union found out that there was a fraud for more than two million dollars in the company and denounced the situation. She appeared on a death list immediately. As Soledad (2017) explains: *“I said they can kill me; I’m not afraid to die. What I didn’t calculate, what I didn’t take into account in the middle of my rage, is that the only thing that I didn’t want to happen was that my children were affected because of my political ideas, they had no idea, they were just small children.”* Soledad’s union was part of *Central Unitaria de Trabajadores* (CUC, Workers Central Union), one of the most important federations in Colombia. The president of CUC recommended Soledad to leave if she wanted to stay alive. Initially, Soledad experienced multiple displacements in different cities of Colombia. However, the risk of being executed was still latent. Soledad (2018) explains: *“my children were innocent and small. I told myself I couldn’t do this to them. I’d sacrifice if it was necessary. I knew that*

³⁶ Soledad, personal communication, September 24th, 2017.

that sacrifice was huge for me. I had to leave the country. For me, it was like having an abortion.”

Paramilitary Power of Discipline

The power of discipline is a particular aspect of the paramilitary's project second stage or territorial control (Loininsigh, 2002). Some of the interviewees shared their experiences of how paramilitaries disciplined them in a steady effort to break the spirit by humiliation. These are circumstances that are more related to control over the microgeographies of everyday life than about the armed conflict (Quijano y Díaz, 2004). Lisandro (2018) experienced the heavy hand of paramilitaries discipline tactics: *“when I was at school, I used to braid my long hair. The paramilitaries targeted kids who were different and mistreated me. One of them put a gun on my head and told me to cut my hair. He said that long hair and braids were for homeless kids, that he would kill me if I didn't cut it.”* Lisandro (2018) concludes that these paramilitary actions sought to humiliate the other and instill terror, *“they didn't have limits for their acts, these acts were public and dehumanizing.”*

Eleonora (2018) shares some of the disciplining strategies that paramilitaries used in Damasco after taking control of the village. According to her, paramilitaries started with young rascals. However, these youngsters were not considered severe criminals. As Eleonora (2018) recalls:

They took the kids that were very undisciplined and gave them a beating in their bare assess. I felt very sorry because those were kids we had known since they were babies; we had seen them come to life and grow up. They were very mischievous. They went around doing naughty things, stealing plantains, just grabbing whatever they could.

According to Eleonora, the paramilitaries took 15 of these youngsters and forced them to work. Only two of those teenagers came back. Eleonora (2018) shares the story of one of them.

“He ran away. They gave a beating to that boy! They submerged him in water.” This kid’s situation was particularly difficult for Eleonora because she had five children who could have had a similar fate. Eleonora (2018) recalls, *“I cleaned his wounds and gave him breakfast. They lashed him with a whip; his skin was torn apart by long wounds.”* She further explains that this child became an orphan when he was very young, he did not have any role model growing up, and for that reason, he behaved badly, but he did not deserve such a harsh punishment. According to Eleonora, paramilitaries lashed other youngsters with a whip on the village streets to instill terror on the inhabitants. The threat was for everybody. As Eleonora (2018) explains: *“they said that they were in charge of the village, that everything that happens, that every woman that was whoring around, gossiping, they were going to disappear her.”* They fulfilled their promise. Eleonora (2018) further recalls: *“a girl who was 14 and was pregnant, they took her to the Cauca river, they tied some stones to her feet, and they threw her to the river. It was near La Pintada. The body was never found.”*

According to Lisandro (2018), paramilitaries combined different strategies to instill terror and discipline people. *“When paramilitaries arrive at a house with a clue, it didn’t matter if they were not sure, they’d kill the father in front of all his children, rape the girls, kill the whole family after, and expose the bodies to give everybody a lesson.”*

War on Drugs

Illegal crops for the production of cocaine is another theme that emerges in the testimonies of the interviewees, although they do not make a direct connection between the illegal crops, the war on drugs, and forced displacement (Cortés, 2003; Escobar, 2003; Oslender, 2007; Gutiérrez, 2009). Maura (2018) explains, *“coca was the economic base of my town, there was a constant flow of cash because of this, every day was market day, Saturday, Sunday, Monday, you couldn’t*

find a business empty.” Maura’s family forced displacement was caused by FARC. However, she also mentions that the state armed forces were constantly entering the territory, which caused much tension between the subversive group and the population. She also shared that paramilitary groups entered the territory after they were displaced and carried on a massacre. Her testimony does not state a causal relationship between the production of cocaine and forced displacement. Nevertheless, it indicates a connection between this illegal economy and the violence they experienced. As Maura (2018) states, *“just as we had economic prosperity, we also had many deaths. The night that my father was killed, there were seven other deaths before sunrise. As children, we were afraid to go out at night. We’d only go out briefly during the day.”* Following Maura’s testimony, it could be argued that the reason why they displaced was not just forced recruitment. Recruitment was the most urgent threat, but behind this, there was a more complex dynamic where different armed actors were disputing the territory because of the wealth produced by illegal crops for cocaine production.

Conclusion

More than 8 million Colombians have become internally displaced, and close to one million have been forced into exile. Nearly 90% of IDPs come from rural spaces and belong to Afrocolombian, Indigenous, and *Mestiza campesina* communities. These communities have been dispossessed of 8 million hectares, but only 1% of these territories have been returned. Forced displacement represents the continuation of colonial dynamics that destroy the way of life of racialized communities. This process is supported by the discourse of tropicality, which divides the nation between racialized spaces or zones of non-being and normative spaces or zones of being. Forced displacement takes place mainly in the zones of non-being. It has caused the de-peasantization of Colombia, wiped out national food security, and ruined more than 2.5 million

jobs in rural spaces. Paramilitary groups, the national Armed Forces, US war on drugs, and other illegal actors are responsible for 81 to 87% of forced displacement.

Forced displacement can be understood as a development strategy where three processes coalesce: forced displacement, a counter-agrarian reform, and the imposition of neoliberalism as the national economic system. In this context, neoliberalism can be understood as a binding force that marks people to be left behind (Brahinsky et al., 2014). This process has caused detrimental redistribution of wealth from the bottom to the top. On the one hand, a small elite of *latifundistas*, agro-industrialists, mining companies, urban land speculators, and developers have increased their wealth. On the other hand, millions of Afrocolombians, Indigenous peoples, and *Mestiza campesinas* have been dispossessed of their land. According to O’connor (2021), one of the conditions to end the social and armed conflict in Colombia and achieve peace, is to advance an agrarian reform that redistributes land among peasants -this category includes Afrocolombians, Indigenous peoples and *Mestiza campesinas*.

The following chapter deals with the social, political and economic crisis in Venezuela. It means that we move from the discussion about the causes of forced displacement in Colombia, to a discussion about the causes of Venezuelans’ forced migration, who arrived in massive numbers to Colombia during the 2010s.

6. VENEZUELAN FORCED MIGRANTS IN COLOMBIA

Introduction

The question of Venezuela at this current historical conjuncture is very complex and polemic. This dynamic does not escape corporate mass media, as well as academics (Alvarado, 2004). This question cuts across all social, political and class divides, most evident among the Venezuelan migrants interviewed for this research. This study seeks to understand the processes of racialization that affect IDPs, Colombian refugees in Toronto, as well as Venezuelan migrants in Colombia. The decision to include the last group in this research was taken after noticing the increasing number of Venezuelan migrants in Colombia and the discrimination they face in their journey. This dynamic is very relevant for this research for two reasons. First, it is an example of a process of racialization that has been caused by forced migration (Freitez, 2019). Second, one of the objectives of this research is to contribute to the search for peace in Colombia by exploring the connection between the armed and social conflict and racism. The armed conflict in Colombia affects Venezuela because armed groups are active in the borders with Venezuela and cause forced displacement in those spaces. At the regional scale, Venezuela is experiencing external aggressions that could have catastrophic consequences in the region, particularly in Colombia as a neighbouring country that is experiencing an internal armed conflict and has been attacking Venezuela (Podur and Emersberger, 2020).

Independently of the position that one takes in the debate about Venezuela, it is undeniable that this nation is going through a major political, social, and economic crisis that has caused the forced migration of nearly three million Venezuelans, representing close to 10% of its total population (Freitez, 2019). According to Gandini et al (2019), a massive migration such as the one that Venezuela is experiencing is provoked by specific

circumstances that can be located in time and space. Although this situation is not exclusive to Venezuela, most Latin American nations have experienced a similar situation at some point in history, caused by different circumstances such as coup d'états, dictatorships, armed conflicts, natural disasters, and social, economic, and political crises that create national instability. Over one million, or a third of the Venezuelans that have left their country, have migrated to Colombia (Cabrera et al. 2019). Most of this migration has taken place after 2015 (Freitez, 2019). While the specific objective of this chapter is to provide a general context of Venezuela and the migration of Venezuelans to Colombia, a more general objective of this research that will be addressed mainly in chapter 8 is to analyze the situation of Venezuelans that have migrated to Colombia in the middle of this crisis, more precisely to learn if they are being discriminated against and if this dynamic can be understood as racism.

Venezuela's crisis cannot be ascribed to a particular sphere, it has social, political, and economic dimensions. Freitez (2019) argues that politically, the crisis has its roots in the weakening of the democratic institutions; socially, in the deterioration of the security and the polarizing and conflicting relations among different factions in Venezuela; and economically, in the application of 21st century socialism, the economic model of the Bolivarian Revolution.³⁷ According to Freitez (2019), this characterization of the current situation in Venezuela is not a recent event, it has been building over the last two decades and has been worsened by an economic recession characterized internally by hyperinflation,³⁸ external debt, decrease in imports, lack of food and medicine, and the collapse of the national production, and externally by the low price of petroleum, which is Venezuela's main export

³⁷ The Bolivarian revolution is not a single event, but the revolutionary process that started in Venezuela with the government of Hugo Chávez Frías and continues in the present with Nicolas Maduro. This ongoing revolutionary process is characterized mainly by a transition from a neoliberal economic system to a socialist economic system.

³⁸ The Venezuelan currency, Bolívar (B), has experienced a tremendous devaluation since 2008. In that year, the traditional Bolívar was replaced by the Bolívar Fuerte (BF) at an exchange rate of \$1 BF = \$1.000 B. In 2018, the Bolívar Fuerte had devaluated so much that it had to be replaced by the Bolívar Soberano (BS) at an exchange rate of \$1 BS = \$100.000 BF.

and the base of its economy. While it is true that Millions of Venezuelans have been forced to leave their country in a mass migration without precedents in the country, Freitez (2019) assessment ignores two important dynamics that are part of the crisis: an internal economic coup and US economic sanctions against Venezuela (CRS, 2020; Fox, 2019; Hanson and Sánchez, 2019; The Wall Street Journal, 2020; US Department of State, 2020). This research considers these two dynamics, mainly US economic sanctions, relevant to understand the socioeconomic crisis that Venezuela has experienced in the last decade because it has disrupted its economy and its capacity to achieve its government's social policy goals.

There are two opposing positions on the current debate about Venezuela. On one hand, there is the official view of the Venezuelan government, which resonates with people that identify with progressive, socialist, and anti-imperialist politics. This perspective envisions 21st century socialism and the Bolivarian Revolution with hope. It might recognize some problems within the Venezuelan government, but it also points to US interference and sabotage as the biggest obstacle of this revolutionary project (Sparke, 2003). This argument is based on the US historical geopolitical control of the region, its interest in Venezuelan resources (Galeano, 1988; Krehm, 1998), and the inhumane economic sanctions that it has imposed over the Latin American nation. On the other hand, there is the Venezuelan opposition, which is supported by nations from the global North with geopolitical power in Latin America and many Latin American governments that comply with neocolonial projects. These powers are represented by the US and the European Union, which use right-wing governments in Latin American nations as proxies. These governments are characterized by embracing neoliberalism and a strong anti-communist rhetoric. The Colombian government is the most outspoken representative of this group, it has been leading regional attempts to overthrow the democratically elected government of Venezuela (Podur and Emersberger, 2020).

According to the second position, Venezuela is a failed nation because 21st century socialism is a complete disaster. This interpretation has been reproduced and amplified by the mass corporate media (Chomsky, 2007), which has persuaded Latin American people that socialism is the worst political alternative. They even have named “*castrochavismo*”³⁹ the monster that terrorizes the Latin American electorate. This has been particularly true during presidential elections and has had a lethal effect for the so-called Pink Tide in Latin America, which saw most progressive governments in the continent losing power against right-wing projects in countries such as Argentina, Brasil, and Chile, among others. This campaign against governments that have tried alternative models to neoliberalism does not always respect democratic processes. Three Latin American progressive governments have been overthrown during this century with coup d’états: Bolivia (in 2019), Paraguay (in 2012), and Honduras (in 2009).

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first part addresses the impact of the Bolivarian Revolution in Latin America and 21st century socialism as a regional economic model. It deals with the social achievements of the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela, particularly the use of social missions as a state strategy to provide social services and solve problems of inequality; and it seeks to understand the social, political, and economic crisis that currently affects Venezuela. This section uses current Venezuelan authors (Alvarado, 2004; and 2009; D’Elia and Quiroz, 2010; Freitez, 2019; Gandini et al, 2019) and anti-colonial authors (Galeano, 1988; Krehm, 1998; Dieterich, 2002; Fanon, 2004; Borón, 2008; Podur and Emersberger, 2020) to understand Venezuela’s social, political, and economic

³⁹ The term is a neologism that combines *Castrismo* and *Chavismo* into one word that alludes to an inexistent ideology. *Castrochavismo* is a term created by right-wing politicians in Colombia, although it has been borrowed by politicians and mass media in other Latin American nations. Its biggest proponents are Colombian ex-president Alvaro Uribe Vélez and its political party *Centro Democrático*. As a concept, it has not been theorized, and it is considered a fallacy because its main objective is to create panic and manipulate the electorate through fake news.

situation. The second section uses the testimonies of eight working-class Venezuelan migrants in Colombia, who participated in in-depth semi-structured interviews, sharing their reasons for leaving their nation and migrating to Colombia. The data analysis of these interviews identified themes such as corruption, economic motivations, difficulties of everyday life, health crisis, violence, and government ideology, as the biggest causes of Venezuelans' migration.

The Bolivarian Revolution in Latin America

The Bolivarian Revolution has had a significant impact on Latin America. After Fidel Castro's guerrilla movement succeeded in Cuba in 1959, the ideology of the Cuban Revolution had great acceptance among different groups in the Latin American left. However, initiatives to export the revolution to other countries in the region, in many cases via guerrilla warfare, were not successful. The Bolivarian Revolution spread its ideas in the region via 21st century socialism as a new historical project. In addition to this ideology, the Bolivarian Revolution inserted some particular elements such as Simón Bolívar's dream of independence, the establishment of democratic governments in Latin American nations, and a strategic alliance with Cuba, having Castro as an ideological leader. One of the achievements at the international scale of the Bolivarian Revolution and Hugo Chávez Frías, President of Venezuela between 1998 and 2013, was to reinstate concepts banned from public discourse such as socialism, imperialism, domination, exploitation, and class struggle.

To understand Venezuelan actions at the regional scale, we need to have a basic knowledge of 21st century socialism, a model developed by Steffan Dieterich, a German sociologist residing in Mexico, that has become the ideological foundation of the Bolivarian Revolution. 21st century socialism builds over theoretical and practical socialism. Dieterich (2002) refers to his model alternatively as "participatory democracy", "new socialism", and "new historical project." He explains that he prefers to talk of a "historical project" instead of

Marx's "socioeconomic formation" to emphasize that history is made by concrete configurations promoted by dominant social actors and imposed over dominated subjects - while also highlighting the possibilities of his alternative. Dieterich (2002) adheres partially to the Marxist ideas of class struggle, arguing that to change capitalism is a matter of power and interest, and consequently, it cannot be done with communication, pedagogy, understanding, and compassion. Dieterich (2002) presents a critique of capitalism/neoliberalism and historical socialism, arguing that both models share in practice some negative traits such as large-scale industrial production and vertical states, and both systems have proven insufficient to provide humanity with peace, democracy, and social justice. However, Dieterich's (2002) critique focuses on capitalism/neoliberalism because it is the dominant historical project in Latin America and the world, reproducing exploitation, domination, and alienation.

Borón (2008) explains that capitalism has failed resoundingly after one century and a half of capitalism in Latin America. It has created societies afflicted by an enormous socioeconomic gap between the rich and the poor. An enormous percentage of the population lives in poverty and extreme poverty with growing social exclusion, extreme concentration of wealth and income in a small class, and regressive tax systems. Capitalism has created weak states without geopolitical weight, externally dependent, vulnerable to international economic fluctuations, and weak national industries dedicated to cheap production in the international labour division. Many Latin American nations have dysfunctional democracies and demonstrate poor records in human rights, among other negative characteristics. Rather than a route to escape underdevelopment, capitalism has kept Latin America impoverished while helping the global North accumulate wealth at its expense (Galeano, 1988).

Dieterich (2002) conceives 21st century socialism considering that a historical project has four central elements: a program, subjects of change, time for transformations, and a struggle strategy. These elements work at the national, regional, and global scales. The

democratic humanist dimension of this historical project is measured against the three biggest obstacles of participatory democracy: exploitation, domination, and alienation. These obstacles are present in fundamental human interactions: with the other as an economic actor (classism), with nature (ecological problem), with women (sexism), and with other ethnic groups (xenophobia and racism). Dieterich (2002) argues that populism has been the most effective model to practice state capitalism in Latin America so far. It has done this by creating a national development project where the state coordinates capital and the workforce while protecting these forces from the world market. These projects (Vargas in Brazil from 1930 to 1954; Cardenas in Mexico from 1934 to 1940; and Perón in Argentina from 1946 to 1952) generated economic growth, citizens' integration into the national projects, strong social states, and cultural pride around national identity.

According to Dieterich (2002), successful protectionist models were followed initially by Germany, Japan, and South Korea among others; and even today remains the only proven successful alternative to escape underdevelopment, with the caveat that only a regional supranational state can achieve this goal in a globalized world. Borón (2008) explains that South Korea rejected the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) recommendations. Instead, it took a protectionist approach with an interventionist state, developing the internal market, imposing high import taxes to protect national production and subsidies for national production, exchange control, management of public expending and fiscal deficit, and simultaneous promotion of exports and domestic market. Historically, Latin America has debated between neocolonialism and neoliberalism on one hand, and state capitalism on the other, but all protectionist state experiments in the region have been sabotaged by the USA (Galeano, 1988; Krehm, 1998).

The basic principles of 21st century socialism (Dieterich, 2002) are as follow. First, it seeks to build an economy of equivalence based on the time invested in producing goods,

replacing market or exchange values. An economy of equivalence is an update to classical Marxism, whose closer concept would be labour value, which clarifies that all commodities are products of labour (Marx, 1959). Second, 21st century socialism acknowledges and stimulates globalization and new technologies. At the local scale, this requires creating strategic state-own companies, cooperatives, and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to generate jobs, develop new technologies, and provide goods for local consumption. At the regional scale, Latin America must organize in a regional power block (RPB) that channels different countries' strengths to create national transnational corporations (NTC) or research-production-commercialization complex (RPCC) (Dieterich, 2002). These must have the capacity to compete with transnationals from the global North for the world surplus and invest in technology development, which should be achieved with high-quality scientific research. Third, Dieterich (2002) proposes the creation of a regional popular power block (RPPB) composed of social movements that support 21st century socialism to strengthen participatory democracy at the national, regional, and global scales. According to Borón (2008), 21st century socialism can not reproduce some mistakes of historical socialism, such as confusing socialism with statism, populism, totalitarianism, productivism, and bureaucratism.

Politically, 21st century socialism represents a convenient alternative at a moment when a global system dominated exclusively by the US and the failures of historical socialism in the past century were creating a hopeless world, a disruption from the global South that seeks to transform regional dynamics at all levels. On a practical level, 21st century socialism presents Latin America a different option to the wreckage caused by neoliberalism, which had damaged national production when it replaced the model of industrialization by substituting imports (ISI) with the model of direct international investments (DII) and had privatized most state-own companies, including those that offer basic services (Dieterich, 2002). With 21st century socialism as ideological background, Chávez recognized in the early 2000s that the

context was favourable and seized the opportunity to fill the power gap left at the regional scale by the US, which has been losing power slowly to other emerging powerful nations. Simultaneously, capitalism was going through a global crisis provoked by the burst of the bubble in the housing market in 2008-2009. The “Pink Tide” represented a turn to the left and rejection of neoliberalism in Latin America. The Bolivarian Revolution was accompanied by the long-time established Cuban Revolution and leftist governments that identified to some extent with 21st century socialism in Argentina (Néstor Kirchner, Cristina Kirchner), Bolivia (Evo Morales), Brasil (Luis Ignacio Lula da Silva, Dilma Rousseff), Chile (Michelle Bachelet), Ecuador (Rafael Correa), Honduras (Manuel Zelaya), Nicaragua (Daniel Ortega), Panama (Martín Torrijos), Paraguay (Fernando Lugo), Peru (Ollanta Humala), and Uruguay (Tabaré Vázquez, José Mujica).⁴⁰

Chávez was instrumental in Latin America’s turn to the left by reinforcing existing regional institutions such as UNASUR (Union of South American Nations) and CELAC (Community of Latin American and the Caribbean States), and by proposing regional initiatives such as ALBA (Bolivarian Alliance of American Nations) in opposition to US’ Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). ALBA introduced some critical elements in regional agreements. Contrary to FTAA, which focused on free trade as an end, ALBA proposed trade and investment as the means to achieve sustainable development. Additionally, it recognized different levels of development among Latin American nations and prioritized cooperation and complementarity over competition (Soto, 2013). In this process of Latin American unification, Venezuela used petroleum as a strategic resource, proposing the creation of Petroamerica Oil Corporation, a multinational company made up of all state-owned energy companies in the region. This enterprise aims to facilitate regional

⁴⁰ The assertion that these governments identify to some extent with 21st century socialism can not be understood as an assessment and approval of their performance. Each government should be studied individually and carefully before making such a generalization.

integration in the energy sector, increase the value of oil and gas produced in the region, and facilitate sustainable development in Latin America and the Caribbean (PDVSA, 2020).

Social Achievements

After Lieutenant Colonel Hugo Chávez Frías won the presidential elections in 1998, Venezuela started its version of the Bolivarian Revolution and experienced a positive progression in its human development indicators. At the time, Venezuela was suffering one of its worst economic crises in history, which was linked to the oil price, less than \$15 US dollars per barrel of crude oil in 1998.⁴¹ This crisis resulted from a long history of reliance on the oil industry and the application of neoliberalism as the predominant economic model in the region, which included privatization of health, education, and public services, elimination of labor rights, reduced vision to attend social problems, and corruption in the government. Chávez's arrival to power brought a miraculous recovery to the Venezuelan economy during the following decade (Alvarado, 2009; D'Elia and Quiroz, 2010; Freitez, 2018). These changes were characterized by adopting the 21st century socialism economic model and increases in social spending. This recovery was favoured by an increment in the price of crude oil, which went up consistently in the following years, reaching its peak in 2009 with a price of \$99.67. However, Alvarado (2004) explains that the situation was difficult in the early development of the Bolivarian Revolution, which she divides into two stages, the first period from 1999 to 2002/2003 and the second after the coup d'état of 2002 and the oil strike of 2003.

During the first stage, the Venezuelan government attempted a series of social reforms to promote education, universal health care and social security, to democratize land property, and to create productive employment. According to Alvarado (2004), this was not fully

⁴¹ This chapter uses the international price per barrel of crude oil because it is Venezuela's main export. It is simplified as the "price of oil" (Macrotrends, 2020).

possible for several reasons that were internal and external to the government. There were conflicts between the government and the business class, NGOs, the Church, local authorities, unions, and political opposition. There were internal disagreements in the governing party, financial challenges, deficiencies in planning, and failures in implementing those plans (D'Elia and Quiroz, 2010). Before the coup d'état, the Bolivarian Revolution had tried to implement universal and integral social policies, focusing on inclusion, equity, and fighting poverty. These initiatives were successful in some areas, but according to Alvarado (2004), they did not go beyond localized social handouts that were used politically-ideologically to maintain legitimacy, political power, and democratic continuity in the face of the political challenges that the government was facing, i.e. the 2002 coup d'état and the 2003 oil strike. The years 2002 and 2003 were a step back for the country. Despite the progress in the previous years, the GDP was reduced by 29% due to political conflict and capital flight. The advances done in social policies were setback by unemployment, inflation, devaluation, and increased poverty, among other problems related to the political conflict. Podur and Emersberger (2020) argue that the 2002 coup d'état and the 2003 oil strike are part of the ongoing internal economic coup that the Bolivarian Revolution has faced since it started in 1998.

By 2003, Venezuela was not advancing in its objectives to reduce poverty. If the tendencies from the 1990s had continued, it would have taken the nation 85 years to reduce extreme poverty (Alvarado, 2004). However, the initiatives taken after 2003 made income per capita grow almost three times between 2003 and 2008, poverty went down from 60% in 1998 to 32% in 2009. The Gini coefficient was reduced to 0.41 in 2008, making Venezuela the second nation with less economic inequality in Latin America after Cuba. Access to education, health care, and medicine grew significantly, improving the quality of life of all Venezuelans (Freitez, 2018). The critical element of the success of the socioeconomic policies

of these years was the application of “social missions”, whose objective was to consolidate the process of inclusion, equity, and social justice by defeating poverty and exclusion, and consequently, to improve the quality of life of the lower classes traditionally excluded from some fundamental social rights (Alvarado, 2009).

There were about 13 social missions in education, health, food security, economic self-determination, and housing. Such programs received support from the Cuban government in the form of specialized personnel. Social missions were highly successful initially, with some of them reaching more than 50% of the population in the first years of operation. They focused on people with less economic means, improving the lives of those that were historically excluded from their share of Venezuelan wealth (D’elia and Quiroz, 2010). Overall, the missions presented an exciting innovation in social policies at the national and international scale. Contrary to the neoliberal model that predominates in Latin America, which promotes ineffectual social programs that emphasize targeting needs and compensation, social missions prioritized the participation of community organizations in solving the problems of exclusion and poverty that affected them (Alvarado, 2009).

Social missions became the primary strategy of the government due to their success. Chávez’s government started channelling revenues from the national oil industry to finance the missions. The missions helped secure the sympathy of the low-income and working-class to the Bolivarian Revolution and its electoral success. The missions were so successful that even the political opposition incorporated them into their electoral promises. According to D’Elia and Quiroz (2010), social missions presented some particular characteristics that were simultaneously the cause of their success and eventual failure. They were outside the traditional structure of the government, which made them agile, flexible, open, and horizontal -creating the impression of being free from government corruption and bureaucratization. They were implemented in popular neighbourhoods and articulated by social organizations,

which connected them to historically excluded classes, which created a strong sense of identification and appropriation. In short, they appeared as the best strategy to universalize access to the public system and services.

According to D'Elia and Quiroz (2010), social missions started to decline between 2006 and 2007 for several reasons. In some cases, they simply had achieved their original goal, such as *Misión Robinson I*, whose objective was to alphabetize the population. This literacy mission achieved a success rate of over 90%. In other cases, the missions failed because the government did not build the required infrastructure or complementary social actors were not helpful, such as *Misión Mercal*, whose goal was to provide food security for the lower classes. This particular mission failed in part because producers did not supply the food products to satisfy demand. D'Elia and Quiroz (2010) identified some of the structural problems of the social missions. First, parallelism -due to their independence from government structure, the missions did not articulate well with other government programs. Second, politicization - access to the benefits promised by the missions became conditional to supporting the government, which created a division between those in favour and those against, affecting the goal of universalizing access to the public system and services. Besides, social mission's direct dependency on the President put them outside the reach of common mechanisms to control public spending. Third, assistencialism -the missions provided short, transitional, conditional, and direct benefits that were not sufficient to transform structural conditions, which was in part due to its parallelism and lack of articulation with other government structures. Additionally, the missions exhausted popular organizations that did not have the resources to achieve their goals and were underpaid but were somehow responsible for their success. This point is contentious. Before implementing social missions, Alvarado (2009) supported incorporating and giving local communities more power in planning, executing, and overseeing social programs.

D'Elia and Quiroz (2010) explain that after their decline, the social missions were updated by the new socialist laws, which gave the power to distribute social benefits to the organized society arranged in popular power organizations made up of communal councils, communes, and socialist organizations. This new model was organized spatially in communes governed by communal parliaments with jurisdiction over “development engine districts”. According to D'Elia and Quiroz (2010), this new model reproduced parallelism, one of the problems that afflicted social missions, because the “development engine districts” were comparable to municipalities, which were already established in the political-administrative division of the Venezuelan territory. Additionally, they presented a democratic defect since only half the communal parliament was elected democratically and the other half was appointed by the government.

Alvarado's (2004) critique of the social missions shifts the focus and presents a more constructive analysis of the social policy of the Bolivarian Revolution. Alvarado (2004) argues that the Venezuelan government cannot focus exclusively on income per capita. It must address inequality between rich and poor, access to education, informality, unemployment, and productive differences between regions. Alvarado (2004) recommends that the Bolivarian Revolution follow its electoral promises strengthening its social programs and community relations, guaranteeing the continuity of social programs, taking distance from social assistance and working more on social inclusion and equal access to opportunities, strengthening the participation of communities in social policy development, and developing methodologies to evaluate social policies and programs. For Alvarado (2009), the sustainability of the missions depended more on cultural-educative changes that belong to the realm of ideology rather than on the size of the budget dedicated to their execution. These changes imply strengthening reciprocity and solidarity to develop the capacity to think collectively, to consider the well-being of other people. According to Alvarado (2009), the

formation of this new ideology, a culture of participation and community self-development among the collective actor is the key to the success of the Bolivarian Revolution. The change must be mainly in the conscience of the collective actor, not so much in the state, whose role is to facilitate this cultural transformation. State actors must participate actively in the process of moving from conventional structures of hegemony and subalternity to one of co-responsibility and co-management.

A Social, Political and Economic Crisis

As the economic model of the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela, 21st century socialism started to show signs of decline in 2009 (Alvarado, 2009; D'Elia and Quiroz, 2010; Freitez, 2019). This diminution was caused by a combination of four main factors: US economic embargo against Venezuela, an internal economic coup, fluctuations in the price of oil, and national economic policy. First, the USA economic embargo against Venezuela has had a devastating effect on the Venezuelan economy, which has extended to its socio-political situation. The sanctions started during the Obama administration in 2014 and have escalated gradually, with the Trump administration imposing more sanctions in 2017, 2019, and 2020 (US Department of State, 2020). Trump even called for a naval blockade against the Caribbean nation and an armed invasion while the world was fighting the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 (Podur and Emersberger, 2021). Among the reasons to justify the economic embargo, the US accuses Venezuela of not cooperating with anti-terrorists efforts (blocking any arms deals between the US and Venezuela); of not collaborating in the war on drugs, and of having an antidemocratic government with a lousy record in human rights violations and corruption (CRS, 2020). These reasons seem preposterous if we compare Venezuela with Colombia, whose government has a more problematic record in these three areas and is positioned as US biggest ally in the region.

The current US economic embargo operates at different scales. At the individual scale, the embargo has frozen individuals' accounts and properties in the US. The vague justifications of the embargo can include any Venezuelan public employee in the list of individuals subjected to financial and diplomatic sanctions. On the national scale, it affects vital institutions for the correct functioning of the Venezuelan economy and society. These include but are not limited to *Petróleos de Venezuela* (PDVSA, the state-owned oil company), Venezuela's Central Bank, *Compañía General de Minería de Venezuela* (MINERVEN, the state-owned gold mining company), and Venezuelan Armed Forces, among others. The US has blocked the Venezuelan government from participating in the financial market, issuing digital currency, coins, or tokens, and purchasing Venezuelan debt, which includes "accounts receivable, and any debt owed to Venezuela pledged as collateral" (CRS, 2020, 2). On an international scale, the US has prevented Venezuela from participating in the global market and intercepted Venezuelan properties in the US, freezing about \$14 billion of dollars vital for Venezuelan public and social spending (Fox, 2019). Conveniently, the US has authorized exceptions in trade when it has needed Venezuelan oil, although payments for these transactions have been made to a blocked account. Cynically, the US has justified these actions as "exceptions to minimize the impact on Venezuelan people and US interests" (CRS, 2020, 2). The embargo has also targeted commerce between Venezuela and Cuba, and foreign companies that do business with Venezuela, such as the Russian company Rosneft Oil, which has elevated tensions between the US and Russia.

The embargo is hurting not just the Venezuelan government. It is damaging mainly ordinary citizens and its consequences are deadly. The sanctions have worsened the hyperinflation crisis that has hit the country. In August 2019, when the Trump administration announced a new set of sanctions, the Bolivar (Venezuelan currency) jumped from \$8.000 per US dollar to \$20.000 in less than a month. The continuous changes in the exchange rate

provoked by the embargo in the last years have worsened hyperinflation without precedents. It has reduced the minimum wage in Venezuela to \$2 US dollars per month, making the cost of life expensive and hard for ordinary Venezuelans (Hanson and Sánchez, 2019). The embargo has affected areas where the social missions installed by the Bolivarian Revolution had made enormous progress, such as the health sector, food supply, public infrastructure, and equipment, among others. The embargo has increased inequality because it has caused two simultaneous events that affect people with low income. On the one hand, it has affected government programs providing essential services for the social classes that needed the most. On the other hand, it has reduced the income of the working class. This population is no longer benefiting from the government programs that have been affected by the sanctions and cannot pay for their basic needs because their salaries have been dramatically reduced by inflation (Fox, 2019; Hanson and Sánchez, 2019).

The embargo's objective is political and is a contradiction with the US rhetoric about democracy. The goal is to oust President Nicolas Maduro and impose self-proclaimed president Juan Guaido, opposition leader and National Assembly's ex-President. According to the media, US-backed Guaido has tried every possible option to overthrow Maduro with poor results (Fox, 2020). He has organized street protests, a showdown at the Colombian border with truckloads of "humanitarian aid," and an attempted military uprising on April 30th, 2019. These initiatives have been noted as a total failure, mainly because Guaido lacks popular support and participation in his initiatives has been feeble. The US sanctions against Venezuela have been instigated by *Voluntad Popular*, a political party led by Leopoldo López, Guaido's mentor, who represents the extreme right in Venezuela and has created division even within the opposition to the government. The political effects of these measures are damaging for democracy in Venezuela because they polarize the country even more. While the sanctions create division within the opposition, they also open space for the

radicalization of the government, “for social movements and political parties, it becomes increasingly difficult to thread the needle between criticizing sanctions and the US government while at the same time positioning themselves against the Maduro government.” (Hanson and Sánchez, 2019, paragraph 9) The sanctions are a direct imperial intervention of the US in a Latin American nation that has practiced its right to self-determination. They constitute an outrageous display of power to impose US interests unilaterally (Sparke, 2003).

Moreover, US sanctions complement what some interviewees referred to as the “economic coup”, which creates a scarcity of essential commodities produced by the industrialist class that is part of the political opposition and partially responsible for Venezuela’s hyperinflation. This national economic elite would be better described as a feudal class than a capitalist class because its wealth has been historically founded over the ownership of extensive tracks of land called *latifundios* and the control of government resources. The wealth of this feudal class is not measured by the productiveness of their properties but by their extension. This practice is an inheritance of Spanish colonial ideology. This feudal class has never fulfilled their role as producers of national products, particularly food products, that equipped Venezuela with food security. Initially, they based their economy on livestock, cocoa, and coffee production (Krehm, 1998), which did not provide food security (Galeano, 1988). Later, they obtained their wealth from the oil rent, which devastated the modest agricultural production because it took away the rural labour force (Galeano, 1988; Krehm, 1998). This feudal class has historically opposed any attempt of agrarian reform (Kay, 2002) in Venezuela, and when it was not possible to postpone it, they co-opted it and used it to exchange farms of infertile soil for the most fertile lands; contrary to the original goal of distributing productive land among poor peasants (Galeano, 1988).

It is a simple matter of class interests, it is more convenient for the Venezuelan economic elite to support US initiatives to sabotage the Bolivarian Revolution by creating scarcity and

promote a new regime, than to support a government whose primary goal is improving the quality of life of all Venezuelans and removing the class privileges of a small elite in the process. The internal economic coup is difficult to locate specifically because it is not an official policy and has been ongoing since the beginning of the Bolivarian Revolution. Podur and Emersberger (2021) explain that Venezuelan oligarchs have been behind every attempt to overthrow the democratically elected governments of Chávez and Maduro, and have supported and encouraged actively US sanctions against Venezuela.

In addition to US economic sanctions and the economic internal coup, the price of oil has also affected negatively the Venezuelan economy. If we look comparatively at the average price per barrel of crude oil and the decisive years of the Bolivarian Revolution, we find a close relationship between the fluctuations of this valuable resource and Venezuela's political, social, and economic situation. The correlation between the price of oil and the national socioeconomic crisis results from a century of dependence on this natural resource. Crises due to the price of oil have been a frequent event in Venezuela's 20th century. Lieutenant Colonel Hugo Chávez Frías failed coup d'état took place in 1993; the oil price for that year was \$18.43/barrel, coming down from \$20.58/barrel in the previous year. Chávez won the presidential elections in 1998 when the oil price was at a record low of \$14.42/barrel. Since that year, the price of oil fluctuated with a tendency to increase until the end of Chávez government. The opposition attempted a failed coup d'état in 2002, which was celebrated by the US and the European Union (Podur and Emersberger, 2021). This attempt took place following two years where the oil price decreased from \$30.38/barrel in 2000 to \$26.19/barrel in 2002. After this period, the price of oil increased steadily, reaching a high of \$99.67/barrel in 2008. This year was followed by some years of fluctuations with relatively high prices. Chávez transferred power to Maduro in 2013 with an oil price of \$97.98/barrel, but this value collapsed to \$48.72/barrel in 2015. Since that year, the oil price has remained low, fluctuating

in the \$40s and \$50s/barrel. Although Chávez started his government with low prices per barrel of crude oil, his government benefited from increasing prices. On the other hand, despite that Maduro's government started with high prices per barrel of crude oil, most of his government has been affected by low prices, a significant obstacle for a country whose economy depends on this resource. Adding economic sanctions and the internal economic coup to the loss of oil revenues, Venezuela has a recipe for disaster. The social, economic, and political crisis has forced the migration of millions of Venezuelans (Gandini et al, 2019).

Finally, there are failures in national economic policy and the Bolivarian Revolution in general. Freitez's (2019) economic analysis argues that a chain of events created the current economic crisis in Venezuela. Economic resources were abundant at the beginning of the Bolivarian Revolution, but they were not accompanied by inflation control, and for that reason, the bolívar currency devaluated quickly. Exchange policy artificially brought down the prices of imports, which made Venezuelan products too expensive to compete in the market. Also, with the reduction in oil price, primary Venezuelan revenue decreased, there was not enough money to finance public expending, and the fiscal deficit increased along with the national debt. Imports were reduced considerably, which caused scarcity in the market. This situation was worsened by the fact that national production had decreased in the recent past due to lack of competitiveness, but also because of processes of nationalization. According to Freitez (2019), the current moment of hyperinflation was finally reached, with disastrous consequences for most of the improvements achieved during the first decade of the Bolivarian Revolution. The income per capita decreased, poverty grew, the Gini coefficient went up, situating Venezuela over the Latin America average. Food insecurity started to affect most families. Mortality rates went back to the 1990s indicators, and life expectancy was reduced by 3.5 years. Coverage in education, health, and medicine was also severely affected.

This chain of events led to a national economic crisis and the rapid increase in migration to neighbouring countries, including Colombia.

Regarding the political situation, Freitez (2019) explains the evolution of the Bolivarian Revolution briefly. According to Freitez (2019), in 2005, seven years after Chávez was elected President, and three years after a failed coup d'état in 2002, most political parties in the opposition decided not to participate in elections for the National Assembly, arguing that they did not trust electoral authorities. The elections were carried on, and most of the seats in the National Assembly for 2005-2010 were won by representatives of *Chavismo*. Control over the presidency and legislature gave Chávez the power to control the judicial system too. This was followed by Chávez's reelection in 2006 and a referendum to modify the National Constitution to advance the Social and Economic Development Plan for 2007-2013. Although the referendum was lost, the plan was nevertheless approved by the National Assembly. This plan had the objective of consolidating 21st century socialism, cementing the state's role as regulator and business operator. Upon learning that he had terminal cancer, Chávez proposed Maduro as his successor, who was elected for 2013-2019. Freitez (2019) notes that the democratic system appeared broken in 2015 when *Chavismo* lost the elections for the National Assembly. However, the legislators leaving office renovated the Supreme Tribunal of Justice members without following the regular process. The new National Assembly declared itself in contempt, losing its legislative functions and control over the executive power.

Freitez's (2019) economic analysis has several weak points. First, her critique does not acknowledge US economic sanctions against Venezuela and their socioeconomic impacts in this nation. As previously explained, sanctions had significant impact on Venezuela's economy and the capacity of its government to advance its social programs, which were quite successful before the sanctions. Second, Freitez (2019) places the responsibility of the

scarcity and hyperinflation on the Bolivarian Revolution, ignoring Venezuela's historical dependency on oil revenues, its weaknesses in national production (including food commodities), the internal economic coup, and the cyclical periods of inflation, which have been accompanied by economic sanctions and coup d'états each time that this nation has dared to change the concessions given to the "oil cartel" (Galeano, 1988; Krehm, 1998). According to Krehm (1998), Venezuela lost the food security that characterized the country in the 18th and 19th centuries when the oil fields were discovered and exploited in the early 20th century. At the time, rural workers abandoned the farms to join the oil craze, and the economy was boosted with revenues from the oil industry, causing inflation that made Venezuela's cost of life even more expensive than that of the US, where Venezuela acquired most of its imports (Krehm, 1998).

Galeano's (1988) diagnostic of the Venezuelan economic apparatus is even more critical. According to Galeano (1988), Venezuela did not have food security before oil appeared in the economy. This nation was a feudal state where barons that dominated the cocoa and coffee production enjoyed luxurious lives, while most people lived in extreme poverty. When Venezuela's main export was cacao, most Venezuelans had never tried a chocolate bar because it was expensive and they could not afford it. Galeano (1988) explains that the oil industry did not change this situation; it only increased the gap between the privileged class that benefited from the oil revenues and most of the population excluded from that wealth. Venezuela's budget multiplied by one hundred after the oil revenues started pouring, but all this wealth did not translate into a more prosperous country for all Venezuelans. More than 70% of the Venezuelan population lived in poverty, and half the children did not have access to school (Galeano, 1988).

Venezuela shifted from the colonial era to the republican *latifundios* and then to the oil economy (Tinker-Salas, 2009), without changing the spatial and racial division imposed

during colonial times. It was therefore only a cosmetic change. It traded a privileged class of White Spaniards and its *Criollo* descendants for White North Americans and White *Criollo* Venezuelans. This elite never left the privileged space of the compartmentalized society (Fanon, 2004), a small enclave where sumptuous consumption reigned with imported luxurious cars, Christmas trees from Canada, champagne from France, and whiskey from Scotland (Galeano, 1988). The Bolivarian Revolution could not increase national production and find a solution for the cycles of inflation that hit the country every so often, but it cannot be blamed for structural problems that have affected Venezuela historically. Galeano (1988) explains that externally, all attempts to change Venezuela's role in the world's oil market have been punished with economic sabotages, blockades, and coup d'états against reformist governments; while internally, no national project has been able to solve the problems that plague national production. As Galeano (1997, 169) writes: "[t]he industrializing thrust that has taken shape and strength [...] shows visible symptoms of exhaustion, of an impotence that is all too familiar in Latin America: the internal market limited by the poverty of the masses, cannot sustain the development of manufactures beyond certain limits." This failure and the role of authors that obscure the real causes of the problems afflicting Venezuela are essential for the interests of the global North, especially the US (Sparke, 2003). The neo-colonial project of obscuring the colonized history convinces the nations of the global South that they need colonization, that otherwise, the colonized society will be chaotic and that everything will be lost (Fanon, 2004).

Why are Venezuelans Leaving their Homes

Freitez (2019) argues that Venezuela is experiencing a humanitarian crisis without precedents. In the past, the economic crises experienced by this nation did not cause a massive migration such as the current one. Freitez (2019) argues that the Venezuelan government is violating "the right not to migrate" (43), understood as the right of every person to stay in the

place where they live and develop their social and economic life without the need to move to a different place in order to have a decent quality of life. For Freitez (2019), forced migrants do not receive protection from the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, and for this reason, it is necessary to reclaim “the right not to migrate”. The economic, social, and political crisis in Venezuela has precipitated the migration of millions of Venezuelans. By September 2018, 2,648,000 Venezuelans were living outside their nation, i.e., 8.3% of a total population of 31.8 million. Freitez (2019) asserts that between 1.6 and 2 million of Venezuelans left Venezuela after 2015.

The socio-demographic profile of Venezuelan migrants indicates that they are predominantly low-income working-class, and most of them are from urban spaces. The gender balance is 109 males for every 100 females. They are relatively young; more than 87% of them are between 15 and 44 years old. Freitez (2019) claims that initially, Venezuelan migrants were predominantly middle-class with post-secondary education, but increasingly more people with low income and lower levels of education have decided to migrate. This characterization partially explains the destination of Venezuelan migrants. They do not follow migration routes to the global North, which are expensive and complex, in addition to require time-consuming paperwork. On the other hand, these destinations could dramatically improve their socioeconomic situation and the value of their remittances to Venezuela. Venezuelan migrants must opt for low-cost and more accessible routes to neighbouring countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, which are not very expensive and, in many cases, do not require visas, although they do not offer the same economic prospects that migrating to a wealthy nation in the global North.

This research interviewed eight Venezuelan migrants in Colombia. These interviews were complemented with participant observation/field diary and document review as methods to collect data. The data gathered during the interviews confirm Freitez (2019) socio-

demographic characterization of Venezuelan migrants. The interviewees were relatively young, four were in their 20s, three in their 30s, and only one over 50 years old. Camilo,⁴² a young man in his early 20s who migrated to Pereira from Valencia, corroborates this information. *“One or maybe two of every three of my friends have left Venezuela. I’d even say that 70% are outside the country. They’ve gone to Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, and Chile.”* The participants are all working-class migrants in Colombia. They come from a similar background in Venezuela, where they belonged to working-class families, partially explaining why they had to migrate by land to a poor neighbouring country in Latin America rather than to a wealthy nation in the global North. Most of the interviewees (i.e. six of them) were female, while only two were male. One female interviewee owns a small restaurant that she runs as a family business, employing informally her cousin, who also participated in a collective interview. The rest of the interviewees sell their labour force to make a living. Interestingly, all women had steady jobs, while the two males were unemployed and worked on informal jobs whenever they could. Most of the interviewees migrated from Caracas. Only one of them migrated from Valencia.

The interviewees presented a harsh critique of the Bolivarian Revolution. Building over their testimonies and field notes taken during participant observation, their critique is primarily based on their observations and experiences in the microgeographies of daily life and those of their family and friends. Their critique is complemented by the news they received from corporate mass media (Podur and Emersberger, 2021). This section uses data from the interviews to name some of the problems that Venezuelan migrants identified regarding the development of the Bolivarian Revolution and the reasons that forced them to abandon their homes. The problems identified by interviewees were collated and categorized according to the frequency they appeared in the testimonies. In addition, this section uses

⁴² Camilo, personal communication, April 25th, 2018.

triangulation of primary data with other sources of information such as field diary, document review, news articles, etc. and theory to confirm the information shared in the interviews (Cope, 2003). Based on this process of coding and interpretation, only the problems identified as relevant in more than one source of information are represented in the following discussion.

Corruption

Nowadays my children go to a school where the government controls everything, but the food that they give, they always give the same, just water with chicken flavour and a few vegetables, that's it, why? Because they keep the sugar, the milk, the rice, the flour. People who work at the school restaurants that receive the food the government is giving for children are stealing the food (Teresa⁴³).

They have made everything a business. There is a supermarket chain named Mercar and Centenario, the food was arriving there, but what happened at night? The managers were selling products to the cops, drug dealers, to those that were making the favours, and when you go in the morning to buy something, they say "we don't have it. Make the line, according to your ID you can't buy today" (Karen⁴⁴).

Interviewees named corruption a big problem in Venezuela. They note its presence in both the government and in the opposition because the leadership of these two groups is made up of privileged people who have not been significantly affected by scarcity in Venezuela. They argue that there is evidence that both elites have kept their privileges when ordinary Venezuelans can not buy essential products within the country. Interviewees argue that there is corruption within the social programs. For example, the government gives a box of groceries to Venezuelan families, but those boxes are opened and sacked by the people who participate in the distribution process before the beneficiaries receive them (Karen, Teresa, and Violeta,⁴⁵ 2018). This lack of trust extends to other government institutions. Interviewees do not trust the electoral system; they believe that elections are rigged in favour of the

⁴³ Teresa, personal communication, April 19th, 2018.

⁴⁴ Karen, personal communication, April 19th, 2018.

⁴⁵ Violeta, personal communication, April 19th, 2018.

government. They do not trust the police; they maintained that this institution has agreements with criminals and gangs. Interviewees sustained that people do not denounce criminals with the law enforcement because they are afraid that the police will take revenge against those that denounce them. They even shared first hand accounts where they witness how policemen were robbing people and beating them in some cases. Interviewees made a connection between corruption and ideology, which is another emerging category. They argue that after the first stage of the social missions (D'Elia and Quiroz, 2010), socialist laws gave more power to the communes, but the leaders used the social programs to benefit themselves and share little with the communities. In general, they see a pattern of people aligned with the government taking advantage of their positions for their benefit. This pattern extends to access to jobs. Interviewees maintained that many professionals had to leave the country because there were no jobs in their areas. According to Violeta (2018), who counts herself among the people who graduated from university but could not find a job in her area, only people with connections to the government had access to good jobs.

Economic Motivations to Leave

If you're going to save money, you save in high denomination bills [...] Nobody trust in the banks, many people don't save their money in the banks because it can be gone at any moment. (Karen, 2018)

I stopped saving money at the bank because you put it there for security and for saving, because you know that at home you'll spend it. But it's horrible to go to the bank for your money and that they don't give it to you. When they give it to you, they only give you \$10,000 bolivares, what can I do with \$10,000 when that isn't enough even to buy lunch for my children. (Teresa, 2018)

Karen, Teresa, and Violeta (2018) believed that the government made a mistake when it closed stores to exchange \$ bolivars for \$ US dollars. According to them, people started to hoard dollars, and it was challenging to buy them. There was not enough cash available because the banks would only provide a small amount per day, which was insufficient to do shopping. Many people started to save money under the mattress rather than in the bank.

Camilo (2018), a young male interviewee, explains the difficulties brought by the lack of liquidity and hyper-inflation.

I'm talking of a dollar that costs about \$600.000 bolívares fuertes⁴⁶ [...] it isn't enough to live, you're just making enough money to buy a box of eggs, with a salary that with luck is \$ 1.200.000 bolívares, but a BBQ chicken costs \$ 3.000.000 [...] the Venezuelan salary for a year is just \$25 US dollars.

Camilo (2018) laments that the Venezuela of his childhood is gone, one that was “*full of different brands.*” He specifically complains about finding different options when buying a product and being limited recently to having just one option. He compares the obstacles to the mobility of commodities in a bygone free market and the “illegal” immigration of Venezuelans to neighbouring countries, arguing that it is difficult for them to leave the country and for that reason, they become “illegal” immigrants. This point of view is not clear for two reasons. The migration status is given by the country of arrival, not the nation of departure, and looking at the immigration statistics of Venezuela, it is hard to believe that people are not allowed to leave the country. Nevertheless, other interviewees and studies have confirmed that Venezuelan passports and official documents are difficult to obtain (Cabrera et al., 2019). Venezuelan interviewees narrated how they had to start moving from one job to another on a descending scale regarding salary and status until they had to migrate because their earnings were not enough to cover their cost of living. Other interviewees explained that they had small businesses but they had to close because they were losing money. Bernarda,⁴⁷ a Venezuelan migrant in Pereira, had to close her business in Caracas because there was not enough cash available to buy products, which she had to buy in cash. Interviewees think that the expropriation of private businesses did not work because most of them went bankrupt after the government started managing them. Supermarkets were mentioned repeatedly as an example of this dynamic, but they also argued that an internal economic coup had

⁴⁶ The bolívar *Fuerte* replaced the historical bolívar in 2008 at a rate of \$1 bf = \$1.000 b.

⁴⁷ Bernarda, personal communication, April 29th, 2018.

intentionally created scarcity. It seems that this is a complex situation that a singular factor cannot explain.

Difficulties of Everyday Life

To buy bread we had to be there at 4 am. We had to make the line to buy just one bread per person, because they didn't sell two to one person, and it was expensive. To buy food you had to be there at the same hour. You had to make a line to give your ID, then they put the ID in a big box. Let's say that there were 300 people, but only 200 could buy, then 100 didn't have access [...] it was a lottery [...] The people selected had to return at 3 pm. to see if the food had arrived because the shelves were empty. If the food didn't arrive, they had to return empty-handed to their homes. The next day it was the same story. When something arrived at the supermarket, it was one bread, one spaghetti package, whatever was there, one for every person and go home. When they said that there wasn't more food, people would kill to enter the supermarket, to rob it because people are dying of hunger (Agustín).⁴⁸

Interviewees shared that Venezuela has been affected by the scarcity of commodities, particularly food products. Scarcity is one of the most frequent emerging themes in the interviews with Venezuelan migrants. The testimony of Agustín (2018), a senior Venezuelan migrant in Pereira, explains the problem of scarcity and the painful procedure to have access to food products. Other testimonies, such as those of Teresa (2018) and Karen (2018) in the category of corruption, connect scarcity and corruption. The lack of food products extended to the supply of other basic needs, such as medicine and health care products. The scarcity affects everybody, but interviewees mentioned their children or their families as their primary concern. Venezuelan interviewees argued that there was an economic coup against the government, especially since Maduro took power. According to them, this economic coup is partially to blame for the scarcity in the food market. This internal economic coup coincides with the US economic embargo against Venezuela, but while the first is difficult to track, because it is not an official policy, the consequences of the embargo have been well documented (Podur and Emersberger, 2021). The lack of food products also affects business

⁴⁸ Agustín, personal communication, April 29th, 2018.

and creates unemployment. Restaurants, mini-markets, corner stores, and other businesses have to close because they cannot fill their shelves and offer products and because people do not have money to buy the few products they can offer.

Health Crisis

My mother is hypertensive. We couldn't find medicine even if we had the money to buy it. It's something vital for her; she must take daily pills. I already had; even the pills that she's taking now are part of the batch I got there; there are about ten left. That made me panic, to know that she was going to be left unprotected and that she couldn't take her pills because they weren't available (Rebeca).⁴⁹

Regarding health care, interviewees showed appreciation for the work of Cuban doctors and *Misión Barrio Adentro*. This was a health program advanced with the support of the Cuban government, it sought to provide free healthcare in spaces that were economically depressed and to people that did not have economic means to pay for health services. *Misión Barrio Adentro* is a clear example of how the Bolivarian Revolution took distance from neoliberalism by favouring public healthcare over private health services. According to interviewees, the program was functioning well until it was affected by general scarcity, which developed gradually during the last decade, affecting both the doctors and the mission. The resources to pay and provide for Cuban doctors started to disappear. In consequence, most Cuban doctors had to leave the mission. The *Misión Barrio Adentro* did not have enough resources to work well; they ceased providing medicine and other services. According to interviewees, corruption was underlying the program, and some of the resources were stolen, such as equipment and ambulances. Interviewees declared that a decisive factor in their migration was not getting the treatment or the medicines they needed for their own or their close relatives in Venezuela.

⁴⁹ Rebeca, personal communication, April 26th, 2018.

Violence

The only activities that my son could do were watching TV and painting inside the house. He couldn't go out because sometimes there were shootings outside our house; many times we have to take cover on the floor. There was a little park in front of our house, many youngsters consumed illegal drugs there, and the kids witnessed that. My child had a bicycle that he never learned to ride because he couldn't go out. (Rebeca, 2018)

Interviewees named violence as one of the reasons why they decided to leave Venezuela. They explained that due to the economic hardship, the crime rate had gone up, people had to resort to thievery to get food and medicine, among other products. According to interviewees, insecurity became a problem in all spaces. In the past, only a few neighbourhoods were deemed unsafe, now they feel it is not safe everywhere. Some interviewees also mentioned protests as another manifestation of violence. They named mainly the violence from the armed forces against the protesters, who were primarily students.

Government Ideology

If you're with the opposition, the government doesn't give you social benefits [...] It isn't because the government is giving them away, you should have them because you're Venezuelan. I know my rights. Many people are with the government because they believe it's a gift (social benefits), and they think everybody should do the same. (Teresa, 2018)

Interviewees share some critiques that can be understood as a critique of the predominant ideology in Venezuela. They manifested to be tired of the anti-imperialist discourse. They argue that before the Bolivarian Revolution, they were better; now they do not have food or some essential benefits from the state. They would prefer to have those basic material products than a government with anti-imperialist rhetoric. Interviewees explain that with the death of Chávez, the Bolivarian Revolution lost its leader, and other big heads in the government started to compete for the power vacuum left by his departure. Power was transferred from Chávez to Maduro in a way that seemed like an inheritance.

Some Venezuelan interviewees also criticize the character of Venezuelans for not having work ethic. According to them, the revenues of the oil economy accustomed them to pay

foreigners to do hard-physical work. Ironically, most migrant workers in Venezuela were Colombians (Cabrera et al., 2019). Following the criticism of Venezuelans' work ethic, interviewees criticize the government's social policy because it gave things away without demanding any action or responsibility in return. According to them, some of the food programs did not stimulate people to work because they could get food for free. Many parents apparently took advantage of this, sending their children for food while staying home and avoiding working. According to interviewees, the government provided economic aid for every child, and many women started having children because it was more profitable than working. Interviewees explain that government assistencialism was frustrating for people who invested time and money completing a university degree and ended up earning less for their work than some people receiving social security.

Additionally, interviewees maintained that people have to support the government to access those social programs. Interviewees shared first-hand and second-hand experiences in which people working for the government had been forced to participate in manifestations and vote in favour of the government, threatening to lose their jobs. According to interviewees, people cannot speak out. If they show disagreement, they are fired from their jobs. If they speak out publicly, they face jail or being disappeared. Interviewees argue that people who lead the *juntas comunales* (community councils) abused their position to hoard material provisions and kept most of the benefits. Complementary to this dynamic, they argue that Venezuelans have internalized the idea that social programs are a gift and not a citizens' right, which has weakened democracy. The critique of the Bolivarian Revolution ideology is a complex discussion. Some elements of this criticism are influenced by neoliberal ideology, which has control over corporate mass media (Podur and Emersberger, 2021).

Migration to Colombia

Colombia is the leading destination of 1,032,016 Venezuelan migrants by 2018 (Cabrera et al., 2019). Peru (414,000), Ecuador (209,000), and Chile (105,756) follow Colombia as nations that have experienced dramatic increases in Venezuelan migrants. The US (351,144), Spain (274,133), and Canada (20,775) are also nations with a large Venezuelan population, but these nations have been historical destinations, and the numbers have not increased exponentially during the current migration crisis. The following exchange between Karen (2018) and Teresa (2018) address this subject.

-Karen: *“Many people have left, they pass through Colombia, but they continue to Peru, Chile, Ecuador. They go to Spanish speaking countries, although they also go to Brazil.”* -Teresa: *“They also go to the Dominican Republic.”* -Karen: *“Those that have more money go to a European country. But for me, the first option was Colombia.”* -Teresa: *“Of course, as soon as you leave San Cristóbal you arrive at San Antonio, and the border is just there.”*

Colombia and Venezuela share a border of more than 2,200 kilometres. This border is a porous frontier that borderland inhabitants have historically crossed daily. This population includes some Indigenous nations such as Yukpa and Bari Motilón people, whose traditional territory expands on both nations. Besides, the Colombian state's presence at the border is weak, with subversive and paramilitary groups controlling broad sections of it. These armed actors combine drug trafficking and smuggling with political activities and participate in the Colombian social and armed conflict. According to Cabrera et al. (2019), 85% of Venezuelan migrants arrived in Colombia by land, combining bus and walking, while only 14% took a flight. Many Venezuelan migrants do the journey on foot, walking hundreds, even thousands of kilometres over rough and dangerous terrain, putting their life at risk and suffering malnutrition. Many of these migrants are elderly, pregnant women, and children. Colombian border cities are ports of entry that migrants use to access temporary health services and find food, shelter, and transitory jobs. However, these border towns cannot absorb all the migrant population; most continue to other Colombian cities and other Latin American nations.

Cabrera et al. (2019) explain that Venezuelan migrants choose Colombia because they have transnational networks and social capital represented in friends and family who receive them. This information is confirmed by the testimonies obtained in this research. The 25 interviews conducted in total in this research were individual in-depth semi-structured interviews, except for two collective semi-structured interviews that included six people. These two exceptions took place with Venezuelan migrants. This particularity illustrates a pattern noticed among Venezuelan migrants in Colombia. They associate living and working together to minimize life expenses in rent, food, and utilities. These groups mix family ties with other sorts of relations, but the main factor to get together is their social capital, which is intrinsically connected with their nationality. Some of these transnational networks are very straightforward. Bernarda (2018) shares, *"I arrived in Pereira at 10 pm, it was very late, but I was secured because I have a Venezuelan friend here. She picked me up; everything went well."* Similarly, Rebecca (2018) explains that her husband was already living and working in Pereira to provide for his family in Venezuela when she migrated with her mother and son. Camilo (2018) clarifies that he originally migrated to Cali, a Colombian city located 300 km. south of Pereira. He hoped to work as a musician in Colombia's *"salsa music capital,"* but it was not as easy as he had thought. He had some friends in Pereira who invited him, *"they're Venezuelan citizens with Colombian nationality because their parents are Colombians."* His partner followed this invitation and convinced him to migrate to Pereira. Other stories and networks are more complex than Camilo's and Bernarda's. Violeta (2018) had migrated to Bogotá, her situation there was difficult. A cousin who was a friend of Teresa and Karen put them in contact. Karen (2018) and Teresa (2018) received Violeta. Their own story and connection with Pereira are more intricate than Violeta's. They did not have direct contact in the city; they had relatives in the United States renting space to a migrant from Pereira. Karen and Teresa's relatives made a curious deal in which they provided housing to a Colombian

migrant in the United States, while her family in Pereira accommodated Teresa and Karen. It is how they ended up migrating to Pereira.

Colombia is a nation that historically has not received many migrants and presents a negative migratory balance. Historically, Colombians had migrated to Venezuela following prospective jobs and the economic prosperity produced by the oil economy since the 20th century until the early 2000s. On average, Colombians represented 60% of the total migrant population in Venezuela (Cabrera et al., 2019). Many Venezuelan migrants coming to Colombia are Colombian returnees or the children of Colombian migrants born in Venezuela, Colombia's Ministry of International Relations asserts that from all the people crossing the border from Venezuela to Colombia, 30% are Colombians, 40% have double nationality (Colombian and Venezuelan) and 30% have only Venezuelan nationality (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 2017). Colombian migrants in Venezuelan were joined by many Colombians that were forcibly displaced by the armed conflict, becoming refugees in this nation. From all the Venezuelan migrants in Colombia, less than 1,600 Venezuelans claimed refugee status between 2015 and 2018; only 3% of them were successful in their application. Cabrera et al. (2019) explain why the low rate of application and approval of refugee status for Venezuelan migrants in Colombia: the Colombian government does not provide free legal advice, the process is unclear, it is complicated, and it does not offer concrete advantages over other migrant statuses such as temporary resident/work permit, permanent resident, and citizenship.

Colombia's migration legal framework is complicated and incoherent, in part because migration to this nation has been marginal in the past. The recent Venezuelan migration crisis has challenged this outdated system. Cabrera et al. (2019) argue that the Colombian migration regime does not specify migrants' rights or the regularization process, while it gives much power to migration authorities to accept or reject migrants. This situation explains Colombia's

first response to the Venezuelan migration crisis as a “natural catastrophe.” By 2016, the Colombian government took emergency measures and created an exceptional regulatory framework, which is temporal, does not solve status permanently, and needs to be updated constantly. Two mechanisms designed within this emergency framework stand out. The first is the establishment of the *tarjeta de movilidad fronteriza* (TMF, border mobility card) for Venezuelans who live on the border and cross it regularly. The second is the creation of the *permiso especial de permanencia* (PEP, special resident permit), which is an alternative to the regular work permit for Venezuelans who entered as tourists and wanted to work or study in Colombia. According to Cabrera et al. (2019), the special resident permit presents some deficiencies. Only 25% of Venezuelan migrants have acquired it, and it excludes Venezuelan migrants that did not use an official port of entry when entering Colombia. This condition affects many Venezuelans crossing the border on foot and using shortcuts along the more than 2,200 km, rather than the main entry points where migration checkpoints are located. Moreover, the special resident permit is temporary; it needs to be updated every three months for up to four periods. The permit has not been widely socialized with employers and institutions, therefore, many special resident permit holders have not accessed the essential benefits that it provides, do not have a contract, earn less than minimum wage, cannot access work benefits, social security, and are not allowed to enroll in the Colombian healthcare system in spite that it is provided by private healthcare providers.

The regularization route for Venezuelan migrants in Colombia is challenging. There are no official pathways to legalize the status for undocumented migrants, only exceptional measures such as the special resident permit, which makes them susceptible to deportation periodically (Cabrera et al., 2019). This vulnerable status restricts them from accessing services or (re)claiming any rights. The official pathway is complex and expensive. Migrants must have a valid passport from Venezuela, but many migrants have crossed the border

without one using the already mentioned shortcuts. Karen (2018) shares that she does not have a passport, and how it is challenging to get one due to the difficult situation and corruption in Venezuela. Teresa (2018) discloses that she does not have a valid passport either, and she is working on getting hers and bringing the two children she left with her parents in Venezuela. While many Venezuelans whose parents are Colombian or have relatives in Colombia have opted to apply for Colombian nationality, the children of Venezuelan migrants born in Colombia are at risk of becoming stateless. These children cannot claim Colombian citizenship if their parents are not nationalized or have a working visa. Children of special resident permit holders cannot claim citizenship either.

Conclusion

This chapter explained the role of the Bolivarian Revolution in Latin America and the principles of 21st century socialism as a regional economic model. 21st century socialism is an economic model that updated socialism to the needs of the global South, particularly to the Latin American context. It proposes a series of national and regional initiatives to achieve social justice and participatory democracy, assert the self-determination of Latin American nations and secure a stronger geopolitical position at the global scale. This dynamic was favoured by a regional context in which many Latin American nations took a turn to the left and elected progressive governments -a political movement known as the Pink Tide. This chapter addressed the social achievements of the Bolivarian revolution in Venezuela, mainly the implementation of *misiones sociales* to improve the quality of life of the lower classes by working on inclusion and social justice. This chapter delved into the social, political, and economic crisis that currently affects Venezuela, explaining that it is caused by four main events: the US economic embargo against Venezuela, an internal economic coup, fluctuations in oil price, and national economic policy. This chapter argued that given the reach of the

sanctions, they are one of the leading causes of instability in Venezuela because they have produced scarcity and have aggravated the hyperinflation crisis.

Venezuelan migrants interviewed for this research identified themes such as corruption, economic motivations, difficulties of everyday life, health crisis, violence, government ideology, and transnational networks as the most important reasons they decided to leave Venezuela and migrated to Pereira and the Coffee Region. Interviewees' responses about Venezuela's economic, political, and social situation are very critical of the Bolivarian revolution. The complexity of the Venezuelan question is revealed in the way the crisis has evolved in Venezuela over the years due to imperialism and colonial histories, and yet in the present day, these dynamics unfold at the everyday level. The testimonies reveal the hardships and daily lived conditions which attend to their survival. This chapter is an example of the complexity of the subject and the challenges it presents to studies that seek to understand Venezuela's social reality, balancing historical and theoretical interpretations with the grounded experiences of people in the microgeographies of daily life. This research analyzes the social reality of Venezuela through the lens of postcolonial geographies, critical geographies of race, and Latin American studies. Coherently, it reasserts the self-determination of any nation in the global South against the global North's imperialism and neocolonialism. However, this chapter also shared the arguments of authors critical of the Bolivarian revolution and the testimonies of Venezuelans that, based on their real life experiences, blame the current Venezuelan government for the dynamics that forced them to migrate.

The following chapter continues with the theme of forced migration. It deals with the situation of Colombian refugees in Toronto and different dynamics that they have to face in this society, such as the challenges of migration and the disadvantages that refugees face in

comparison with economic migrants, issues of continuing colonialities, and the Colombian diaspora transnational activism.

7. COLOMBIAN REFUGEES IN TORONTO

Introduction

This chapter focuses on Colombian refugees in Canada with the specific objective to explore their context in Toronto. The refugees interviewed and whose testimonies appear in this chapter include social activists, union leaders, journalists, critical government officials, and community leaders.⁵⁰ This chapter explores critical research questions such as why Colombian refugees have to leave their homes, how Colombian refugees relate to the peace process in Colombia, and transnational activism in Canada. The methodology of this chapter combines interviews, secondary sources, census data, and relevant literature to provide a general context of Colombian refugees in Toronto.

Toronto is Canada's largest city and North America's fourth-biggest city. As of 2021, the city of Toronto is comprised of the former cities of Toronto, York, North York, East York, Scarborough, and Etobicoke and has a population of close to three million people. Toronto's metropolitan area or Greater Toronto Area (GTA), which includes the municipalities of Durham, Halton, and Peel, has a population of nearly six million inhabitants (Census Canada, 2016). Toronto is known as the financial capital of Canada. Toronto's officials claim its status as a world-class city based on its prominence in global finances, business, financial services, real estate, industrial production, wholesale and retail trade, media, culture, the arts, and migration (Toronto, 2020; Ackler and Hood, 2003). Toronto is known as one of the most multicultural cities in the world, and this is reflected in its diverse population. More than 47% of the city's inhabitants were born outside Canada, and over 51% are classified as part of a

⁵⁰ Eight Colombian refugees were interviewed for this section of the research. Their names have been replaced with pseudonyms for security and privacy reasons. Other details that could identify them have been omitted for the same reasons. All the testimonies were translated from Spanish to English by the author.

visible minority (Census Canada, 2016) -- a category that clearly indicates that Whites are the normative bodies of the nation. Toronto is one of North America's faster-growing cities, mainly because it receives immigration worldwide, especially from the global South, making it one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the world. This migrant population contributes to the labour force and industries that make Toronto one of the most important North American cities (Stockford, 2018).

This chapter is divided into six sections. The first discusses the role of Colombian refugees in Canada's settler colonial project. The second section explores Latin American migration to Toronto, emphasizing the various waves of refugees that have arrived at the city. The third subtitle deals specifically with Colombian refugees in Toronto. This section addresses the contradictions of Canada as a nation that promotes itself with an international reputation as a safe haven for refugees, but this group have to face disadvantages such as being put in the category of immigrants. However, refugees have not prepared for the migration process by learning the language, validating their professional certification and studying their work possibilities. The fourth section addresses the differences between refugees and economic migrants. The fifth section explores Colombian refugees' organizing initiatives and transnational movements in Toronto and Canada. The final section addresses the differences between internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees as they relate to ordinary IDPs and IDP leaders/refugees in the context of the Colombian social and armed conflict.

Colombian Refugees as Settlers: Indigeneity Across Continents

Toronto, like all the Americas, was originally indigenous territory. In fact, many territories in the Americas are disputed today by their first inhabitants. There are different explanations about the origin and meaning of the word Toronto. The word "Tkáron:to" means "place in the water where the trees are standing" in Mohawk (Stockford, 2018; Kepttwo,

2021). The spelling eventually changed to Toronto, and the designated area grew to include the larger region the city occupies today. Toronto was a significant place for many Indigenous nations, notably the Haudenosaunee and the Anishinaabe, who founded settlements in the territory (Keptwo, 2021). The first French traders arrived in Toronto in the early 17th century. They recognized its strategic location, which connects the Atlantic via the St. Lawrence River with the Great Lakes, and borrowed the so-called “Toronto passage” from the Indigenous peoples. French traders built a store and a fortified post, which became very important in the emerging fur trade. By the mid 18th century, the British had expelled the French from this territory and founded the town of York in 1793. Around this time, the British made a series of treaties with the Indigenous peoples, including “the Toronto Purchase” of the land to the Mississauga of the New Credit First Nation between 1787 and 1805. These treaties were tremendously disadvantageous for Indigenous peoples, who in many cases were not aware that they were selling their territory to the British (Keptwo, 2021). In 1834, the town of York changed its name to the city of Toronto, restoring the original indigenous name for this territory.

Toronto’s population and size grew rapidly thanks to its strategic location in Lake Ontario, the access it offered to North America’s Great Lakes, and the development of transportation technologies such as the steamboat and the train. Toronto became a common destination for European migrants and an entry point for newcomers who continued their journey and colonized the continent’s interior. The waves of migration experienced by Toronto have produced a multicultural city in terms of religion, culture, language, geography, and ethnicity. Its population has expanded from the original Indigenous inhabitants, who represent today a population over 73,000 or 1.4% of Toronto’s population (Canada Census, 2016). The first colonial settlers were protestants from the United Kingdom, and they were joined by Irish Catholics escaping the famine in the 1840s. They were followed by settlers

from continental Europe who arrived in the early xx century. This group had a diverse background; they were Eastern European Jews, Italian Catholics, Western and Eastern Europeans. They were followed by more Europeans from the South of Europe and Slavic nations in the first half of the 20th century. The Anglo-Protestant homogeneity and dominance of Toronto, which had already been challenged by European migrants from other religions and regions of the continent, although they did not challenge Christianity as the dominant faith, was definitely disrupted with migrants from the global South after the second half of the 20th century. The West Indies, South and East Asia, North Africa and the Middle East, Sub Saharan Africa, and Latin America, are the principal regions migrants came from starting in the 1960s (Stockford, 2018). Colombian migrants and refugees are part of this last group.

The indigenous history of Toronto is relevant to this study because Colombian refugees questioned their role in Toronto and Canada as involuntary participants in the settler-colonial project that has caused the exclusion and oppression of the Indigenous people of the land. These dynamics of dispossession have a lot in common with those that internally displaced persons and refugees experience in Colombia. According to Alba (2017), a Colombian popular educator who was exiled in Toronto in the first decade of the 2000s, she has come to understand her experience in Canada as a double process of dispossession and privilege. On the one hand, she had to leave Colombia and seek refuge in Canada because her life was at risk. On the other hand, she enjoys the privileges of living in a nation of the global North with very high development indicators, which has improved her quality of life considerably. To access these privileges, Alba had to become a citizen of Canada. She describes this as a process of recolonization because she had to swear allegiance to the Queen of Canada, which is the Queen of the United Kingdom. But Alba, like all Colombians, had been emancipated from the King of Spain two centuries ago in the struggle for national independence. When

Alba became a Canadian citizen she automatically became a treaty person. The treaties between European colonizers and Indigenous nations are the foundation of Canada as a settler-colonial nation. They have generated deep inequalities that affect Indigenous peoples, facilitating processes of dispossession and exclusion. Alba (2017) has come to see herself as a settler in a land where she has more privileges than its original inhabitants:

Something as simple as going home, opening the tap, and having access to safe drinking water. I have the possibility of being in the center, not in the periphery, a space where Indigenous communities don't have access to water. We're talking about exclusion from the most basic services.

Alba (2017) is addressing the problems that many indigenous reserves experience, where they do not have access to the most basic public services such as clean drinking water and electricity. Alba (2017) works as a popular educator with refugees that also had to leave their countries, she recognizes the complexity of explaining this situation to refugees, *"you can't tell a refugee that has run away from their nation, you're a victim in your country, but you're also an oppressor in this nation."*

Alba's ideas resonate with dialogues advanced in Canada and other settler-colonial nations in the Global North. Lawrence and Dua (2005) question the role of racialized immigrants in the ongoing colonization of Canada, their silence and complicity in the dispossession of Indigenous peoples, and the role that they should play in a decolonization project. Sharma and Wright (2008), however, present a critique to Lawrence and Dua (2005), challenging "the conflation between processes of migration and those of colonialism." (121) Sharma and Wright (2008) propose a decolonial project that renounces any nationalist project and seeks to re-establish the commons at a global scale. Veracini's (2011) concept of the "exogenous others" finds the middle ground in this discussion. It names the subaltern in a settler society, differentiating it from both Indigenous and settlers. According to Veracini (2011), the settler-colonial project creates a double process of exclusion where those that are fixed in space (Indigenous) and those that are on the move (immigrants and refugees) are

excluded, they are not part of the settler body, they do not make the rules, and they do not create the settler order. Veracini (2011) argues that the settler-colonial project creates three dynamic groups: first, indigenization of the settlers (normative bodies); second, aboriginalization of Indigenous peoples; and third, ethnicization of racialized immigrants and refugees. Following this interpretation, Colombian refugees would be located within the third dynamic category, they would be part of the racialized migrant group that participates in the settler-colonial project, but it is excluded from the normative body that makes the rules. However, Colombian migrants and refugees must find a way to relate respectfully to the Indigenous people of the land known today as Toronto (Keptwo, 2021). This research contributes to this reflection.

Colombian Migration within the Context of Latin American Immigration

Toronto is the Canadian city with the largest concentration of Latin American population. In 2016, 214,000 -or 30% of the Latin American population in Canada, was located in this urban center (Canada Census, 2016). According to Veronis (2010), on average, the socio-economic situation of the Latin American population in Canada is precarious. “They have lower levels of income and homeownership, and higher rates of poverty, female-headed households and high school dropouts. Politically, the group remains underrepresented in the Canadian processes of decision-making, especially in the higher levels of government.” (177) According to Veronis (2007), The Latin American community in Toronto has struggled to reclaim a collective identity and improve their socio-economic situation. In order to achieve these goals, the Latin American community has tried to create a Latin American neighbourhood -similar to China Town or Little Italy neighborhoods, organize at different scales, find common grounds in their experiences as migrants in Canada, and reclaim citizenship beyond its legal dimension with political and cultural organized actions (Stacheli et al., 2012). Veronis (2007) defines these initiatives as “strategic spatial essentialism” to

highlight that “ethnic places are not only imposed spaces of oppression, but also a ‘third-space’ of resistance and creation where new immigrant groups can assert their identity and contest dominant notions of inclusion.” (456) This characterization of the Latin American community in Toronto is a generalization that is useful to understand some dynamics that affect Latin American migrants, but the Latin American diaspora cannot be understood as a homogeneous community, as this chapter reveals profound differences even within Colombian migration -economic migrants and refugees.

There have been five waves of Latin American migration to Canada (Veronis, 2010; Landolt et al., 2011). The first group was made up of Europeans who had migrated previously to Latin America and later to Canada in the 1950s. The second cluster included economic migrants from the Andean countries of Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru in the 1960s. The third wave was political refugees from the Argentinean, Chilean, and Uruguayan dictatorships in the 1970s. The fourth group was war refugees from Central America in the 1980s. The fifth and last wave is the ongoing immigration of Latin Americans that started in the 1990s. This wave is composed mainly of Latin Americans using the Canadian immigration point system. Veronis (2010) includes the arrival of Colombian refugees in the 1990s and 2000s in this last group. This classification makes sense for temporal reasons, although given the differences between refugees and economic immigrants, it is important to make a clear distinction between the two “immigrant” and “refugee” groups. Colombian refugees interviewed for this research shared insightful thoughts about the differences they have perceived between economic migrants admitted under Canada’s point system and refugees coming from Colombia. In general terms, economic migrants decide to move to a different country and seek better living conditions. For this reason, they noted that the will to be successful in the receiving society overcame the feelings of nostalgia that they had for the homes they left behind, family, and friends.

The third and the fourth waves of Latin American migration to Canada, as referred to earlier, are particularly important to the arrival of Colombian migrants and refugees in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Landolt and Goldring (2010) identify some factors that influenced transnational political involvement based on comparative research on Chilean and Colombian political culture and transnational movements in Toronto. These factors include: “(1) migration, citizenship and settlement policies; (2) labour market and public policies; and (3) patterns of social exclusion in contexts of departure and reception.” (444) The wave of political refugees from southern Latin America and war refugees from Central America shaped Colombian refugees’ context of arrival. The Chilean movement had a prominent role in the development of transnational solidarity with Latin America. The political culture of this group was able to influence Canadian solidarity movements to participate actively in sponsoring and welcoming refugees and lobbying the Canadian government. According to Landolt and Goldring (2010), the Canadian government did not have experience managing Latin American refugees and incorporated Chilean social justice activists in the management of the refugee crisis. The Chilean movement influenced government policies, social justice activism in Canada and established the foundations to attend to the successive waves of Central American and Colombian refugees.

There are two relevant differences between the migration waves that included Chilean refugees, on one hand, and Central American and Colombian refugees, on the other hand. First, when Central Americans and Colombian refugees arrived, the Canadian government already had experience managing refugee populations from Latin America and these groups were not allowed to join the Canadian government to handle the crisis, as it was the case with Chilean refugees (Landolt and Goldring, 2010). In consequence, Central American and Colombian refugees did not have the same influence on the Canadian government and the transnational solidarity movement. Second, Colombian refugees arrived when the shift to

neoliberalism was affecting social policies. Ignacio,⁵¹ a Colombian exile who came with his family in the 1970s and works in social services, alludes to this situation and explains that in the last three decades, there have been cuts in social spending that have affected services for refugees. Ignacio (2017) explains that the conditions to grant refugee status have become more strict alongside these austerity measures, making it more challenging to receive refugee status in Canada. Central American refugees arrived in the 1980s, while Colombian refugees came in the late 1990s and 2000s when neoliberalism ravaged Canada's social services. Landolt and Goldring (2010) explain that before the arrival of Colombian refugees, "despite differences across sectors (for example, faith-based and nonreligious) [...] civil society groups shared a vision of Canada as a multicultural nation with a strong left-liberal welfare state. The cornerstones of this agenda were refugee rights advocacy, international solidarity and grassroots development." (455-456) This context transformed radically from the 1970s, when the wave of political refugees from Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay arrived, to the 1980s, when Central American war refugees came, -and even more in the 1990s and 2000s, when Colombian refugees sought asylum in Canada.

Two contemporary socio-economic dynamics have affected Latin American migrants in Toronto, including Colombian refugees. The first is the collapse of the welfare state and the rise of neoliberalism (Gilbert, 2007), which has affected the socio-economic situation of Latin Americans in Toronto, particularly the last wave (Cahuas, 2018). Second, the last wave of Latin American migration under the Canadian point system (Government of Canada, 2020b) has changed the socio-demographics of Latin American migration to Toronto and Canada. This program prioritized people who migrated for economic reasons and scored better in the point system, including characteristics such as post-secondary education, language proficiency, professional experience, age, marriage, family, among others. Gilbert (2007)

⁵¹ Ignacio, personal communication, October 27th, 2017.

explains that “the neoliberal assault on liberal welfarism and democratic values did not necessarily meant the end of programs or services, but rather transformed them by instilling in them new rationalities of economic efficiency and individual freedom” (19). These changes sought to incentivize the arrival of economic high-skilled migrants over traditional migrants, but migrants face two problems. First, foreign credentials are not fully recognized (Bauder, 2003), which means that migrant’s professional degrees, especially those from the global South, are not accepted or have to go through long and expensive processes of accreditation before they can practice their professions. Second, high-skilled migrants choose the US because they could access higher salaries and pay less taxes. However, the objective of restricting migration to people who would not use welfare services is achieved.

According to Simón,⁵² a Colombian exile and electrical engineer, Canada “*evaluates if a person can be productive here. Basically, Canada saves all this money in education, it brings recent graduates to the system without investing in their previous education.*” Consequently, people migrating under the point system have better economic means and education than the previous waves of Latin American migrants, especially political refugees, mainly because economic migrants come voluntarily and plan to stay in Canada. On the other hand, they do not have the political background that refugees have. These changes in the migrant population have led to a shift from a collective approach to the problems that Latin American migrants and refugees faced in Canada, as well as organizing in solidarity with Latin American nations, to an individual emphasis on obtaining government services to solve the challenges faced by migrants. These characteristics negatively affect transnational Latin American movements because new migrants focus on assimilating to Canada and do not participate actively in social justice movements connected with Latin America. It has weakened transnational

⁵² Simón, personal communication, October 25th, 2017.

organizing initiatives for social justice and solidarity movements in connection with activism in Canada and Latin America.

Colombian Refugees in Toronto and Canada

Colombian migration to Canada, particularly the arrival of Colombian refugees, became important in the late 1990s and 2000s. During this period, Colombia as a nation became “the main source of refugees in the Americas and [...] one of the three main sources of refugees worldwide.” (Riaño-Alcalá and Goldring, 2014, 93) Canada’s migration statistics indicate that Colombia is one of the Latin American nations with more migrants and refugees in Canada. There are nearly 32,000 Colombian refugees in Canada, which is the country’s largest Latin American refugee population. There are more than 70,000 Colombian migrants in Canada, making it the second-largest Latin American immigrant group after Mexico, which has 80,000 migrants in Canada. The Latin American population in Toronto is close to 214,000 people, whereby Colombians represent the largest Latin American community with nearly 25,000, representing more than 11% of the total Latin American population (Canada Census 2016).

According to Riaño-Alcalá and Goldring (2014), after the 2000s, more than 60% of Colombians that came to Canada came as refugees. This dynamic was mainly the consequence of Canada’s policy concerning the Colombian social and armed conflict. In 1997 the Canadian government established Colombia as one of the six source countries of asylum refugee classes worldwide. Canada granted this recognition and prioritized Colombian refugees after international and Colombian NGOs and human rights groups visibilized the dangerous situation of Colombian social leaders. The Colombian government was not protecting, and in some cases, it was directly responsible for the violation of the fundamental human rights of union organizers, human rights defenders, social activists, community leaders, journalists, the political opposition, among other sectors (van Isschot, 2018). These

individuals were targeted because of their work on human rights, social justice and their criticism of the main actors of the Colombian social and armed conflict.

Riaño-Alcalá and Goldring (2014) explain that Colombian refugees were mainly located in small or medium-size Canadian cities, where Colombian migration was a new phenomenon. Consequently, Colombian refugees lacked social capital in the new urban spaces where they arrived. Besides, Colombian migration had been marked with the stigma of drug trafficking, which became an obstacle in the places where Colombian migrants and refugees tried to integrate (Guarnizo and Díaz, 1999). Osorio's (2008) study of Colombian immigrants and refugees in Quebec has identified some of the challenges this population faced in Canada. Some of the obstacles were inevitable in the North American context, such as the harshness of winter, the challenge of learning a new language and adapting to the dominant culture despite its claimed multiculturalism. However, some of the difficulties intersect with the challenges of race and class, such as the rejection of immigrants, discrimination in the job and housing markets, a precarious legal status, feelings of exclusion and poverty, stigmatization of welfare recipients, and difficulties to succeed in the education system. Colombian refugees interviewed for this research confirm some of Osorio's (2008) conclusions.

Other challenges are not necessarily negative as they relate to gender relations. Colombian refugees encounter more progressive gender politics that affect family dynamics in Canada. This gender dynamics can be difficult for men, who might perceive these changes as a process of emasculation, particularly when they lose their role as the household provider. They also have to work in spaces where women perform hard-physical work or are in positions of authority, which is challenging for male Colombian refugees and questions their patriarchal gender ideology. Other positive changes include better perceptions of the role of government, institutions, and law. This perception is significant for refugees as they find

themselves in a situation where another state protects their fundamental rights after their government did not fulfill this constitutional responsibility. This dynamic is complex and contradictory. Some Colombian refugees interviewed are aware of the discriminatory treatment that Indigenous people suffered in Canada at the hands of the government and can relate to their experiences of having difficulties seeking asylum in Canada.

Pilar (2017), a Colombian refugee in Toronto, sharing what she felt when she finally arrived in Toronto, states “*it was a Saturday during June, it was sunny and beautiful, everything was blooming, I felt like arriving in the promised land.*” This feeling did not last. Pilar soon encountered the obstacles of a slow bureaucracy that process refugee applications and remained in limbo for a couple of years before she could officially restart her life in Canada.

Due to her work as a union leader in Colombia, Soledad, another Colombian refugee in Toronto, received support from unions in Canada. During her first few months in Toronto, the unions assigned a person to accompany her and other Colombian refugees. Soledad (2017) expresses gratitude towards this person, explaining that she gave them an essential orientation to survive in the city, teaching them basic things such as health, education, and transit systems, how to navigate the city, where to shop, translating when necessary, among other forms of support. However, the relation turned sour eventually. Soledad (2017) admits not quite understanding what happened but speculates that she might have confused the accompaniment relation with friendship, creating cultural friction between her and the settlement guide.

Leandro (2017), a Colombian refugee in Toronto, encountered Kafkaesque obstacles when he applied for refugee status, a process that took over 15 years of his life and the life of his family. He was not sponsored by any NGO when he sought asylum in Canada, although he was supported by a retired professor from the University of Toronto, who was familiar

with his work as a journalist and political activist in Colombia. Leandro (2017) explains that he suffered multiple cultural shocks when he arrived. His family identified as middle-class in Colombia, but they encountered themselves living in a basement with no windows in Toronto, receiving second-hand clothing and furniture, including mattresses, and not having enough money for the most elementary things such as public transportation. Using second-hand things in Colombia is not very common; usually, only people in the most extreme circumstances need to do. Leandro (2017) shares that it was very challenging having to deal with the trauma of forced displacement and poverty while adapting to a new culture and society under conditions of scarcity, and waiting 15 years for their refugee application to be granted.

Of all Colombian refugees coming to Canada, 57% came directly from Colombia to Canada as refugees, while 43% came from a third country, mostly crossing the US-Canada border to also claim asylum in Canada. Many asylum seekers of this last group were undocumented migrants in the US. Between the 1990s and early 2000s. Some of the refugees interviewed for this research claimed asylum entering Canada from Buffalo, New York. At the time, Colombia was prioritized as one of the six source countries of refugees coming to Canada, but this changed with the implementation of the US-Canada Safe Third Country Agreement. This agreement is part of US-Canada Smart Border Action Plan that started in 2004 and requires that refugees claim asylum in the first “safe country” that they arrive (Government of Canada, 2002; and 2020). There are some exceptions to this rule, but it meant that Colombian refugees seeking asylum in Canada were to arrive directly to the country, not via the US as many did before. Direct arrival required a Canadian visa in advance or entering the country illegally. Gilbert (2007) explains the content and the consequences of the US-Canada Safe Third Country Agreement:

[It] proposed a series of measures to more effectively manage the flow of refugee claimants between the two countries. Under the provisions of the Safe Third Country Agreement, refugees who have come to the United States but were denied entry will no longer be able to claim refugee status in Canada (at land border crossings). This

agreement also virtually closed the Canadian land border to asylum seekers, many of whom found themselves in a vulnerable position in the United States. The result of new procedures and security checks was a 50-percent drop in border claims between 2004 and 2005. (27)

This agreement echoes historical Canadian racist migration policies such as the early 20th century continuous journey rule, which sought to keep whiteness in Canada by preventing the arrival of migrants who made stops in their journeys, affecting mostly Asian and other non-European migrants at the time (Walton-Roberts, 2003).

Colombian refugees interviewed for this research explain that many Colombian economic migrants circumvented asylum rules in order to claim refugee status, regularize their situation in the short term, and as a pathway to citizenship in the long term. Colombian refugees lament that economic migrants do not have the political culture to join the transnational solidarity movement with Colombia in Canada. They understand that economic migrants use this strategy as a way to overcome the exclusion of an unjust migrant regime that, on the one hand, creates the conditions that push people from Colombia and the global South to migrate to the global North, and on the other, increases the obstacles to migrate legally. Consequently, legal migration has become a privilege for people who can afford the costs and fulfill restrictive requirements that aim to recruit a more productive population for the receiving society, such as having post-secondary education, command English (or French) languages, possess professional work experience, and contribute to balance an ageing population.

Susana,⁵³ a Colombian refugee in her early 30s, explains a long tradition of migration to the US in her family. Those who remain in Colombia compare their precarious economic situation with their relatives in the US, supposedly doing much better. Susana (2017) shares that during the 1990s, her family in the US experienced anxiety due to the massive

⁵³ Susana, personal communication, October 6th, 2017.

prosecution and deportation of undocumented immigrants. This situation was the initial reason why some of them evaluated the possibility of migrating to Canada -and specifically identified an incident that forced some of them to seek refugee status in Canada in the early 2000s. Three family members were on a trip to see Niagara Falls. When they were driving to Niagara Falls, they mistakingly took the Rainbow International Bridge, which connects the US with Canada. Once they were over the bridge, it was too late to return without crossing the border. One member of her family had legal status in the US, but the other two did not. One of them had a warrant as an undocumented immigrant. She was imprisoned and deported to Colombia after two months, losing all the possessions she had acquired over 20 years working as an undocumented immigrant in the US. Susana's other relative was allowed to remain in the US for medical reasons, but after this incident decided to stay in Buffalo and claimed refugee status in Canada. She migrated to Canada in the following months. Susana followed the route of her relative to claim asylum in Canada in the early 2000s. She arrived at *Vive la Casa*, a shelter for refugee applicants in Buffalo that also supports them logistically in their initial application. *Vive la Casa* is a program of Jericho Road Community Health Center.

Pilar (2017), a lawyer who worked for a local government in Colombia and had to exile after denouncing human rights abuses from government institutions, also claimed refugee status via Buffalo. She explains that before coming to Canada, she spent seven months in the US applying for temporal protection status without success (US Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2020). Pilar was pregnant when she was forced to leave Colombia. Her baby was born while she was trying to obtain refugee status in the US. When her application did not progress, she did not have many options -returning to Colombia with a newborn while dealing with the death threats against her life was not a good option. Thanks to her professional training as a lawyer in Colombia, she completed her application drawing on Canada's Immigration Refugee Act and the Jesuits refugee services for support. Her stay in Buffalo was

much longer than Susana's as it fell before creating the Safe Third Country Agreement in 2004 and asylum seekers were lining up at the border at the time. Pilar (2017) waited for two months before getting an appointment and was received by Romero House in Toronto, where she experienced, *“radical generosity [...] people giving you what they don't have for your wellbeing because they consider you a human being. Knowing these two contexts, the United States and Canada, it's completely different.”* Pilar and Susana would not have been able to claim asylum in Canada if the Safe Third Country Agreement had been enforced at the time of their arrival.

Refugees and Economic Migrants – Class and Race Perspectives

Colombian refugees interviewed for this research share interesting insights about the differences between economic migrants and refugees. They argue that economic migrants move to another country in search of better living conditions. This perspective gives them the strength to deal with settlement obstacles and combat their nostalgia for their homes and communities in Colombia. Additionally, economic migrants with legal status can visit Colombia and their families if they have the economic means. Their lives are not at risk if they return to Colombia. The respondents noted that the challenges they faced internally were different. Economic migrants arrive through skills/points based program, which demands post-secondary education, command of the language of the receiving society, and work experience, among other conditions. Economic migrants tend to focus on their careers; they invest time and money studying to get the certifications needed to practice their careers. In general, economic migrants plan to improve their living conditions and are driven to build their social capital towards this objective. According to Colombian refugees, the main disadvantage for economic migrants is that they are alone in the migration process. Economic migrants do not receive economic and legal support from the Canadian government, and they must procure all the resources needed to complete the migration venture. In consequence, the

logic of the economic migrant is an individualistic logic where every individual or family must take care of themselves.

On the other hand, Colombian refugees noted that they experience a very different set of characteristics as asylum seekers. They did not choose to migrate, they did not necessarily have post-secondary education, and they did not learn the language of the receiving society in advance. According to interviewees, initially, they could only focus on dealing with the trauma caused by their forced displacement, not on developing their careers. They mentioned multiple times that their psychological and emotional situation was an obstacle when they tried to concentrate, study, or take any other initiative to better adapt to the receiving society. Refugees struggle with the desire to return to Colombia, but they cannot because their status does not allow it, and their lives would be at risk if they return. One manifestation of this nostalgia is that refugees do as much as possible to reproduce ordinary Colombian life in the receiving society. They call family and friends in Colombia every day, they watch Colombian T.V., listen to Colombian news, they cook and eat Colombian food. Due to refugees' political culture, they tend to participate in social activism and join social causes in Canada, primarily transnational activism connected with their places of origin in order to build relations with people who participate in these groups. This affirmation applies more to political refugees who were active in social organizing in Colombia, not so much to economic refugees who did not participate in social movements in Colombia.

The refugees interviewed for this research recognize the negative consequences of being physically in Toronto but mentally and emotionally in Colombia. It was much more difficult for them to learn the language. They spend considerable money buying Colombian or Latin American products. They do not develop meaningful relations with Canadians or other people outside the small communities they have formed, and they have difficulties adapting to the receiving society. All these conditions affect their opportunities to succeed in Canada. The

main advantage that Colombian refugees identified over economic migrants is that they receive support from the Canadian government during the settlement process in the form of legal advice, a small allowance, health care, and education. In general, the differences highlighted by Colombian refugees between economic migrants and refugees are reflected in economic disparities between these two groups, with the first presenting a better economic situation than the second. The analysis and description shared by Colombian refugees present an insightful understanding of the differences between Colombian refugees and economic migrants, and they might have explanatory power for the comparison between these two groups in general.

Colombian Refugees' Transnationalism and Activism – Internal Divides within the Colombian Diaspora

Riaño-Alcalá and Goldring (2014) identified a negative stigma associated with Colombian refugees and the Colombian diaspora in general, which indicates that they have a “reactive identity” or that they do not organize around social justice issues. To this negative stigma, we should add the stereotype of Colombians as drug traffickers (Guarnizo and Díaz, 1999). Riaño-Alcalá and Goldring (2014) explain that Colombians alleged “reactive identity” can be explained by numerous factors, including the persistence of the armed conflict and political violence in Colombia, a weak historical identification with the democratic system, government institutions, and political parties, and divisions related to race, class, and region. Social stigma, particularly about drug trafficking and the armed conflict, creates much distrust within the Colombian diaspora. Landolt and Goldring (2010) research Colombian activism in Canada in their comparative study about the political culture and transnational social fields of Chileans and Colombians in Toronto and found that rather than a “reactive identity,” Colombian refugees and migrants have a different political culture and a particular way of

doing transnational solidarity in comparison with other Latin American immigrants, such as Chileans or Central Americans, and Canadian activists with interest in this world region. My research confirms Landolt and Goldring's (2010) assessment. The Colombian diaspora, and particularly Colombian refugees in Toronto, is very active in transnational politics and the Colombian solidarity movement, as their participation in Colombia's peace process has attested.

Landolt and Goldring (2010) explain the differences among the Colombian, the Chilean, and the general Canadian transnational movement in terms of convergences and divergences, rather than disqualifying the political culture of any of these groups. According Landolt and Goldring (2010), many factors must be taken into account to understand the Colombian transnational movement. Colombia has experienced seven decades of social and armed conflict with multiple actors and protracted and multipolar violence. The chaos of this conflict has caused much distrust among Colombians and a lack of clarity about how peace or an end to the conflict looks. In this sense, there is not a singular and clear goal for the Colombian transnational movement. In comparison, the Chilean transnational movement had a clear objective, which was ending Pinochet's dictatorship. Since Colombians do not envision an end to the conflict, exile has become a permanent condition. They try to integrate and assimilate into the receiving society rather than embracing their refugee/political status. Landolt and Goldring (2010) explain that "Colombians came to Canada to stay. They arrived with a political culture characterized by distrust of politics and political fragmentation. Most Colombians avoided political organizing and focused on settlement issues. For this group, transnational political activism was the purview of a small network of committed activists." (453)

Colombians leaving the country as refugees or economic migrants have very different agendas. In general, economic migrants are more individualistic, and when they participate in

organizing, they gravitate towards organizations that focus on settlement, professional development, sports, culture, and business. On the other hand, fieldwork has confirmed that refugees' experience before forced displacement on social and political work motivates them to organize around social justice issues and transnational politics. Landolt and Goldring (2010) explain that this division caused an environment where transnational politics was reserved for a few dedicated activists, not for ordinary Colombian migrants. Also, Colombia's weak political party structure, particularly leftist parties, meant that the political party membership did not influence Colombians pre-migration political and social practices and experiences. Consequently, Colombian activists tend to organize around friendship and prefer to work with social movements and grassroots organizations. Landolt and Goldring (2010) contend that Colombians' activism practices "horizontal dialogue and consensus-based decision-making" (453) but have not developed a protocol to resolve organizational conflicts or mechanisms to resolve tensions, which does not help to solve differences with Canadian solidarity organizations.

Colombians' political culture pushed Canadian organizations to include the Colombian social and armed conflict in their agendas, but they also developed new initiatives and ways of doing politics, such as twinning and sistering projects with grassroots organizations. These tactics differ from traditional Canadian activism and Latin American groups that have been active for a longer time, such as those formed by the previous waves of Latin American refugees. Colombian activists developed a context-specific analysis and challenged Canadian organizations to think and act differently, but they were met with skepticism, partly because Colombian and Canadian transnational movements have different interpretations about the conflict in Colombia. These differences caused divergence between organizations; there was a collaboration among Colombians and Canadians for specific campaigns, but not long-term partnerships (Landolt and Goldring, 2010).

Riaño-Alcalá and Goldring (2014) researched Colombian refugees' organizing and social activism in Sherbrooke (Quebec), Toronto (Ontario), and Vancouver (British Columbia) and concluded that Colombian refugee activism could not be homogenized. They identified some general factors that influence Colombian refugee activism, such as legal status, economic stability, access to welfare, circumstances of flight, absence of discrimination, ties with family, friends, and compatriots. This study indicates that Toronto has a more active Colombian diaspora concerned with issues of social justice. This organizing work around progressive politics is built over a history of several waves of Latin American and Colombian migration to this city, which have developed a tradition of Latin American refugees and activists organizing transnational movements.

On the other extreme, Vancouver constitutes the space with the weakest organizing community. Riaño-Alcalá and Goldring (2014) explain that most Colombian refugees were sent to Vancouver without any contacts in the city. Besides, the Latin American and Colombian communities were relatively small. Mistrust and classism affected the reception and support of Colombian refugees in the Colombian migrant community. Organizing efforts were limited to charity, and any political and educative work was labelled as revolutionary. Additionally, refugees faced everyday life in Canada's most expensive city and more urgent challenges that did not allow them to dedicate time and energy to activism. Riaño-Alcalá and Goldring (2014) found that Sherbrooke presents a unique case because it is a much smaller city, with a population of just over 150,000 people, compared to the larger populations of Toronto's metropolitan area, more than 6 million, and Vancouver, over 2 million. Sherbrooke received more refugees sponsored by the government and private institutions than any other Canadian city despite its relatively small size. Riaño-Alcalá and Goldring (2014) identified this city as an ideal space to study how dynamics such as ongoing conflict, political violence, fear, and distrust among the Colombian diaspora, might affect organizing, along with other

factors such as legal status and processes of social cohesion to reconcile and organize refugee communities. Refugees in transnational movements are important because they can influence Canadian politics towards Colombia, the conflict in their homeland by supporting one of the factions or by returning and bringing back their economic, cultural, social, and human capital.

Colombian refugees in Toronto participate actively in the Colombian transnational movement, notably as it relates to the peace process. The Colombian government held a peace referendum to ratify the peace agreement reached with *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo* (FARC-EP, Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces- People's Army) on October 2nd, 2016. Colombian refugees and the Colombian transnational movement organized different events in Toronto to convince Colombian migrants to vote to ratify the agreement. Leandro was part of an activist group that organized seminars, workshops, and conferences. He confronted many Colombians planning to vote no and convinced them to vote in favor to ratify the agreement. Leandro (2017) asked:

Don't you think that it's cruel to send someone else's children to the war when you're here protected from it? Do you want the war to continue with someone else's children? [...] I asked them about their children, what they were doing, and if they were not sad because their children were abandoning university to fight in the Colombian war. When they responded that that wasn't happening, I asked them why they wanted the war to continue if they were not planning to send their children or go themselves to fight [...] many of them felt shame. They wanted war like the most powerful elites: they love war, but they never fight it.

Pilar, a Colombian refugee in Toronto, and her partner conducted an art installation in front of the Colombian embassy on the peace referendum day. They designed a gigantic banner and invited people to communicate their ideas regarding the peace referendum with words and drawings. They welcomed voters supporting and opposing the agreement. As Pilar (2017) explains: *"we told people, it doesn't matter what your vote is, you have a right to have your own opinion, but we can all agree that we are here as an act of love for Colombia."* Pilar and her partner explained to voters that this installation was a small window into the democratic dialogue that the peace process would bring to Colombia. Alba (2017) was very

active participating in education campaigns about the importance of supporting the peace process with the Colombian diaspora in Toronto. After the Peace referendum, she has been involved in the work of the Colombian Truth and Reconciliation Commission with the Colombian diaspora in Toronto. Muriel,⁵⁴ a Colombian exiled in Toronto, used her work as a filmmaker to contribute to the peace process in Colombia. She has been focusing on the connection between mining companies and the armed conflict in Colombia. This approach is very relevant in Toronto because many mining companies are based in this city (Pearce, 2006), but Toronto is also the base of different social and activist organizations that hold accountable mining corporations, such as MISN (Mining Injustice Solidarity Network) and LACSN (Latin American and Caribbean Solidarity Network). All Colombian refugees interviewed in this research shared that they voted in favour of the peace referendum and have participated in different activities to support the peace process. The Colombian transnational movement in Toronto enjoyed a bittersweet victory in this referendum. Toronto was one of the few cities outside Colombia where the votes in favour of the peace agreement won. In Colombia, the “no” campaign of misinformation won this referendum by a very close margin.

Internally Displaced Persons and Refugees: The Colombian Experience

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees share experiences of forced displacement and racialization due to the Colombian social and armed conflict, but they present substantial differences in terms of class, race, and gender, among other categories. These differences affect the way they are racialized in the receiving societies. UNHCR defines a refugee as “someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion” (UNHCR, 2010, 3). However,

⁵⁴ Muriel, personal communication, October 2nd, 2017.

an internally displaced person (IDP) is defined as someone who has been forcibly displaced by conflict and persecution but have not crossed international borders and therefore are still under the protection of their national government (Mooney, 2005; The Brookings Institution-University of Bern, 2005; Gregory et al., 2006; UNHCR, 2010 and 2012).

According to these definitions, the most significant distinction between refugees and IDPs is the geographical scales that they transcend. IDPs are displaced within Colombia, while refugees are a transnational group that cross international borders. This chapter explores this difference and reveals how the scale of the movement is related to the social status, economic means, and networks of the people being displaced. Some forced migrants walk to their final destination, while others resort to flying to a different country. Some of the refugees interviewed were classified as IDPs before they became refugees in Canada. In other words, they were forced to displace between Colombian cities or regions before they had to leave Colombia in order to save their lives.

The testimonies of Leandro, a journalist and social activist, and Soledad, a union leader, exemplified this dynamic of shifting scales towards the asylum. Leandro (2017) and Soledad (2017) share that before they were forced to leave Colombia and came to Canada as refugees, they tried to avoid the death threats they were receiving by moving at different scales. They first moved from one house to another within the same city, then from one city to another city within Colombia, and finally, they both had to leave the country because their life was in danger and the government could not guarantee their protection. In fact, both testimonies suggest that the Colombian government was aligned with the aggressors.

Ironically, some of the refugees interviewed for this research in Toronto used to work in Colombia accompanying IDPs, which puts them in a unique position to understand the similitudes and differences between IDPs and refugees. Alba, a popular educator exiled in Canada, used to work in various regions in Colombia where the armed conflict is intense. She

accompanied communities at risk of forced displacement and supported community leaders when they had to leave their homes to protect their lives. Alba is in a unique position to explain the similarities and contrasts between refugees and IDPs. Alba (2017) notes, “*the most dramatic issue for both IDPs in Colombia and refugees in a foreign country, is the impossibility to be one hundred percent in one place [...] you had to abandon your home involuntarily, there are the memories, all the things that tie you to a place.*”

Alba (2017) establishes a distinction within the community of IDPs. On the one hand, common people were displaced for reasons related to the Colombian social and armed conflict, as noted in the previous chapters. On the other, there were community leaders whom the armed actors targeted to attack and dismantle the social movements and changes they were leading. Alba (2017) argues that IDP leaders share many characteristics with refugees. This research confirms this assertion; it found that refugees and IDP leaders were very active supporting the peace process in Colombia, while ordinary Colombian IDPs were not as active and in many cases were somehow indifferent to the peace process. Alba (2017) explains that her organization in Colombia supported economically and logistically many communities and social leaders that were forcibly displaced. Her organization followed a strategy that tried to respect the social and physical geographies of the homes of IDPs. This displacement included moving them first to safe spaces that were not different from their place of origin in terms of the weather, landscape, rural or urban setting. However, sometimes, the security conditions forced leaders to move to more distant places, and in some cases, to leave Colombia. Alba’s organization supported them emotionally, logistically, and economically in this traumatic process. In this sense, Alba (2017) argues that refugees and IDP leaders have a position of privilege compared to ordinary IDPs, explaining that the first group are recognized for their work, their ideas, their leadership, and this recognition generates support from organizations, institutions, and individuals who help them in different capacities during their exile. In this

sense, despite the differences in scale of their displacement, refugees and IDP leaders share characteristics of expulsion and reception.

On the other hand, ordinary IDPs have little support when they arrive at the places where they seek refuge, and they have to struggle with conditions of extreme poverty, even homelessness, with little or no support from government institutions and non-governmental organizations. In addition, the testimonies given by IDPs in this research, reveal that the violence that expelled them from their territories was anonymous, it did not target them specifically because of their role in their communities. Yet, it was cruder and more tangible than the threats of violence faced by Colombian refugees. Alba (2017) recognizes that the distinction between ordinary IDPs and IDP leaders/refugees as people who deserve different kinds of accompaniment is problematic, but that the second group's privileged accompaniment is in response to the emergency created by the armed actors of the conflict. They targeted the leaders of social processes to dismantle those initiatives. Alba (2017) explains her assessment of the protection privileges IDP leaders and refugees access, asserting that *"if this [refugee status] wasn't a category of privilege people wouldn't ask for it to achieve status in a country, it's a figure of protection contemplated in international law."*

Conclusion

This chapter provided a context of Colombian refugees in Toronto and explored its relationality with the Colombian transnational experience. It draws on relevant literature and the testimonies of eight Colombian refugees interviewed for this research to achieve this objective. This chapter explores the similarities and differences between IDPs and refugees, establishing that the most relevant affinity is that both groups have been forced to displace. In contrast, the most significant distinction is a geographical one whereby IDPs are displaced at the national scale and refugees at the international scale. The testimonies reveal that IDPs and refugees are not mutually exclusive categories; some Colombian refugees were IDPs moving

at the local and national scale before moving at the international scale seeking asylum in Canada. This affinity between IDPs and refugees reveals a difference within IDPs. There is a privilege distinction between ordinary IDPs and social leaders/IDPs. In this sense, IDP leaders share more characteristics with refugees than with ordinary IDPs, who face a more precarious situation during their displacement and settlement process.

Colombian refugees face very different circumstances than previous waves of Latin American refugees in Toronto. Colombian refugees face challenges such as the collapse of the welfare state, the consolidation of neoliberalism, and the predominance of the Canadian point system in Latin American migration. Colombia is the Latin American nation that has the most refugees in Canada and more migrants in Toronto. The Colombian social and armed conflict has led human rights and non-governmental organizations to lobby the Canadian government to prioritize asylum applications by Colombian community leaders, union organizers, journalists, leftist politicians, human rights defenders, and many other activists targeted by the armed actors of the conflict. The arrival of Colombian refugees to Canada slowed down with the creation of the Safe Third Country Agreement in 2004, which did not allow refugees to claim asylum if they were arriving via the US. In practice, this rule cancels any possibility of claiming asylum following a land route (and forces refugees to fly or sail to Canada). Some of the testimonies in this chapter explain how important it was to stopover in the US before claiming asylum in Canada. These refugees would not have been able to find protection in Canada if the Safe Third Country Agreement had been in place when they were forcibly displaced from Colombia.

Refugees' traumatic process of forced displacement becomes an obstacle to adapting and prospering in the receiving society. Colombian refugees interviewed for this research explain that it took them many years before they could be in the proper mind space to take the most basic steps to accommodate in the receiving society. Colombian refugees' role in developing

the Colombian transnational movement is fundamental because their experience and political culture can shape this movement to influence the Canadian government to support the peace process in Colombia. Refugees' political culture allows them to connect social justice struggles in Colombia with those of Canada, questioning the role of the Colombian diaspora in Canada's settler-colonial project and bridging solidarity with Indigenous peoples. Colombian refugees offer their experience to transform the social reality of Colombia in the function of social justice and the end of the armed conflict. Their transnational work has been fundamental in Colombia's peace process.

This chapter closes the contexts section of this research. The following chapter brings together the testimonies of Colombian IDPs and refugees, and Venezuelan migrants to offer a comparative analysis of how these groups experience racism in the spaces they arrive seeking peace and a better life.

8. RACISM AND OTHER FORMS OF OPPRESSION

Introduction

This chapter addresses the variation of experiences of racism within Colombia (Colombian IDPs and Venezuelan migrants) and the Colombian diaspora (Colombian refugees in Toronto). This chapter combines the testimonies of the interviewees, relevant notes from the field diary recorded during fieldwork, and critical analysis of the dynamics and themes that emerge from those testimonies. The theoretical findings draw on insights from critical geographies of race, postcolonial geographies, urban geography and Latin American studies.

Table 4: Interviewees' Short Characterization

# Interviewees	Category	Gender	Ages
9	Colombian IDPs	5 females and 4 males.	20s (3), 30s (3), 40s (1), 50s (1), 60s (1)
8	Venezuelan Migrants	6 females and 2 males	20s (4), 30s (2), 40s (1), 50 (1)
8	Colombian Refugees	5 females and 3 males.	30s (3), 40s (4), 50s (1)

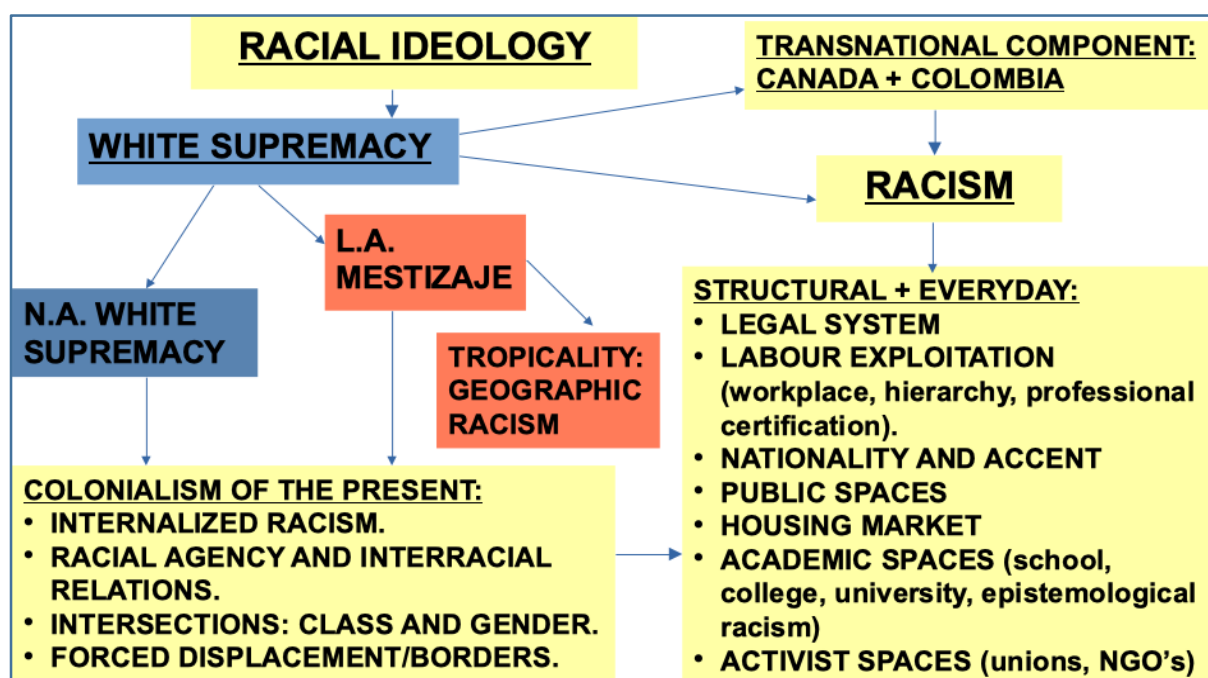
In total, I conducted 25 interviews with Colombian IDPs, Venezuelan migrants, and Colombian refugees. (see *Table 3: Interviewees Characterization* for a brief description of the research participants). The sections of this chapter correspond to the main themes that emerged from interviewees' testimonies. The themes that emerged from the analysis of the interviews include the complex interracial relations that Colombian refugees, Venezuelan migrants, and Colombian IDPs find in the places they seek refuge. It also identified structural racism, where the state and the society reproduce racism and oppress racialized bodies in ways that limit their possibilities in life. The themes of structural racism and everyday racism are separate categories, although this theoretical differentiation is confusing to observe in practice. The testimonies and the categorization advanced in this chapter illustrate how difficult it is to separate these two forms of racism. Interviewees' testimonies exemplified the

many ways that racism is entangled in the legal system, migration regulation, the workplace, the housing market, as well as in public, academic and activist spaces, making it almost impossible to categorize specific instances of racism into separate categories. Structural and everyday racism are complementary and reinforce racial ideology in different spaces. Additionally, the Colombian context presents another layer of complexity when analyzing racism because the armed conflict and racial ideology are deeply entangled. This relationship has been addressed in previous chapters, and it surfaces again in many of the testimonies shared in this chapter.

This chapter merges the testimonies about experiences of racialization of Colombian IDPs, Venezuelan migrants, and Colombian refugees. Although the original plan was to integrate these testimonies in the previous sections, (which implied dividing the themes in the three groups that participated in the research), including all the testimonies in this chapter provides for interesting comparative insights into the racialization experiences of these groups. The rationale for merging these testimonies in one chapter rather than writing three separate chapters is practical, methodological, and theoretical. First, reviewing these three experiences together allows developing an analysis of racism that pays attention to different place/spatial relations. Diagram 4 shows that racism operates at the global scale via white supremacy as the dominant ideology of racism. However, it becomes regionally specific in North America with biological white supremacy and in Latin America with *mestizaje*. The findings show points of convergence and difference between these two racial ideologies, which makes sense because both are variations of white supremacy. North America's racial ideology or biological white supremacy presents some particularities in relation to white supremacy as the globe's dominant racial ideology with origin in Europe. North America's biological white supremacy developed in a settler-colonial society (Lawrence, 2003; Coulthard, 2007; Simpson, 2014), therefore it faced the challenge of justifying the

incorporation of immigrants from the global North, while excluding the original inhabitants of the land (Lawrence and Dua, 2005; Wirth, 2014). As a racial ideology, it incorporated ‘scientific measures’ such as blood quantum and the one-drop rule to separate White dominant bodies from Indigenous and Black racialized bodies (Amadahy and Lawrence, 2009; Simpson, 2014).

Diagram 4: Racial Ideology and Transnationalism



Second, analyzing these three experiences together highlights the importance of continuing colonialities in the present and how migration plays a central role in the constitution of the categories of race and class. The testimonies of Colombian refugees reflect on Canada as a settler-colonial society and the exclusion of Indigenous peoples, while Colombian IDPs highlight connect forced displacement with oppressive colonial dynamics against Indigenous and Afrocolombians, and how these dynamics extend to *Mestiza campesinas*. These testimonies reveal the mechanisms of oppression and domination used in the present to sustain unjust hierarchies that originated in the colonial era. All three groups, in

the case of IDPs at the national scale, and in the case of Colombian refugees and Venezuelan migrants at the international scale, reveal that today, as in the past, migrant labour has been fundamental in developing capitalism since its origins (Robinson, 2020). The analysis of the experiences of IDPs, Venezuelan migrants, and Colombian refugees approaches racism as a historical, present, and fluid dynamic.

Third, consolidating the categories that have emerged from the data has proven relevant in the North American and Latin American contexts. These categories appeared in Diagram 4 under “Colonialism of the Present” and “Structural and Everyday Racism.” These categories reveal the diverse and complex ways racial violence and oppression become axiomatic through the spatial practices of structural and everyday racism, including governance, coloniality, institutional, and everyday practices. The transnational component of this research and its unified analysis have been fundamental in reaching this conclusion because it shows that despite the different contexts -- Canada, North America, and Colombia, Latin America -- and racial ideologies, similar categories emerged from the racialization experiences of Colombian IDPs and refugees, and Venezuelan migrants. Fourth, assembling the experiences of racialization of these three groups is conducive to comparing spaces and experiences to generate broad assessments about the relationship between social forces and spaces and identify the factors that generate commonalities and differences. The complexity and variety of manifestations. These findings are of transnational relevance.

Fifth, merging the three experiences shows how racism is experienced from one context to the other, the transnational sense for some and not for others. These practices are similar yet distinct across geographies. One limitation of this approach is that because it does not concentrate on one single space and experience, it cannot go as deep as research focused on one space. On the other hand, it provides valuable starting points for future research on dynamics and themes identified in this research. Sixth, when analyzing the data, it became

evident how similar were the experiences of racialization of these three groups. Therefore, it is more interesting to thread together the three cases to address the question of racialization rather than having three separate chapters with a very similar structure.

Mestiza and Racial Agencies

This section explores the question of racial self-identification. The data indicate that Colombian refugees in Canada seem to be more aware than Colombian IDPs and Venezuelan migrants of questions related to racial identity and racial issues in general because all interviewees in the first group had something to say about the subject, while most individuals on the second group did not have much to say about this theme. A geographical analysis could indicate that race becomes a more prominent category when people are forced to move from the global South to the global North. Freire (1985) explains that we move through everyday life with the consciousness of what is happening around us, but without analyzing everything. One of the difficulties of exiles is that everything they experience in everyday life presents a challenge. The exile interrupts the normality of life without having to reflect on everything. Forced displacement provokes an identity crisis for those forced to migrate (CNMH, 2015) because it changes drastically their lives and the place they occupy in the world, but it seems that this crisis is more challenging for those who move at the international scale, going from the global South to the global North. Ahmed (2000) argues that immigrants, foreigners, and refugees, are all constructed as strangers. The imposition of the condition, as well as the feeling, of being “strangers” is part of the identity crisis created by forced displacement.

Racial ideology (Omi and Winant, 1984) plays an essential role in the construction of the stranger. While the hegemony of white supremacy permeates North America and Latin America, it is experienced differently in each region. Colombia’s racial ideology is *mestizaje*. Due to the lack of migration, Colombians experience racial relations and multiculturalism mainly as being among White, *Mestiza*, Afrocolombian, and Indigenous communities, the

groups that historically have inhabited Colombia since the colonial era. While Whites are the most powerful group, *Mestizas* are the bodyscape of the nation, and their racial ambiguity allows them occasionally to pass for Whites in the Colombian context (Wade, 1993). When Colombian refugees flee to Canada -all Colombian refugees interviewed identified as *Mestizas*, they encounter biological white supremacy, a different racial ideology to *mestizaje*, where they embody racialized subjects and are the targets of racism.

As Muriel, a Colombian exiled in Toronto, explains, “*being White here is very different from being White in Colombia. We’re White in Colombia because we have lighter skin, but being White here means something very specific, you must be Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, English/Irish/Scottish.*” Canadian multiculturalism might welcome the stranger to a certain degree. However, it has an ideal subject that constitutes the bodyscape of the nation. Colombian refugees find themselves as “strangers,” the target of racism. This experience is new for Colombian refugees that were not racialized bodies in Colombia -- namely Whites and urban *Mestizos*. The stranger is subjected to processes of exclusion and expulsion (Burman, 2007; Goldring et al., 2009); its identity is (re)constituted in the encounter with the other, including other racialized bodies and those who formed the bodyscape of the nation (Ahmed, 2000). Once Colombians migrate, they find themselves in a position where they are not part of the normative population of the nation. This is the event that made them realize the importance of racial issues.

Negotiating *mestiza* identity pre and post-migration experience is closely aligned to power relations and experiences of inclusion and exclusion. Race is deeply embedded in the post-migration experience. Muriel (2017) was only 13 years old when her family took refuge in Canada. She explains that she only experienced racism after arriving in this nation.

I remembered feeling racism or feeling that I was different. I arrived in a suburb called Oshawa and later moved to Whitby. These are places where most of the people are White, with very few immigrants. I have memories of when I was an immigrant child and somebody was making fun of me or was mistreating me. The difference is that when I

arrived in Canada, I felt racism; I was the target of racism. In Colombia, you see it and feel it, but as a Mestiza, I was not the victim of racism; it was Black people. But coming to Canada, I understood racism in a different way. You understand that you aren't neutral, that you are a person of colour. What does it mean? That you're Mestiza, but that you're also Indigenous. I also started to understand internalized racism. My family is very cautious with other Colombians; they judge other Colombians very hard [based on stereotypes and stigma]. All this internalized racism, how we judge each other, how are we constantly comparing with White people.

Pilar, a Colombian refugee in Toronto, had a similar experience to Muriel. She started to question her racial identity as soon as she left Colombia.

In New York, in a context that was more Latino, not even Colombian, more Dominican and Puerto Rican, I found that I was more similar to them than to Colombian women. In Canada, it was obvious that I wasn't White for White people, and I wasn't Black for Black people. But I'm somewhere; I do exist (Pilar, 2017).

Refugees react to these new racial challenges by developing racial consciousness, denying their racial oppression, or integrating into whiteness. Muriel (2017) shares a family conversation that she had with her aunt and mother:

We were talking with my aunt; she was the first that arrived in Canada. She considers herself Canadian. We asked her, "when you respond to a questionnaire, and they ask you to self-identify, you answer that you're White?" And she said, "yes, of course" [laughs]. My mother and I made fun of her. We said, "how can you say that you're White? Look at your skin, look at your face, look at your son, he looks Indigenous, what makes you think you're White? We are Latinas. People here don't think that we are White; they see us Brown." But she thinks that she's White.

The inherent racial ambiguity of *Mestizas* facilitates flight, running away from your racial identification (Fanon, 1986). Muriel (2017) explains that as a *Mestiza*, "*you can be anything; you are like a chameleon.*" There is an interesting discussion about *mestizaje* and its relation to racial identity's static or fluid character. This fluidity is reflected in the present. Different factors, including gender, class, clothing, place of birth and education, can allow an individual to trespass racial borders and perform a different race than it has been assigned (Rappaport, 2014). This dynamic occurs within *mestizaje* as a racial ideology, but as we have seen before, it changes once Colombian refugees are racialized in contexts where biological white supremacy is the predominant racial ideology.

The interviews indicate that racial issues are not a priority for the Colombian IDPs and Venezuelan migrants that participated in this research, but these issues seem to be very important for Colombian refugee participants, as the previous testimonies indicate. Cabrera et al. (2019) explain that Colombia is a nation that historically has not received many immigrants. This situation has changed with the Venezuelan crisis. Alba (2017) provides another convincing argument about why racial issues are not as important in Colombia. She suggests that the armed conflict eclipses many other social problems, among them racism and colonialism.

We haven't thought about our own process of colonization. We are a nation at war; we don't have time to think about colonization and race. But what does it mean to be a Mestiza? What does it mean to live in a city that receives IDPs from everywhere? What does it mean to be in the center after you were from the periphery? We were always thinking about the war; it was a matter of survival. Even if you think about who owns the land, the problem of the Indigenous nations in Colombia, campesinas have suffered dispossession after dispossession. Just look at them; how are they now? The problem of reparations, what does it mean to repair? (Alba, 2017).

According to Alba, Colombians are not reflecting on racial issues because the war is more urgent and takes all the attention. However, this research demonstrates that the armed conflict and racial issues are not disconnected; they have a dialectical relation.

Racial identification is a complex issue. As it has already been mentioned, Colombian IDPs and Venezuelan migrants did not consider this aspect central to their concerns of exclusion. For example, Maura, a Colombian IDP in the Coffee Region, identifies as Indigenous, but she cannot name the Indigenous nation that she belongs. Soledad (2017), a Colombian refugee, identifies as a *Mestiza campesina* and explains the complexity of this category as follows: “*my grandmother and my ancestors had Indigenous roots, but when you don't come directly from those roots, you're not Indigenous, you're Mestiza.*” Damaris' (2018) testimony, a Colombian IDP in the Coffee Region, indirectly confirms how *Mestiza campesina* identity slowly replaces indigenous identity. Her municipality of Quinchía is surrounded by Indigenous *resguardos* (reserves), but she clarifies that where she comes from,

“people are campesinas, not Indigenous” (Damaris, 2018). This testimony indicates that the impacts of coloniality and the racial ideology of *mestizaje* erase indigeneity over time.

Despite moving from an Indigenous to a Mestiza campesina identification, Damaris’ municipality has not escaped tropicality. As we have seen previously, this municipality is considered a racialized space and has been heavily affected by the armed conflict.

Adding another layer of complexity to racial identification, Lisandro (2018), a Colombian IDP in the Coffee Region, explains the importance of the geographical space as a racial marker, which is considered more important in some cases:

I had a classmate at university. When you see him, you think that he isn’t Black, his skin colour, he’s what we call a Mestizo. In Chocó, if you aren’t Black or Indigenous, you’re White. But this classmate comes, and he says that he’s from Quibdó [Chocó’s capital] and that he’s Black. The Mestizo classmates looked at him in astonishment, like saying this guy wants to pass for Black. People made comments like that. But he argued that he was Black convincingly because he was born in Chocó, studied there, and his traditions and culture were from Chocó. He argued that his skin colour couldn’t exclude him from his construction as a subject.

Racial identification gets mixed with racial pride and conscious reevaluation. Racial identification and racial pride work in different contexts and scales, Marco (2018), a Colombian IDP, explains

I don’t identify with a particular indigenous community, but I like the idea of having indigenous blood. I have researched the subject, and I have learned that many of my practices are part of an indigenous spirit. On my mother’s side, my great-grandfather was from an indigenous reservation in Tolima, from the Pijao nation. They were courageous people. Exploring my spirituality, I have also developed the capacity to go into trances. When I’m perturbed, learn about injustice, feel powerless, I look directly to the sun. I can feel a deep connection with nature, with all living things, ants, butterflies, with the wind. It isn’t all the time, just moments. I feel that this is an indigenous inheritance that manifests in me; they have these deep understandings.

The transnational component of this research allows us to see how racial identification works in complex ways at the local, national, and international scales. Along with these changes in scale, we moved from a precise racial identification such as “Pijao-Indigenous,” to a broader category, “Colombian-Latino.” Soledad (2017), a Colombian refugee, explains how their children identify racially in Toronto: “My children, they are young, they’re very proud of

being Colombian. In their group of friends, they're all very proud of being Latino for two reasons. They think that they are cool and fun, but are also very feisty; they fight back when they have to."

Walcott (2015) addresses racialized subjects' pride about their racial identity with the concept of "everyday or popular multiculturalism" (185), explaining that this form of multiculturalism is driven from below, "asserting new ways of coming into the world." (185) Similarly, the concept of *mestizaje* from below (Alberto, 2021), asserts the agency of individuals, more precisely Indigenous peoples, who decide to frame their racial identity outside the categorization imposed by the predominant racial ideology. Amin (2002) explains that second-generation youth politics are more assertive than the politics of their immigrant parents in England. Growing up in the new nation made them feel entitled to full citizenship. They feel that they can combat racial and economic injustice and even answer violence with violence when necessary.

Interracial relations

Soledad, a Colombian refugee in Canada, speaks of the complex relations that Colombian refugees have with Indigenous people in Canada. She explains that her interactions with Indigenous peoples are a mix, sometimes she is greeted with happiness, but other times she senses defensiveness. She clarifies that she understands the source of this last reception. Soledad's testimony touches on the debate about people of colour's role, including refugees and racialized immigrants, in Canada's settler-colonial project (Lawrence and Dua, 2005; Sharma and Wright, 2008; Keptwo, 2021). This discussion has been addressed in previous chapters, but the testimonies in this section expand it by speaking of the intricate interracial relations that Colombian refugees, Venezuelan migrants, and Colombian IDPs find in the places they seek refuge.

Leandro (2017) explains the complex interracial relations that Colombian refugees encounter in Canada. These relations have another layer of complexity. Colombian refugees arrive at working-class neighbourhoods in Toronto, where they encounter racism. Leandro (2017) explains:

Oshawa is a very White city. We were very few immigrants when we went to the swimming pool. I felt weird when they looked at me. Now there has been massive migration, but not in those days. In the area of Oshawa where we arrived, towards the south, there is a White population, they are Canadians, but they are very poor, have high unemployment, lots of drugs and alcohol. That population is very racist. In the south of Oshawa, I felt rejection; I felt that people didn't accept yet, and they got upset when they saw that immigrants progress economically when we buy a house, a car. They reject that progress, but they don't realize that immigrants come to work hard, we might come with better education skills.

Amin (2002) explains that mixed housing of racialized immigrants and the White working-class population seems an excellent answer to racism on paper, but not so much in practice. It increases instances of everyday racism while allowing the middle-upper classes to scapegoat the White working-class as racist. Soledad (2017) makes a clear distinction between her relations with racialized people, a population that includes Colombians, Latin Americans, and other immigrants, and with White people on the other hand. She explains that she has felt discrimination for economic reasons among Colombians and Latinos, but among people of European origin, she has felt racial discrimination. She notes that the relation with other immigrants in a similar socio-economic situation is one of solidarity.

Tropicality: Geographic Racism

Lina,⁵⁵ a psychologist who works with the Government Office *Unidad de Víctimas* (Victims Unit) supporting Colombian IDPs, narrates an exercise her team conducted at a school. In the beginning, every person was assigned an image, which was stuck to the back of the participants. The images would assign a role; it could be a *Mestiza campesina*, an

⁵⁵ Lina Marcela Duque, personal communication, May 4th, 2018.

Afrocolombian, an Indigenous person. The roles could be anybody who is a subject of discrimination. The Victims Unit team asked people “*to get close to those that generate more trust.*” Lina (2018) explains that one of the teachers had the role of *Mestizo campesino*. According to her, this role was very popular, and students surrounded him as someone who produced trust in them. After this section of the activity, students were asked about the most popular public spaces in the city. Students named the hospital, the central square, the church, the marketplace, among others. Finally, students were asked to place each character in the public spaces students thought they belong. The *mestizo campesino*, along with the characters that are usually excluded such as Afrocolombians and Indigenous peoples, was left out as if they did not have a place in the city. Lina (2018) narrates that the teacher who was impersonating the *Mestizo campesino* role felt personally offended by this. He asked, “*why? If you all came to me, you were relating with me, how is it that I don’t have a place? Nobody could answer, but the fact was that he was left out.*”

Lina (2018) explains that she and her colleagues analyzed the situation after this activity, “*why was the campesino excluded?*” They concluded that *Mestiza campesinas* do not have a place in the city. Lina (2018) comments with irony: “*we all say, campesinas, they are so nice, so cute, they are our roots. But the teacher who was playing the role of a campesino had no place; he couldn’t be in the park, he couldn’t be in the hospital, he couldn’t be in the church.*” This exercise was conducted in Santa Rosa de Cabal, a municipality that is part of Pereira’s Metropolitan Area. Santa Rosa’s economy is based on agriculture. While it was not very surprising that Indigenous peoples and Afrocolombians were excluded from a space where they do not have a strong presence, it was highly unexpected that *Mestiza campesinas* were excluded from a space where they are one of the main economic actors.

These exclusions are one of the consequences of the discourse of tropicity (Clayton and Bowd, 2006) in Colombia, which plays a central role in defining its racial ideology. A crucial

aspect of a racial project is deciding who has “access to social and geographic spaces” (Brahinsky et al., 2014, 1139) and who is excluded. In the scenario described by Lina (2018), we can see how the people who live in rural spaces are somehow racialized and excluded from urban spaces. Racism invisibilizes racialized subjects, keeps them out of sight (McKittrick, 2006; Price, 2010). Fanon (2004) refers to the division between racialized and non-racialized spaces as the “compartmentalized world” created by colonization, a social space divided between normative and racialized bodies. Similar to Fanon’s reference, Colombia is divided into compartmentalized spaces. According to Clayton and Bowd (2006), the discourse of tropicality alludes to a white space of civilization in high altitudes with more temperate weather. This space is inhabited by White bodies and those urban *Mestizas* who pass for White -- this point is much more complex because *Mestizas* can be subjected to racism in the city. Race and class intersect. Urban *Mestizas* with darker skin color are usually low-income working class and are discriminated based on their race and class. In many cases, the urban *Mestizas* discriminated in the cities are relatively recent migrants from rural spaces, many of them were IDPs in the past, one or two generations before they would have been identified as Afrocolombian, Indigenous or *Mestiza campesinas*. Tropicality creates another dark space of backwardness in lower altitudes with hotter weather. Racialized people inhabit this space: Afrocolombians, Indigenous, and *Mestiza campesinas*. Brahinsky et al. (2014) interrogate the relation between race and nature, how it authorizes violent exclusions, reproduces social hierarchies, and legitimizes some forms of political representation. Brahinsky et al. (2014) argue that as a consequence, “time, particular natural spaces have cultural valence, coming to be known as “wild” or “violent”, “dark” or “diseased” as a result of images, narratives” (1141). Tropicality, as a central concept of Colombia’s racial ideology, is used by normative bodies to reinforce their racial privilege, but also by racialized bodies who have internalized racism.

Practices of domination achieved with the strategic use of racial ideologies “naturalize both identity and place, repetitively spatializing where nondominant groups “naturally” belong.” (McKittrick, 2006, xv) Tropicality’s division between racialized and non-racialized spaces corresponds to a separation between rural peripheral areas and urban centers (Castro-Gómez, 2005; Gutiérrez, 2019). In Colombia, racialized people are confined to the “tropics” or rural areas and they are seen as out of place in the city. Castro-Gómez (2005) explains that the knowledge of coloniality (Quijano, 1999) developed a “racial science” in Latin America. Different technologies were used in this emergent “racial science,” such as the taxonomy that classified “different races” in the *casta* system, and the discourse of *tropicality*, a spatial discourse that classified individuals and groups, assigning moral and physical characteristics according to the region, latitude, and altitude where they were located. In Lina’s account the campesino was not given a place in the city precisely because he was out of place, because according to the discourse of tropicality he belongs and is confined to rural spaces. This is the situation that Colombia’s eight million plus IDPs are facing. They are forcibly displaced from their territories, in most cases, they move from rural spaces to urban spaces (Toro, 2005), where the discourse of tropicality maintains that they should not be. Lina’s (2018) testimony confirms tropicality’s ideas: “[t]here is this sort of natural discrimination. Sometimes, when people see Indigenous peoples begging on the streets, they think that they shouldn’t be there, and yes, they shouldn’t be there, but if they are here is because there have been events and situations [forced displacement].”

The fate of Colombian IDPs in the cities is not good. Once they arrive in the city, they become part of the most vulnerable population. They reside in the most dangerous spaces in relation to criminality and natural disasters. As Lina (2018) explains, “*they live next to the rivers; they live in the most dangerous neighbourhoods. They came forcibly displaced to the cities, but here they become the victims of other social problems.*” Research in urban studies

has evidenced a repetitive pattern where racialized bodies are confined to spaces of neglect and exclusion (McCaan, 1999; Nelson, 2000; Keil and Harris, 2006; Veninga, 2009, Shabazz, 2015). Similarly to racialized bodies in North America, IDPs reside in the equivalent of the Latin American ghetto, repeating patterns of “social-spatial segregation [...] spaces for those who have been left behind [destined to live] segregated lives in zones of poverty” (Linke, 2014, 1227). *Centro* (CNMH, 2015) explains that Colombia presents the highest migration rate from rural to urban areas in Latin America because of forced displacement. This migration represents an increase in population that cities are not ready to integrate. IDPs drawn to the city by the armed conflict and searching for jobs have to create *invasiones* (informal neighbourhoods), where they are left to transform these inhabitable environments into living spaces through their labour. They struggle with poverty, environmental problems, housing shortages, lack of public services, overcrowding, and deprivation. This dynamic reflects how urban injustices configure the geography of the city (Soja, 2010)

Lina is very critical of the work of *Unidad de Víctimas*. She argues that public officials prioritize the safety of their jobs over advocating for structural changes. Lina (2018) explains,

To be honest, talking about the victims, we are not rehabilitating them physically and mentally. As a Unit, we are fulfilling our job responsibilities, we are following an action plan, but we aren't advancing an articulated strategy with other institutions. There is no real articulation between the institutions. For example, the public policy for the victims of the conflict should be a common concern, but if you ask in the City Council, nobody will be in the capacity to talk about the subject, same with the Government of the Department, but this is part of their work.

The interview with Lina brought up an additional layer of complexity to the racializing dynamic of the discourse of tropicality. As discussed earlier, tropicality as a process racializes people who live in tropical spaces, including primarily Afrocolombians, Indigenous, and *Mestiza campesinas*. The discourse of tropicality in intersection with the armed conflict creates another layer of vulnerability or danger for the people in the territories controlled by subversive groups. This demonization is stronger for those that were part of these groups but

had demobilized during peace agreements between the government and subversive groups.

Lina (2018) explains the situation of the children who were forcibly recruited by armed groups and the barriers they encountered in urban spaces:

When you talk about racialization and ask me if them [under age ex-combatants] find some kind of resistance when they enter urban spaces. Yes, every kind of resistance. They encounter an education system that discriminates against them. There is no policy that covers them, that understands that they don't have a mental problem, they were just kids taking part in an armed conflict, and we are responsible as a society. The State is responsible because it didn't take care of that child. His family couldn't take care of that child. So, when they arrive in the city, they find all kinds of institutional barriers.

Internalized Racism

These testimonies of Colombian refugees in Toronto and Colombian IDPs in the Coffee Region speak of how internalized racism works among different racialized groups. This section might be polemic considering it shows how racialized bodies reproduce racism, but it is necessary to share these testimonies for the reason that they evidence the complexity of racial ideologies and internalized racism. Roy (2016) explains that internalized racism is the imposition of white supremacy ideology into the colonial body. Coulthard (2016) similarly argues that internalized racism works when the colonized accept it as valid and naturalizes the colonizer's social relations and their forms of recognition and representation. Internalized racism is present in interactions among different groups in Canada. Soledad (2017) explains how internalized racism works among different nationalities and how this affects racialized bodies with less power in particular spaces.

There are some national clans in my office: the Russians, the Filipinos, the Cubans. The Colombians are very few. So, the Russians protect the Russians, the Filipinos protect theirs, but the Colombians, since we are few, same with the Latinos, then we're like a lesser category, we receive less work, and when we get it, it's the most difficult jobs.

In Soledad's experience, internalized racism works in different contexts. In the previous testimony, internalized racism affects its relation with racialized colleagues and her job. She receives less paid hours and has to perform harder tasks that other colleagues avoid. Soledad

(2017) argues that discriminatory treatment is based on her nationality. In other situations, internalized racism affects its interactions with clients. *"I arrived at the house of a Jamaican, a Black woman, she automatically asked me to leave her house, she said that she didn't accept White people in her house. I'm not White; I was so upset because I'm not White. I'm Mestiza"* (Soledad, 2017). In this case, Soledad felt discriminated because rather than trying to pass for White and distance herself from blackness, she is willing to reclaim a *Mestiza* identity and recognizes herself as a racialized body. However, other racialized individuals categorize her as White. Soledad's reclamation of a racialized identity, in this particular context, runs contrary to the historical tendency of racialized bodies seeking entrance into whiteness. On the other hand, Wynter (2003) explains that Black people remain at the bottom of the racial hierarchy, with all incoming racialized groups that are not Black finding ways to claim normality within North American racial ideology by distancing from blackness. Wynter (2003) argument helps us understand the rationale behind the Jamaican client that rejected Soledad.

The racial tensions produced by internalized racism also affect the relationship between Indigenous peoples in Canada and racialized immigrants. Ignacio, a Colombian exiled in Toronto, has also experienced aggressions from clients, including Canadian Indigenous peoples who had faced similar histories of oppression and exclusion. As Ignacio (2017) explains,

I worked with Indigenous peoples. There were many troubles in that space. I was very strict with our clients because people sneaked drugs and alcohol to the center. I was one of the stricter workers; others were more permissive. In consequence, I experienced lots of racism from Indigenous people there. I saw it as internalized racism. They insulted me, "Mexican son of a bitch, go away, come to my reserve, and I'll greet you with a bullet!"

Colombian refugees and Latin Americans are not always at the receiving end of internalized racism and racial discrimination. They also practice it against other racialized bodies. Leandro (2017), a Colombian refugee who works as an immigration settlement

counsellor in Toronto, shares that he witnessed racist behaviours among his Latin American clients: *“there is a lot of racism among immigrants. I attend to people from different nationalities. Many people from Latin America complain about Hindus, Arabs. I sense their disgust, their discrimination.”*

Internalized racism is also present in people with the same nationality, although they might identify with different races and spaces of origin, which illustrates the intersection between race, class, and space. Alba explains how the process of internalized racism takes form in real life in different contexts. She explains that the Latin American community in Toronto has its problems of internalized racism. This dynamic is reflected in the marginal presence of Indigenous peoples and Afro-Latinos in Latin American spaces. Alba (2017) argues that *“you can see a process of exclusion and discrimination that we repeat among ourselves.”* She explains that internalized racism among immigrants in Toronto has a geographical dimension. There are class and racial differences between the Latin Americans located in areas of the city such as Mississauga and Richmond Hill on the one hand, and areas with lower income such as Weston Road on the other hand. Alba argues that the intersection between class and race is something that Colombians bring to Toronto from Colombia, explaining that there is always a question about the place that Colombians come from, which carries implicit discrimination. Colombians bring the discourse of tropicality to Toronto. In this process, they are creating a dynamic where the racial ideologies of mestizaje and biological white supremacy come together in one space, while simultaneously incorporating class in the discussion. Some of the Colombian refugees that Alba knows come from regions of Colombia that would be characterized as “tropical.” These regions are in the lowlands, have warmer temperatures, are surrounded by dense forests, are peripheral to the urban centers, and have suffered the armed conflict with more intensity. Wade (2016) explains that

regional diversity in Colombia is intensely racialized. Alba's (2017) testimony expands over this idea,

There are some regions where history and race overlap. I talked about this with a friend from Barranca. She arrives with a group of Colombians, and she says that she's from Barranca, and it isn't the same as saying that you're from Bogotá o Medellín or other larger cities. If you're born in peripheral regions... I know refugees that don't tell you where they are from. They share this outside the community with the average Canadian because they have no idea, but if they're interacting with Colombians, they won't disclose information about their place of origin because they don't feel safe.

Alba's testimony touches on the consequences of the discourse of tropicality in Colombia.

In this case, Colombians from racialized spaces do not feel safe revealing where they come from to other Colombians because all the negative stereotypes created by the discourse of tropicality would be imposed on them, making them the target of internalized racism. This dynamic is an example of the psychological impacts of racism and how racialized subjects interiorized markers of racial inferiority. Alba (2017) continues explaining the consequences of the discourse of tropicality: *"I think that there are few countries that have bounded geographically racialized communities to this level. Not only by reservations but even by departments."* Susana confirms Alba's argument about how Colombians bring this form of geographical internalized racism from their nation. As Susana (2017) states: *"it has happened when I met Colombians here. In all those conversations, there are always the same questions, the same that they would ask in Colombia. Where did you live, what neighbourhood? I always feel uncomfortable with those questions."* Susana (2017) further explains that she is self-conscious about her class in Colombia, *"why do they want to know about my neighbourhood? But I think it is because I always carried that stigma. They know that your neighbourhood isn't a good one. I always feel that perhaps for that reason, I don't have many Colombian friends here."*

Susana (2017) recalls her feelings when she was living in Colombia and visited places where she felt that she did not belong, *"I struggled with the same feeling when I went to a*

neighbourhood that wasn't mine, and people always learn that you came from a different place, and they realized that you're from a lower class because you dress differently, you don't have designer's clothes." Susana (2017) admits that she felt free from this pressure and discrimination once in Toronto, although she became aware that she could be the target of racial discrimination. *"When I came to Canada, I saw that there were people from so many different places and that it was more about your skin colour. To be honest, I think that I'm fairly White, but they notice my accent, and then you're part of a different group."*

Muriel (2017) expands on how race and class overlap. Her family has a WhatsApp group where they communicate across distance, sharing jokes and family news. However, she explains that many of the comments shared on that group make her feel very uncomfortable:

In terms of race, stigmatizing Indigenous and Black people, and in terms of social class. The jokes that I heard in my family [...] Many of these jokes are based on social issues, such as lack of education, how a person doesn't know how to write or doesn't pronounce some words properly because they didn't receive a good education. They make fun of them; it is a mix of race and social class.

These testimonies evidence how racism affects people's self-esteem, creating insecurity to the point that they internalize ideas of inferiority as humans. Damaris echoes with Susana's negative effect that racism and discrimination can have on self-esteem. Damaris (2018) shared her feelings when she arrived at Pereira after being forcibly displaced:

It's hard to adapt to a place that you're not used to because you're coming from the countryside, you arrive like a squab that has broken the shell, it doesn't know what to do, why it came to this place. You feel that everybody is giving you a bad look, weird, like saying this person isn't from here. I felt like everybody was looking at me. I felt excluded from the world. It might be because we were coming from the countryside, you act very slow.

Damaris (2018) further explains that the feeling of not belonging and insecurity accompanied her for many years,

I was afraid to talk with anyone, [...] if I start talking with you, I'd cry towards the end of the conversation. I cried, just talking with you I would cry, I was afraid [...] That was my trauma, thinking that I wasn't doing things correctly and didn't know how to express myself. [...] I wasn't able to look anyone in the eye.

Alba (2017) addresses how racism is not limited to external and structural conditions but how it affects the psyche of the person who is the target of racism.

The problem with racism isn't just that puts you in a position of disadvantage regarding opportunities, but that it diminishes you as a human, it affects you deeply, you don't trust in yourself anymore. Microracism in the workplace, in school, in activists' spaces. There are certain insidious prejudices that little by little destroy the dreams of people.

Alba (2017) emphasized that even people who have the tools to understand and fight racism can succumb to this oppression: *“even a refugee, with all their political experience, is affected. Now imagine what can happen with people who haven't gone through critical analysis processes.”*

Another reaction related to shame, but that can also be read as a vindication, is that of Lisandro. His personal story was full of events that allowed him to claim IDP status, but he insisted that he wanted to be interviewed as a person from Chocó that had been forcibly displaced by structural racism. This research found a similar reaction with Colombian refugees in Toronto, where they were initially embarrassed to share that they had refugee status when they arrived in Canada. We could understand this as a manifestation of internalized racism. Shame and denial of IDP status are feelings that repeat with many refugees who publicly deny this status, which is connected with Alba's dynamic about how refugees deny the places they come from to avoid discrimination. In Lisandro's case, it could have both connotations, an embarrassment of IDP status or an affirmation of his blackness. Given that he is an Afrocolombian leader, this analysis leans towards the interpretation that this is his strategy to call attention to how structural racism affects Afrocolombians and how forced displacement is also a cause of structural racism.

Marco had a different reaction to the racism that he experienced as an IDP coming from a rural area to a marginal neighbourhood in Pereira. In his case, race and physical violence intersected as a reaction to racism. Marco (2017), who was subjected to racism, became a racist bully when he had the opportunity:

They notice that you are different, and they attack you for that reason. Me too, I attacked new kids. Why did I attack them? There was a kid named Carlitos. He was a pretty boy that came to live in the neighbourhood. When I saw him, I got mad that he was living in our neighbourhood. I was only 11 years old, and I felt this rage when I saw him around. With other kids already living in the neighbourhood, it was more difficult to bully them because they fought back, but not the new kids; you could bully them. I felt this need to bully him; it was a way to get rid of the rage that I had inside [...] when you see someone different, you attack them, it also happens when you see someone weak. If you see that the person is an Indigenous kid, you also bully him.

Although this statement reveals violence, it also shows how some people who are subjected to forced displacement and racism, react to this dynamic by reproducing the discriminatory behaviour and violence that they received themselves. This is a negative consequence of racism that emerged in this particular interview. Colombians need to reflect critically on racial issues, although sometimes it implies addressing violence as in the previous statement, or the messiness of the following situation.

Muriel (2017) sees racism in Colombia as internalized racism. She recalls an education campaign advanced by Bogotá's public transit system

A few days ago I saw how they were trying to educate users of Transmilenio [Bogotá's transit system]. Instead of saying don't jump the fence, use the correct entrances, let people go out of the buses before you try to come in... They just put a poster that says "No sea Indio" [Don't be an Indian].

Figure 7: "No Sea Indio"



Note: “Do not be an Indian! For your security, let the doors close” (Noticias RCN, 2020). Earlier, I have critiqued *Figure 7* ‘education’ campaign (Gutiérrez, 2015).

However, there is a polemic around this picture. Noticias RCN reported that it was a fake campaign (Noticias RCN, 2020). Nevertheless, the fact that this polemic exist indicates continual racism against Indigenous peoples in Colombia’s racial ideology. Ali and Amórtegui (2011) explain that the term *Indio* in Colombia is often used derogatorily. It does not necessarily mean that someone is Indigenous, but that that person is nasty or vulgar. Muriel (2017) notices two aspects in this manifestation of racism. First, there is an urgent need to educate Colombians on racial issues, as it can not be socially acceptable that government officials insult racialized people openly and without consequences -- neither she nor I knew at the time of the interview about the polemic regarding the ‘education’ campaign in question. Second, she thinks that these racist attacks against Indigenous peoples are a manifestation of internalized racism. Even though Colombians understand the concept of *mestizaje*, they have not come to terms with what this means for their identity. Colombians generally feel proud and emphasize their European, especially their Spanish ancestry, but they deny their Indigenous heritage and how this is a fundamental part of their culture.

Colombians internalized racism and identity crisis is not just a matter of identity politics. It has real-life and death consequences for racialized people. Pilar was a public officer in Colombia before she had to leave the country to save her life. She recalls her feelings when she understood how racism kills people in Colombia. As Pilar (2018) states:

The anguish that I felt when I recognized that what happened in my land to Wilfred just because he was a black kid, but also with indigenous ancestry, the structural conditions that affected him, that’s why he was on the streets, and because he lived on the streets some people considered his life worthless and that people with power killed him.

Pilar (2017) elaborates on the structural conditions that affect racialized people in Colombian urban spaces, who are also the victims of forced displacement. “*What is the common factor with these kids, most of the children and families who live in the margins?*”

They are Black and Indigenous families. Many of these families arrived [to the city] because of processes of forced displacement.” Colombia’s racial ideology condemns to death those that inhabit the zone of non-being, those whose humanity is not fully recognized (Fanon, 1986; Grosfoguel, 2012). The adjective used to name this group of people could not be more telling; they are called *desechables* (disposables) in everyday discourse.

Children who live on the streets, consume drugs, commit petty crimes, sell their bodies for prostitution [...] they are homeless, and this makes them “desechables.” Every time I think about the word deseachable, I imagine the action of trashing a person, like when you trash a disposable cup or plate because it is the same idea. To call someone “deseachable” is to rob them of their humanity, to tell them you can’t be used again, you’re there, but you’re finished. It is this idea of cleaning society from garbage, and the best way to do this is to eliminate the garbage (Pilar, 2018).

Pilar’s (2017) testimony makes us reflect on the intersection of race, class, and public space -principally about how racialized bodies who do not have a home are perceived in public spaces. Mitchell (2002) argues that public space is feared as a space of anarchy, where crime, drug addiction, prostitution, and homelessness develop. The state responds to these issues with order, law, and repression to regain control of public space. It proposes the erasure of homelessness from our gaze, not structural poverty. The homeless do not have the right to exist; they are robbed of this right by using a language that alleges to protect the rights of “good citizens” to the detriment of homeless people’s fundamental rights. Most homeless are racialized individuals subjectified as *homo sacer* condemned to bare life, “[t]hey constitute instead the originary exception in which human life is included in the political order in being exposed to an unconditional capacity to be killed” (Agamben, 1998, 85). Pilar (2017) explains that the paramilitary groups that advanced this social cleansing project, known as *La Mano Negra* (The Black Hand), argue that they are cleansing society from those that do bad things, “*that they are only killing those that contaminate society.*” Mbembe (2003) argues that the sovereign (who is not limited to the state, although in the escenario that Pilar is describing the forces that reclaim the right to kill are part of the state) uses the state of exception and the

relation of enmity as the basis to kill the other. The fiction of the enemy is advanced to justify exception and emergency and then to kill with justification.

Pilar (2017) is in agreement with Muriel (2017) about the urgency of educating Colombians about racial issues:

Officials working in public offices, the terrible things that I heard about Indigenous peoples, the communities they have to protect legally. It was painful, demotivating, disappointing. I have little faith that these minds can open to understanding that they haven't earned what they have. They were the recipients of these privileges because they conformed to an idea of what is better, related to a Eurocentric idea (Pilar, 2017).

Pilar's analysis echoes Coulthard's (2007) ideas, whereby racism is deemed to be a strategic target of transformation as much as the socio-economic structure because it has similar capacities to structure social relations.

Lina, a psychologist who works with *Unidad de Víctimas*, has experienced the apathy that most Colombians have with the victims of the Colombian social and armed conflict. This indifference is a complex dynamic where race, class, geography, and other categories intersect to create exclusion and oppression. She explains that she is used to people reacting negatively to her work because they argue that the armed conflict was a fiction. This narrative was a common argument of former president Álvaro Uribe Vélez that proved quite popular among Colombians when he managed to defeat the referendum to support the peace agreement with FARC in October 2nd, 2016. As Lina (2018) explains:

Many friends that I spoke with, said that the armed conflict wasn't real. And I said, really? Let's go, I can sit you with the people I worked with, and you can tell me after chatting with them that the conflict isn't real or that there are no more risks. It's a reality completely unknown. [...] The stories are terrible. "I was displaced, my father was killed, my mother was raped, my sister is the product of that rape, my uncle was disappeared, my grandfather was kidnapped, our lands were taken..."

Lina adds another layer of complexity to the call to increase awareness about racism in Colombia by highlighting its intersection with the armed conflict. Both subjects have a lot in common. As Lina (2017) argues, *"if we look at this differently, more social, as a society we could arrive at more humanistic positions."*

Structural Racism

These testimonies speak of structural racism, where the state and the society, in general, reproduce racism and oppress racialized bodies in ways that limit their possibilities in life. The following testimonies explore dynamics of structural racism, some of which have been touched upon in previous chapters.

One theme that surfaced in the interviews is how the immigration system is racist when recognizing migrants' professional qualifications and experience (Bauder, 2003), and creates tension between refugees and economic migrants. Alba (2017), a Colombian exiled in Canada, explains that racism permeates the immigration system, affecting Latin American migrants in general, and Colombian refugees in particular. She thinks that if the Canadian state creates better reception conditions for the arrival and legalization of migrants -including protection and economic, social, and institutional support during the first months, the quality of life of migrants could improve drastically. This change would not completely end the racism experienced by Colombian migrants and refugees, but it would be an improvement. Karen and Teresa (2018), two sisters who migrated from Venezuela to the Coffee Region, explain that they have plans to improve their economic situation and leave behind the job precariousness that affects them. To achieve this objective, Karen and Teresa need to legalize their migratory status in Colombia. Alba (2017) explains that when she came to Canada as an exile, she *"understood the importance of having legal status."* She noticed that *"many people didn't have documents [legal status], and that made their lives more difficult because additional to the racialization and invisibilization that they experience, their political being was reduced to zero."* We see in these cases how migration, legality issues, and racism intersect to make the lives of racialized migrants and refugees more difficult.

The intersection of refugee status and the migration system is not limited to legality. Even when the refugee has legal status and receives support from the government in the settlement

process, they are still subjected to racism, in some cases, from the very same government officials accompanying them in the settlement process. This dynamic relates to the reception conditions mentioned previously. Alba (2017) shares the story of Lido Pimienta, a Colombian refugee and musician who has won the Polaris Music Prize and has been nominated to the Grammy and Juno Awards, which is the most prestigious recognition for musicians in Canada.

Lido is a Colombian refugee from the Wayuu nation. There are many intersections, mother, Afrocolombian. She won this prize, she went to the stage, and the first thing that she said was "I would like to have in front the social worker who saw me when I arrived a few years ago and told me that I wouldn't be able to do anything in this country." That was the first thing that she said. It makes you realize that this problem affects many people.

Migrants and their children are subjected to intergenerational racism that becomes an obstacle to improve their quality of life. Structural racism affects refugees and migrants in the present and the future; it is not limited to the refugees that arrive now; it will follow their children and future generations. Alba (2017) wonders for how long would refugees and their children feel the pernicious effects of racism, *"until when the racialization? I mean, it is with the first generation of parents that arrive? Of course, they're going to feel it. It is the children of the children who are going to be treated like a first-class citizen, like a Canadian."* Alba (2017) recalls a conversation that she had with a second-generation Canadian whose parents were Latin Americans,

He was totally racialized. He looked brown, with a gringo name and Latino last name. His last name wasn't anglo, wasn't Canadian. He explained how difficult it has been for him, even if he was born in Canada, because his last name is a marker in the first CV screening [...] He was asked a lot where he was from. He said Canadian. But they said, "no, but really, where are you from? Well, I'm from here, my parents aren't, but I was born here."

Alba (2017) argues that this intergenerational racialization process experienced by refugees and migrants is diametrically linked with the experiences of those who represent the bodyscape of Canada as a nation and who enjoy racial privileges. As Alba (2017) argues:

“maybe this is the reason why the Parliament and the City Council look the way they look. I think that the face, not just the face, the human group that takes the important decisions, at all scales, municipal, provincial, national. The human group is still male, anglo, protestant.”

Structural racism is more difficult to see and understand than everyday racism.

Interviewees were quick to recognize the instances where they were oppressed by racism. In most of these situations, the racist individuals were mostly White working-class people without much education using open everyday racism, in many cases taking the form of xenophobia, as a way to affirm their racial superiority against racialized migrants and refugees, who in many cases have more education and have better chances to succeed economically, despite the disadvantages and obstacles put in their way by structural racism. These are situations where racism and class intersect,. However, the analysis of structural racism shows a more complex picture; it illustrates how society, particularly the high-income class, benefits from racism and whiteness (Lipstiz, 2006). Brown (2007) explains that multiculturalism has resignified racism to avoid questioning structural racism and focuses on racial microaggressions and everyday racism. The keyword in this development of white supremacy is “tolerance,” a concept that indicates communities how to cohabitate, installing a new normativity. The focus is on the intolerance of racist individuals, not on the structural conditions that reproduce systemic racism. In his insightful analysis about how whiteness works, Lipstiz (2006) explains that White working-class individuals feel powerless about the social, political, and economic problems that they face, and instead they focus on people of color, immigrants, people with different beliefs, and non-normative minorities as the source of their problems. In other words, racial ideology is used to manipulate the White working-class against their own interests.

Structural racism is present in government institutions and offices. During research fieldwork, I visited *Unidad de Víctimas* (UAV, *Unidad* from now on) to learn about their

work with IDPs in Colombia. I was first directed to an official who considered that her tasks were not immediately connected with the research subject. When I explained the research, showed the informed consent, and asked if I could record the interview, the official said that she was not the best person for the interview, but introduced me to *Unidad's* Director and asked him if he could do the interview. He accepted, but while we waited with the first official, I started asking questions about her tasks. She explained that her role in the *Unidad* is to connect IDPs with different institutions that provide social services helpful to them, such as finances, housing, education, and healthcare, among others. The official divided the IDP population into those that stay and those that return. The second group was subdivided into two, those that return formally and those that do it informally. The official explained that the first subgroup receives support from the state to guarantee their return in good conditions. The examples that she gave emphasize the contacts that IDPs have with family and friends to guarantee a successful return. The official explained that state financial support to IDPs consists of \$900,000 COL (about \$300 CDN), which are given in three installments during the next three months after the economic assistance has been approved. She did not say much about the informal return, just that there are no statistics, so she could not tell me much about the percentage of IDPs that return formally and informally.

The *Unidad* official expanded on the group of people that stayed. At this point, she made a very telling point. The official noted that Afrocolombians and Indigenous IDPs were less receptive to the *Unidad's* services and preferred to stick to the *ayuda humanitaria* (economic humanitarian aid provided by the *Unidad*). On the other hand, she noted that the other population, the *Mestiza campesinas* IDPs, were better at using their services. She noted that it was very satisfying to talk with IDPs willing to leave the past behind and succeed in their new home. Her comments of evaluation of their situation revealed a racist assessment of Afrocolombians and Indigenous peoples' resilience after being forcibly displaced. The

findings of this research illustrate that public officials' discrimination against IDPs is not rare, as Pilar (2017) and Lina (2018) have denounced in their testimonies. Similarly, a socio-demographic study published by Pereira's administration (Alcaldía de Pereira, 2012) highlights the negative consequences of IDPs arriving at the city, blaming them for increasing violence. The report does not share data supporting these statements; it simply establishes a causal relation between forced migration and increases in criminality cases.

Lisandro (2018), an Afrocolombian IDP from Chocó, goes one step further, explaining that structural racism does not only affect IDPs after forced displacement, but that structural racism and the state are at the root cause of their forced displacement. Lisandro (2018) opines that the state is more criminal than the guerrillas because of its *"political structure and its negation towards Indigenous and Afrocolombian communities. The spaces where the Afrocolombian and Indigenous communities are located are the most abandoned; there is no road infrastructure, no education, no universities, no health centers."* This dynamic is the main reason why Lisandro insisted on being primarily interviewed as a person who had to leave Chocó because of structural racism, not as an IDP running away from the armed conflict. *"That's why we have to leave for the bigger cities in search of better opportunities because we don't find them in our territories. That's is structural racism for me."* Finally, Lisandro (2018) emphasizes that the only appearance that the Colombian state has in the racialized regions of Colombia is via extractive economy.

The state only arrives in the forms of transnationals to exploit the gold in Chocó, the natural resources of the territory but the state doesn't come with the same strength to build a university or a company that offers real possibilities and improves the conditions of the community.

Structural racism against Afrocolombians and Indigenous people has been amply documented by academics (Wade, 1993; Hooker, 2005; Restrepo, 2016). In Lisandro's testimony, it is evident that structural racism represents the continuation of colonial capital extraction from the territories racialized by the discourse of tropicality.

Racism in the Legal System

Structural racism manifests in the legal system and criminalizes racialized people.

Ignacio, whose family was exiled in Canada in the 1980s, shares a traumatic experience with the legal system in this nation when he was 16 years old. Ignacio (2017) starts providing a context of his living situation at the time. *“My parents had divorced, I lived with my mother and my younger brother in social housing. My mother was working, but our economic situation was precarious.”* Ignacio (2017) narrates that one day he went to a department store with a couple of friends:

There was a jacket that I liked, but I didn’t have enough money, so I changed the price tag for a lower price. Then I paid for the jacket, but they had already noticed, so when I completed the transaction, the police arrived, and I was arrested. We went to the police station. They called my mother, she was crying. They didn’t detain me, but I was charged with theft under \$5,000.

At this point, Ignacio was in a legal problem, but neither he nor his family had experience dealing with the legal system and money to hire a lawyer during the process. As Ignacio (2017) explains,

I was a good kid. I wasn’t into weird stuff, no drugs, no crimes. When I had to go to court... I was so innocent. We had to wear a uniform at school, I thought “I’m a good kid, I go to this good school.” I thought it was a good idea to go in the uniform. I didn’t even think, nor my mother, to get a lawyer. If I had been from a different social class in Canada, my family would have gotten me a lawyer, but that was our reality.

Ignacio went to court thinking that his Catholic school uniform would present the image of a good kid, but the judge disagreed with that. Ignacio (2017) continues:

I was a person of colour; I don’t know if the judge recognized that I was Latin American. Maybe he thought I was Indigenous from Canada. There were many cases before me; the judge would address them. There was another kid; he wasn’t an immigrant, neither a person of colour. He stole a bicycle, but he was given a complete discharge. He didn’t have to do community work, no probation, anything.

Given the punishment received by the White kid who appeared in court before him, Ignacio thought that his case would be easier and that he would not have to deal with serious consequences because of his mistake. Ignacio (2017) recalls:

When I was called, I stood up, and the judge was very mad with me. He said “you come here with your uniform, this priest [the founder of the Catholic school] was a very important person.” In short, he said that I was dishonouring the memory of this priest. He gave me 18 months probation, community work, and a criminal record. It was called a conditional discharge.

Ignacio thinks he received such a harsh punishment because he was a Brown kid. He compares his treatment and sentence with the one received by the White kid who stole a bicycle.

I think it was racism because the judge was so mad with me. The sentence that he gave me was very severe for a first-time offender and the offence that I had committed. The other guy, he wasn't an immigrant, he wasn't a person of color. He stole a bicycle but he didn't have to go to probation.

I worked as a human rights observer with Indigenous communities in Canada. I had to visit courts every so often with a group of delegates to learn how the legal system discriminates Indigenous peoples and how this connects with colonialism and racism. The court was located in Kenora, Ontario. Time after time, we observed how racialized bodies were more criminalized than White bodies. In one occasion, an Indigenous man lost his driving license for driving under the influence of alcohol, but just minutes before a White man received only a warning for sailing his powerboat under the influence of alcohol. Delgado and Stefancic (2012) argue that lethal white practices such as going to war, embezzlement, fraud, among others, are not criminalized, while the everyday practices of racialized people are criminalized. Race and class intersect in the legal system. We would witness in Kenora's court how Indigenous people were judged with more severity than White people. Similar to Ignacio's account, the judges would treat impoverished racialized bodies with more severity than White bodies.

This research has demonstrated that public officials connect criminality with IDPs. This stereotype also affects Venezuelans in Colombia. Despite Colombia's historically high rates of crime, Venezuelan migrants are blamed publicly for most of the crime in the cities today. This blame comes openly from ordinary citizens and official authorities, who demonstrate a

high degree of racism in their public statements about the subject. This event is so prevalent that some Venezuelans have internalized this manifestation of racism and reproduced ideas about Venezuelan criminality in Colombia. Rebeca (2018), a Venezuelan migrant in the Coffee Region, explains that *“some people from our country have come and they have sadly damaged our reputation, they have come mainly to Cucuta to do bad things, commit crimes, and that has turned Colombians against Venezuelans.”*

Racism in the Workplace

As discussed in previous sections, race and class constantly intersect, but this intersection becomes more evident at the workplace. Robinson (2020) developed the concept of racial capitalism to explain that coercive and racialized labour regimes have been historically a crucial aspect of capitalism. According to Robinson (2020) “[t]he tendency of European civilization through capitalism was thus not to homogenize but to differentiate -to exaggerate regional, subcultural, and dialectical differences into “racial” ones” (26). The European colonization of much of the world integrated the people that today occupy the global South into capitalism as labour subjected to exploitation and regulated by coercive labour regimes. In the present, racism at the workplace often starts before people even have access to a job. Interviewees offered multiple testimonies that attest to this. Violeta (2018), a Venezuelan migrant in Colombia, shares her experience applying for jobs in Bogotá: *“many times I presented a CV, they asked me if I’m Venezuelan, I said yes, and because of this they wouldn’t accept my CV, they would say that they didn’t need more people, I asked why do you have a job ad? There is an ad outside saying that you need personnel.”*

Lisandro connects this exclusion from the job market to structural racism, arguing that racialized people cannot apply and get certain jobs because of their race and ethnicity. As Lisandro (2018) explains *“we live in structural racism, I say it because you come to the city, you finish a career, but you don’t find a job.”* He argues that racialized people are limited to

low-income jobs, “you go to a bank, and you don’t see a [Black] person working. You go to a mall, and you only see Black people working as guards or janitors.” Lisandro (2018) explains that this exclusion is intentional. It is not because there are not racialized professionals who can take those jobs, but because they are not given the opportunity. Lisandro (2018) further states:

You don’t see people in those positions not because there are not Black professionals, Black people trained, we do have them. [...] But in general terms, structurally, there is still marginality on the side of the structure of those in power against Afro-Colombians and Indigenous. All this talking about Colombian diversity, interculturality, and multiethnicity is beautiful, but you don’t see equity in everyday actions.

Lisandro’s (2018) analysis highlights the contradiction between multiculturalism discourse and racial inclusion in the workplace. Multiculturalism displaces the discussion from a critique of a socio-racial economic system to cultural differences and diversity (Bannerji, 2000).

Soledad (2017) works as a personal caregiver and explains that her clients constantly discriminate against her on racial grounds, “*I have experienced racism with my clients, especially with Europeans. They want to feel superior, you come, and you are a Latina, then you’re inferior, in spite that you’re helping them.*” Karen (2018), a Venezuelan migrant in Colombia, recalls:

In the first clothing factory I worked, the owner commented [...] because we received SISBEN⁵⁶ and the work and residence permit for two years. The owner of the sweatshop was estrato 3, which doesn’t receive SISBEN, and she said, “how it is possible that you being Venezuelans and just coming to the country receive SISBEN, and I don’t, but of course, how can I receive SISBEN if all the Venezuelans coming to the country are receiving it.”

Ignacio (2017), a Colombian exile in Canada, shares his experience as a recipient of racial stereotypes at work,

⁵⁶ SISBEN is the Colombian national system that classifies Colombians according to their income and basic needs. The most common SISBEN program is public health care, which only covers estratos 1 and 2. *Estrato* is the Colombian system to classify social stratum according to neighbourhood income. There are six *estratos*: 1 and 2 are low-income, 3 and 4 are middle-income, and 5 and 6 are high-income.

Because I'm a racialized man when I participate in a discussion, it can be in a working or an academic space; they see you as aggressive. Even if I'm not insulting or attacking, but they feel uncomfortable. I think this is because I'm a racialized man, because you're seeing easily as a danger, even in a social setting. I think this perception comes mainly from White people; they feel uncomfortable.

These testimonies expose how racism affects Colombian IDPs, Venezuelan migrants, and Colombian refugees at the workplace. The transnational component of this research establishes that this dynamic is common across spaces, affecting these three groups.

Work Hierarchy - Social and Cultural Capital

Simón is a Colombian exiled in Toronto. His testimony illustrates how racism, culture, and power intersect to exclude racialized people from the best workplace positions. Simón (2017) explains,

There is some differentiation in terms of access to specialized positions, or managerial positions, or who has the best opportunities and better access in the companies I have worked with. There is no doubt that immigrants develop our work and advance as any other in the companies, the working ladder, but just until a certain point. After that point, there are limits, obstacles.

Simón (2017) connects this exclusion with the culture of immigrants:

In the beginning, it has to do with language [...] But along with language comes a cultural background. They grew up with the language in this society, and they're familiar with certain things that we don't understand. Sometimes they speak about people, songs, things that I have no idea about, which creates separation [...] we are left out. It's an additional obstacle that immigrants have in comparison with those born here.

Simón (2017) also remarks how difficult it has been for him to scale the working ladder, but at some point, it just becomes impossible, “*we have to work harder, and even after that we won't make it.*” Bauder (2003) explains that the exclusion in the Canadian job market is done using multiple strategies: citizenship (which goes as far as to say which jobs can immigrants legally access); the distinction between nationals (White bodies) and immigrants (racialized bodies); the non-recognition of foreign credentials (particularly those from non-western countries); and exclusion from networks (social capital). This situation guarantees Whites' economic privilege and reproduces racialized bodies' exclusion. Simón (2017)

expands on how racialized people are excluded from the most powerful positions, *“from manager upward is another thing, the people who are there, it’s logical, they want to protect their power, because at the end is a matter of power. How do they do it? Well, putting another person similar to them in those positions.”*

Simón (2017) sees this situation as the limit of Canadian multiculturalism and states, *“below those positions, you’ll find all the multiculturalism that you want, all the diversity that you want [...] from all nations, from all races.”* Gilbert (2007) argues that despite multiculturalism discourse of inclusion for immigrants and ethnic groups, it continues assuming the existence of a dominant group. Simón (2017) highlights the characteristics of those privileged to access the most powerful positions and the dominant group:

What I see first and foremost is that they’re Canadian, by Canadian, I mean that they grew up with the Canadian culture, the language is Canadian, the culture is Canadian. They like Canadian things, they play hockey and stuff like that [...] their background is European, many Italians, Irish, the people that have come historically.

Simón’s (2017) testimony illustrates how the transmission of power works in informal ways, but it guarantees that power remains in the hands of White Canadians.

The second thing that I have noticed about them is that there is a certain kind of continuity. It isn’t necessarily the manager’s son, but they’re connected somehow, and this is difficult to notice. For example, with the friends that I work with, there are always some co-ops. They are like summer students that always come to do internships with the university. These students are always the son of someone who has the power to locate their children there. If you want to do an internship with Rogers or Bell, you need someone who puts you there. It isn’t easy; imagine any of these companies, Toronto Hydro receives 2,000 or 3,000 applications, everybody wants to go there, but they are only going to select ten applicants. They will be the children of someone who is up there. It’s a second filter, they let you get in, but at the same time, “I know who you are,” and secondly, “we’ve been with you during the whole process.”

Delgado and Stefancic (2012) use the concepts of “interest convergence” or “material determinism” to explain that racism advances the interests of White elites and workers and that there is not an incentive within to dismantle it.

I have personal experience dealing with racism at the workplace. Racialized subjects’ capacities are questioned because of their race, no matter how much experience they have at

work. Part of my previous job before attending graduate school was to lead delegations to Indigenous communities in Canada. The objective was to learn about indigenous culture, their resistance to extractive economies, and the present and past problems they faced in Canada. There were always people participating in these delegations who did not fully accept my role as a delegation leader because I was an immigrant and a person of color. But they did not assert it openly; they always insinuated it indirectly. For example, if I was working with another person, it did not matter if I had more experience; if I was more prepared than that person, some people would give that colleague more authority. This discrimination was very subtle; it was not open, it was not like “*you don’t know because you aren’t White.*” Once, we were talking about Residential Schools in Canada. The father of one participant had been a preacher and worked in one of the Residential Schools. In general, the subject was heavy, additionally, it had a personal connection for this individual. Initially, this person was resistant to reflecting on the information given, particularly about the horrible abuses endured by Indigenous children in residential schools. When I challenged this person to reflect on the subject, she became upset and told me “*to go back to Colombia.*” There was a very interesting dynamic behind this racial insult. This individual was middle class and progressive, not the type of person that incurs racial aggressions, as we have seen previously, but as soon as the personal story of this individual was challenged concerning her family’s participation in residential schools and structural racism, this person jumped scales and use everyday racism to avoid dealing with systemic racism.

Professional Certification and Labour Exploitation

These testimonies address the role that professional certification plays in structural racism against refugees. Not having professional certification means that refugees cannot practice their profession, putting them in a precarious economic situation. Leandro’s (2017) testimony illustrates how not being able to practice his profession negatively affected his quality of life:

I hadn't been a construction worker, where you have to be very early at the construction site and leave late, go out at lunch to eat [...] while sitting on pieces of wood. I remembered my office [in Colombia] during those times, while I was eating rice with meat stew quickly and uncomfortable because we only had 30 minutes before going back to work [...] Those cleaning jobs, they were extremely ungrateful, very poorly paid. I was always middle class, with struggles, but I had access to many things. I could travel, take holidays, and suddenly I was here in this cold country, mopping floors. Those experiences were very difficult for me.

Soledad (2017) argues that the system to get professional certification is essentially racist: “I don't know where this policy came from, but it's very racist, discriminatory. Depending on the profession you want to validate, you must study again. It's a great waste of human resources and experience.” Professional certification represents an obstacle that causes many refugees to desist practicing their profession in the space they seek refuge. Alba (2017) explains:

The accreditation system isn't made to receive and certificate the professional experience easily [...] There are professions that you have to choose between working to cover living expenses or dedicate entirely to certifying your studies. Professions such as medicine, nursing, odontology, many professions have professional associations. These are private associations that regulate professional practices in some provinces. These are the filters where immigrants are the recipient of several discriminations. To achieve certification is very complex, it's very expensive, and the standards... I believe there is an interest to keep the offer in some professional fields very low to keep high salaries.

Alba (2017) connects how racism in professional certification affects refugees on an individual basis with a racist ideology that denigrates education systems in the global South. “They don't recognize the quality of our education, they don't believe that we have universities. There is much ignorance.” Bauder (2003) argues that de-skilling qualified immigrants is negative at multiple scales. It damages skilled workers who are not able to use their training and capacities. It hurts the country of origin, as the resources invested in training immigrants are practically lost. It hurts the Canadian economy, as it follows an irrational logic that awards incompetence over the capacities of skilled immigrants. And it hurts the global economy because it is wasting human resources on a global scale. As a consequence of this exclusion, high-skilled immigrants take low-wage employment for which they are

overqualified. This state of things guarantees the economic privilege of normative bodies and reproduces the exclusion of racialized bodies (Bauder, 2003).

On the other hand, these testimonies also inform how refugees transfer their skills to survive in new spaces and understand and learn from their precarious position. Pilar (2017) recalls her experience when she had to flee Colombia and travel to the US to save her life; she had only two days to plan the trip and a budget of US \$300: *“I didn’t know anything different than to write, to speak, to fight, to dream of being a lawyer, to change the world. Suddenly I was in New York, a monster city where people do whatever they have to.”* For Pilar, the shock was not just doing whatever she had to do to survive, but having to deal with the trauma of being forcibly displaced from Colombia and leaving behind the life that she had built with so much effort. As Pilar (2017) states:

When you’re dealing with feelings of loss, what I’m going to do to survive? What I’m going to do when the \$300 is gone? It didn’t last, obviously, and now what? And all the pride because I was a prodigy girl at some point. I think those are moments of vulnerability. To recognize that all you had is over, that you’re not whom you used to be, that all those privileges are worth nothing.

Pilar explains that arriving in New York was very difficult. She did not speak English, could not practice her profession, and her migration documents were about to expire. However, even under these conditions, she managed to transfer some skills and survived. As Pilar (2017) explains: *“I started working on a restaurant, I was a terrible waitress, so I ended up working behind the bar, and was pretty good at that, two months later I was made manager of the restaurant. You transfer many skills, but you only transfer those that are functional.”*

Not having access to professional certification pushes IDPs, Venezuelan migrants, and Colombian refugees to the informal economy, where labour exploitation is more intense than in regular jobs. The following testimonies speak of the intersection of exploitation and racism due to IDPs, refugees, and economic migrants’ status. These include the exploitation of IDPs

working in the informal economy. Uriel, a Colombian IDP in the Coffee Region, narrates that he worked collecting sand from the river banks when he arrived in Pereira. He had an accident while working and was not given proper compensation. As Uriel (2018) explains:

It was very difficult. I went looking for a job to the Consota river. I broke one finger, do you know what the boss did? He didn't want to pay for my time. He said go to the hospital and get it examined. I went there and then I had to go to rest at my house. The boss said that he'd go to visit and gave me only two days' payment.

Leandro, a Colombian refugee in Toronto, was also exploited in the informal economy. Leandro (2017) narrates that he and a friend were hired to paint a series of apartments in a high-income sector of Toronto, “the person who hired us refused to pay for our work. He said that we made some mistakes that were very expensive to fix. I felt a lot of anger because I experienced what is to be exploited, to be robbed of your labour, to not to be paid after doing a job.”

Eleonora, Milena, and Maura are IDPs forcibly displaced to the Coffee Region from different regions of Colombia. They are all part of San Isidro's community project, which includes a small clothes factory where all the workers are women from the same community. The armed conflict has displaced many inhabitants of this community. Milena (2018) shares that they were exploited by a bigger factory that hired them to do pieces.

We made many shirts, they said that they'd pay for the piece, we made about 160 shirts, they'd pay \$40 or \$50 COL, I didn't understand how they were going to pay fully, but honestly nobody made more than \$45.000 COL.⁵⁷ We work for about a month, all December we worked on that, but for what, that wasn't enough for anything.

Milena (2018) also shares that they were so disappointed after this event that they thought about abandoning the coop, but Doña Hilda, a woman who has taken leadership in the community process, found a better contract making the school uniforms of two local schools and convinced them to continue in the project.

We were going to retire when Doña Hilda said don't quit, that she was going to arrange for us to do the school uniforms, two schools in total. But that she was going to make the

⁵⁷ Monthly minimum wage was nearly COL\$ 900,000 at the time of the interview; the equivalent of \$300 CAN.

arrangement, and we said, well, if we worked for those that exploited us, how aren't we going to give her a chance, as long as she pays and it's fair. (Milena, 2018)

Marco, an IDP from San Isidro, shares that his mother had to work as a maid when they were forcibly displaced to Pereira. She had to endure exploitation in her work as a maid. One way to compensate for her exploitation and low wages was taking cleaning items from the home where she was working. Marco (2018) shares an encounter that he had with a professor at his university about this dynamic:

One day at university, a professor said in class that maids steal things. She was very rude saying those things, she didn't know that I was the son of a maid, so I said, "I'm very sorry, professor, but if maids steal things, it is because you don't pay them enough, it's because you take advantage with the payment, so they don't have enough money and they have to steal to supply some basic needs at home, like stealing a bar soap. My mother was a maid, and sometimes she came home with a soap bar or a paper towel." The professor blushed and continued the class.

Venezuelan migrants report being exploited in Colombia because of their nationality and Colombian employees know about their urgent needs. Bernarda (2018), a Venezuelan migrant in Pereira, explains:

With Venezuelans, I tell you, they are taking advantage of the situation, that we come with nothing, without any knowledge, and then later is when we realize that we were working so much and they were paying so little, that they should have paid this much. On top of that, many Colombians are mad because they say that we come here to steal their jobs.

Bernarda (2018) explains that Venezuelans take jobs under exploitative conditions because of their needs, but also because they do not know the context, they ignore Colombian salary rates and basic working conditions. *"Because we don't know, we accept any payment. What we do is to make the math, ok, I'm getting paid this, I can send this to Venezuela, and I know that my family would be able to eat for about a week."* Bernarda (2018) also shares that before she started her own business, she was exploited in multiple ways working in a bakery. She had to work longer hours than usual, earn less than it was legal, and had to fulfill multiple roles that were not part of her job. Bernarda (2018) explains that in her experience, the working conditions in Venezuela used to be better than they are in Colombia:

In Venezuela, the working day is 8 hours, but if you're making food deliveries, that's what you do. If you're a cashier, that's what you do, and if you're a driver, you'll drive [...] I worked at a place, I was paid daily. I worked from 12 to 9 pm; I worked for 9 hours and was paid \$ 23.000 COL.⁵⁸ On Sundays, I worked from 7:30 to 7:30; sometimes the boss closed even later. I was working 12 hours, and I was paid \$ 30.000 COL. I was happy because I came here with nothing, it wasn't easy for me. I had to arrive at the bakery, attend to clients, clean the tables. When we closed, clean everything, take deliveries, as I said, I had to do a little bit of everything.

Rebeca (2018), a Venezuelan migrant in Pereira, shares similar experiences to those of Bernarda. Rebeca explains that she likes the Coffee Region because they have not experienced the levels of discrimination they were subjected to in Cucuta, a Colombian city on the border with Venezuela, or in the Caribbean coast, where she argues there is more discrimination against Venezuelans. Rebeca (2018) explains that her husband suffered a lot of discrimination in the job market in Cucuta:

He lost a lot of weight, didn't find a job, and had problems getting his documentation. They offered him half the regular payment. For example, a basic construction worker receives \$ 45.000 COL per day, and to him, they say, ah, you're Venezuelan, I'll pay you \$ 20.000 COL. That was labour discrimination. He told me, "I could take it, but I'd get into trouble with the other workers because I'd be working for little money."

The situation of her husband was aggravated by the fact that he fulfilled the requirements to be a Colombian citizen. He was born and grew up in Venezuela, but his parents were Colombian, making it easier for him to get legal status in Colombia. But being a Colombian citizen with a Venezuelan accent did not save him from racism and exploitation in working spaces. Rebeca (2018) shares that some of her friends have also suffered racism and discrimination at the workplace, *"I have friends who are hairdressers, the clients sit, and they say, ah, you're Venezuelan, don't touch me."* Rebeca is unemployed and has not been able to find a formal job in Colombia. She used to work in Venezuela's oil company and has ample experience as a manager in the truck loading industry, but she has not accessed this area of work in Colombia. To make some money, she has opened a small street waffle cart. Rebeca's

⁵⁸ Minimum working day payment was about COL\$ 30.000 per 8 hours at the time of the interview. Sundays' extra working hours should be paid at a higher rate because they are outside the regular work schedule -days of rest and night hours.

(2018) testimony connects precariousness with professional accreditation, revealing the racist dimension of this process.

Soledad (2017), a Colombian refugee in Toronto, shares that refugees and immigrants are put in a similar position in Canada, *“we come to do the jobs that Canadians don’t want to do. There is a reason why most of the jobs that we take don’t require English. Most of them are in construction, in factories, in cleaning.”* Similar to Bernarda (2018), Soledad (2017) explains that refugees do these jobs because of the money, with the aggravation that the capitalist ideology is stronger in North America, which makes workers more complicit with their exploitation, *“the irony is that they return happy because of consumerism, they feel happy working 10, 15 hours to pay for a car. That’s happiness for people.”* Soledad (2017) connects exploitation and consumerism, indicating refugees critical analysis and political culture when confronting oppressions.

Refugees are put in a precarious situation where they have to take physical jobs that they are not in the capacity to perform. Agustín (2018), a Venezuelan migrant in the Coffee Region, explains that he worked collecting coffee when he came to Colombia:

But it didn’t go well. I arrived at a small town called Fredonia, one hour away from Medellin. [...] it was through a friend; they needed workers to collect coffee. That was my reference, that’s why I came here, but that work is very hard, you must have the experience to earn something. They pay you for what you collect, I didn’t have experience, and I did terribly. I collected very little. So I said no, I worked only one week and that was it.

The testimonies show that refugees’ political education helps them understand and process these situations better than IDPs and Venezuelan migrants, which provides them with more resilience to endure these hardships and even see it as an opportunity to learn. We have already seen this with Soledad’s (2017) analysis. Leandro (2017), a Colombian refugee in Canada, reinforces this finding with his analysis of labour dynamics:

I was born again here because I moved a lot among the working classes in Colombia, campesinos [...] I had a discourse about labour and social issues. I had all the theory [...] But in Canada, I did something new, something different. I was one of them. I was a

construction worker, a driver, and a janitor, so I experienced the other dimension. I was able to ground all that theory in those practices. For example, I experienced being exploited, receiving salaries of misery, that you have to walk a lot to get to your job, that they cheat you with your payment.

There are other factors that have an impact in the discussion about Colombian refugees' political culture and its comparison with Colombian IDPs and Venezuelan migrants. Class and cultural capital are important aspects of this discussion.

Racism in Everyday Life

I have argued that structural racism is not explicit, more difficult to see and understand, and represents systemic conditions that affect the lives of racialized bodies. On the other hand, racism in everyday life is easier to identify, it is explicit, and although it is made of small acts known as racial microaggressions, it has, along with structural racism, power to affect the lives of racialized individuals. Omi and Winant (1994) explain that racialization occurs in everyday experience and works as common sense. It is made up of micro-scale interactions and grows in scale to the point that it shapes how we relate with institutions and organizations. Racism or racial ideology is located in the social structure, the historical context, and everyday life. Delgado and Stefancic (2012, 2) explain that racial microaggressions, which take place in everyday life, are “those many sudden, stunning, or dispiriting transactions that mark the days” of racialized bodies. Racism and racial microaggressions are ordinary events; they are not extraordinary, they are not an aberration. Moreno (2010, 389) talks about the “omnipresent dimension of racism” to explain how racism microaggressions in everyday life distribute its intensity, making more difficult for people to recognize racism, presenting it as ordinary and reducing the gravity of racial microaggressions, but also creating moments of intensity where racism can manifest in all its ugliness. This dynamic creates a logic where structural racism is disconnected from personal experiences of racism, making it difficult to understand at the systemic level. Wade (2017)

argues that race studies must include a focus on individual cases and historical analysis to understand the structural problem, how some lives become more valuable than others. This research argues that we must understand racism as a dialectic relation, whereas we internalize racism and the person who suffers it loses confidence. This internalization of racial inferiority that manifests as a lack of confidence feeds the oppressor's power and makes them even more racists. This process is not a conscious decision, but it is the consequence of a dynamic between the oppressor/racist and the oppressed/racialized. Everyday racism and microaggressions are critical aspects of this dynamic.

Nationality and Accent

Many interviewees share experiences of racism based on nationality and accent. In Colombia, where migration is not a historically common phenomenon, these situations are more frequent in the urban spaces (such as Bogotá) that receive more immigrants. However, this type of racism is not exclusive to Colombia. Soledad (2017), a Colombian refugee in Toronto, explains that she feels discriminated against constantly because of her accent:

People love to make you feel bad about your accent. Sometimes you end up surrounded by teachers who want to correct you all the time. You say one word, they hear it differently, then they correct you because they want you to speak the way they speak. But they don't realize that here everybody has an accent, nobody speaks perfect English.

Following findings from the interviews, it seems that Venezuelan migrants in Colombia, despite speaking Spanish, Colombia's official language, experience more discrimination because of their nationality and accent than Colombian IDPs in the Coffee Region and Colombian refugees in Toronto. For example, according to Violeta (2018), a Venezuelan migrant in the Coffee Region, "*xenophobia has increased a lot in Bogotá [...] and it is going to keep increasing as more Venezuelans come.*" Karen (2018), a Venezuelan migrant who lives with Violeta, seconds her friend, "*people get mad because they see it as an invasion to what belongs to them, this makes them furious, and this causes discrimination.*" Camilo

(2018), another Venezuelan migrant in the Coffee Region, shares that he had also experienced racism in Colombia, particularly in Bogotá: *“I noticed a lot of hate against Venezuelans in Bogotá.”* Bernarda (2018), a Venezuelan migrant in the Coffee Region, shares the interactions that she has had with people that make xenophobic remarks against Venezuelans in her tiny restaurant:

I tell them, look, mister or miss, I’m not here because I want to. Would you leave your country, your house now, your comfort to go to a different country? Well, you must understand, I’m not here because I want to. I’m working hard to have a good life because you can’t do it in Venezuela at this moment, but don’t worry; things will get better at any time.

Bernarda (2018) remarks that although she does not receive racist remarks all the time, she gets racist comments frequently at her business: *“here, in our business, they come and make disrespectful comments, “ah, this is full with Venezuelans.” They said like that, disrespectfully [...] They always say that we are invading.”*

Venezuelan migrants have high hopes that the situation in their country will eventually improve and they will be able to return. When Venezuelans share how they have been discriminated against in Colombia, they remember with a hint of bitterness that there was a time when Colombians migrated to Venezuela and how their families were supportive of Colombian migrants at the time. In fact, according to Colombia’s Ministry of International Relations (2017), most Venezuelans migrating to Colombia have double nationality or have Colombian parents. Rygiel (2010) reminds us that nation-states are historical political constructs, that they do not represent a natural order and that people are not naturally organized into them. These arguments are particularly valid for nations like Venezuela and Colombia, which were unified under one nation in the 19th century after *La Gran Colombia* won the independence struggle from Spain.

Venezuelan migrants and Colombian returnees are discriminated against based on accent. Why did Venezuelans interviewees report more racist incidents related to nationality and

accent than Colombian IDPs and Colombian refugees? This dynamic may be caused by Colombia's lack of experience receiving migrants and the exceptionality of Venezuelan migration to the country (Cabrera et al., 2019). Colombian IDPs are subjected to racism based on how they speak, but their accent is not as distinctive as Venezuelans, and they have Colombian nationality. Colombian refugees in Toronto, as Soledad (2017) shared, do suffer racial discrimination because of their accent, but there are refugees and immigrants from all over the world in Toronto. More than half the population was not born in the city (Canada Census, 2016), and they all speak with a different accent, making it more difficult to single out Colombian refugees. Venezuelan migrants have an accent that makes them more recognizable in Colombian society and facilitate their racialization based on that characteristic.

Public Spaces

The following testimonies in this section speak of different manifestations of racism in public spaces. Some of them are open attacks against racialized individuals because of their race, other aggressions are subtle, but both manifestations are undoubtedly racist for the ones receiving the attacks. These forms of racial violence provoke different reactions. Some people similarly defend themselves, reproducing a violent cycle, while others ignore the attacks but internally feel completely diminished and hopeless. I observed some of these incidents, and they have affected this research in significant ways. During my fieldwork in Colombia's Coffee Region, I witnessed a racial microaggression against a Venezuelan woman. I was at the *Registraduría* (the Colombian public office that issues IDs) renewing my ID, and a person made a racist comment against Venezuelans. A woman had arrived, she was carrying a baby in her arms, and she did not stand in the line like everybody. She was given priority and was attended to immediately. Someone behind me said, "*ah, she must be Venezuelan,*" implying that she had jumped the line, had done this because she did not have manners, and behaved

like this because she was Venezuelan. Of course, this person was not taking into account that the woman had a baby, and for that reason, she had priority. Nevertheless, even after ignoring this fact, it did not justify the racist remarks. This particular incident is one of the reasons why I decided to modify this research to include Venezuelan migrants as one of the groups that were racialized in the process of displacement.

Leandro (2017), a Colombian refugee in Toronto, narrates a confrontation that he had with a White man in a store. At the time, Leandro did not speak English and could not understand the different insults that were directed against him, but he remembers this confrontation as a racist attack against him and his baby. Leandro (2017) explains:

I was in a store buying things, and I had put my baby inside a shopping cart. The cart was next to me on the aisle, and a person was coming, a White man, he wasn't well dressed. He said fuck and pushed the stroller hard. When he pushed the stroller, my son fell inside, bumping his body against the cart. I yelled at the man, but I didn't know English, and the man said many things. I only remember "fuck yourself." He insulted me, but I didn't understand what he said. A woman came into my defence and spoke to him in English, the man left, and the woman calmed me down. She told me to continue, but she didn't see the previous event with my kid because she would have reacted differently if she had seen it. I didn't know what to do. I only thought about punching this guy, I was very tempted, but I had learned that punching someone here could give you criminal charges.

Pilar (2017), a Colombian refugee in Toronto, shares the feelings of insecurity that racialization causes in her. This dynamic is another instance where race and class overlap.

"When people don't attend you because you look like someone who doesn't have money to pay, even though you might have money, it might be that you're coming in to spend some time, but the situation is that you have the face of poverty, you look suspicious." Pilar (2017) keeps questioning the meaning of looking suspicious and how it works as a racial marker, "I question this idea [...] because I know that I'm suspicious all the time, I reunite all the requirements to be suspicious, I don't even know how not to look suspicious."

Marco (2018), a Colombian IDP, shares his experience when he arrived at a marginal neighbourhood in Pereira. *"When we arrived new to the neighbourhood, the kids on the streets beat us, they bullied us, as a consequence, I became violent."* He shares that as a child

growing up in that context, he had to face many challenges. His family was impoverished after being dispossessed of everything they had. His mother had psychological consequences and became schizophrenic. They experienced hunger along with many other problems. In this context, he learned how to handle a knife, a machete, and other weapons to earn a place of respect in the neighbourhood. He also took part in robberies and other illegal practices. We learned in a previous section that after Marco earned the respect of other youngsters, he became an oppressor. When other new kids arrived in the neighbourhood, he discriminated against and attacked these children that were arriving due to forced displacement that has affected millions in Colombia. He confesses that he used to attack racialized kids, mainly because they were the most vulnerable.

The Housing Market

These testimonies share experiences of discrimination in the housing market. Basu and Fiedler (2017) explain that the housing market is a frequent space of exclusion. This manifestation of racism is based mainly on negative stereotypes against racialized people. Alba (2017), a Colombian exile in Toronto, explains that renting a living space is a problem for the Latin American community in this city: “*they [landlords] don’t rent to Latin American people supposedly because they are noisy or because it smells when they cook.*” Racist stereotypes can cause a great deal of frustration and disillusion among racialized people trying to find a place to live. After living for one year at the refugee shelter, Pilar (2017) shares that she was finally ready to move to her own space.

I was very happy because finally, I was going to my apartment, at least my space, everything was ready. I only had to give the landlord a cheque, a money order with the first and last month. As soon as he saw me entering the apartment, he said, “no. Why no? Because the apartment is too small, it doesn’t have the conditions for the number of people... But we have been talking about this for two weeks; you were only waiting for the cheque.” And that was the excuse, but it was evident in his face, he didn’t have to say because you’re Latina, he hadn’t realized that I was Latina. It was very obvious that he didn’t like what he saw when he met me in person. The explanation was just an excuse.

There are also experiences where racialized people are constantly reminded of their situation and humiliated after renting a place. Maura (2018), a Colombian IDP, shares her experience when she was displaced to the Coffee Region and found a place to live:

A lot of humiliation, yes. When we arrived, we paid for a room. We had to make space on the side for the kitchen [...] we were used to having our own house. On top of that, we weren't used to hearing that we had to turn off the lights, that we shouldn't wash our clothes every so often. Lots of humiliation regarding that.

She and her family ended up moving to San Isidro, a marginal neighbourhood in Pereira's periphery where many IDPs arrive. Rent is much cheaper in this neighbourhood, although many social problems exist, such as crime and illegal drugs trafficking.

Academic spaces

The testimonies presented in this section speak of different instances of racism in academic spaces such as schools, colleges, and universities. Some of the cases are subtle racial microaggressions practiced by classmates, teachers, professors, and administrative personnel, who reproduced racial stereotypes in ways that diminished racialized students and made them feel insecure in supposedly safe spaces. Other instances are direct racist attacks, including statements questioning racialized students' capacities, behaviours, and racial insults. In some instances, these insults escalate to physical violence and push racialized people to fight against racism with physical force, which invites us to reflect on the importance of how violence is enacted. Some of these instances imply structural racism in academic spaces, for example, in research practices that exploit racialized people, in the curriculum, especially with the predominance of Eurocentric knowledge (Robinson, 2003; Peake, 2011). In many of these cases, racism and classism intersect to oppress racialized working-class people.

Ignacio (2017) narrates that he and his family were exiled from Colombia when he was a kid in the 1980s. He started primary school in Toronto, but at the time, there were not many programs to support students that had Spanish as a first language: *"In those years, there were*

not many immigrants like me, there was no English as a second language program. When I arrived, there was an Ecuadorian girl. She had been here for about two years, spoke English, and was the one orienting me." Ignacio (2017) confesses that he got involved in fights.

Although he did not start those physical confrontations, he was only defending himself.

I had many fights, but I didn't want to start these fights, other kids wanted to fight me [...] I arrived, I was an immigrant, I didn't speak English, and there was this kid who wanted to fight with me. I didn't speak English very well, I don't know if he did it because I was a person of colour or an immigrant, but he wanted to fight with me. I didn't do anything against him.

Ignacio (2017) shares that many of the insults he received were racial slurs,

Many people were coming from India and Pakistan at the time, a very derogatory term was Paki. It was like saying the N-word for Black people. It was a word... even if you weren't, it was very offensive. When other kids wanted to insult me, they called me Paki. I wasn't from South Asia, but I knew what they were saying.

The racism that Colombian refugees in Canada experienced in school accompanies their transition to college and university. Alba (2017) explains that her stepchildren arrived in Canada after she and her husband were better established. Their children had taken most of the school education in Colombia, had very high grades in Colombia and Canada, and were planning to attend university. In their interview with the academic advisor at the high school where they were graduating, Alba (2017) narrates that he asked, "*when are you going to start college?*" She responded, "*What do you mean by college? They want to go to university.*" But he insisted, "*No, they can't go to university. It requires a higher level, special courses; it'd be too heavy, they wouldn't be able.*" Alba (2017) admits that she got mad with the academic advisor at this point because he was not doing well his job and he was being discriminatory towards her kids, "*I told him your job isn't to tell them what they can't do, your job is to accompany them in what they want to do.*" At this point, the academic advisor changed his discourse because he noticed that he was facing someone who knew the system, someone with "*political education,*" as Alba (2017) puts it. She reflects on this situation, "*immigrant youth, not just Latin American, but from racialized countries, of course, are going to receive*

a different treatment. From the beginning, just the colour of your skin, your accent, many other characteristics.”

Soledad (2017), another Colombian refugee in Toronto, reveals that racism permeates other academic spaces. She shares her experience in a Canadian college, *“there is a lot of racism. For example, I have felt it at my college. I had classmates at college that never said hi. They were White and Canadians.”* Racism continues at the university. Lisandro (2018), an Afro-Colombian IDP who has become an anti-racist leader in Pereira, has experienced racism in many spaces. A number of these situations have happened at the university.

The first situation was when I started with a woman from admissions, I asked her for a few clips for some folders, she put her hand into a box, grabbed many clips and threw them to me. She didn't hand them to me; she threw them and said, “ah, Black people, you're used to doing the same.” She mentioned Black people; I went and put a formal complaint (Lisandro, 2018).

For Lisandro, racist events did not happen only with the university administrative personal. These situations also occurred with professors who were working with programs that had an explicit anti-racist component. He narrates: *“Sometimes in the classroom, in the beginning, they made fun of our accent, our way to speak, even a professor did it. He had a problem with us because he implied that we understood slower as if we were stupid, which bothered the rest of the group. They protested.”* Lisandro (2018) argues that

There is a message, an idea, that Indigenous peoples, especially Black people, have arrived to steer troubles. A Black person is a synonym of a problem, slow, stubborn, and negative things. Many Mestiza people connect like this with Black and Indigenous peoples. It's very common, and you experience it with classmates, work colleagues. If people in those spaces have that ideology, do you imagine outside? Several stereotypes contribute to segregation and racism.

Lisandro (2018) recognizes that these racist stereotypes and the racism he experienced at university produced many insecurities in him.

I had a hard time connecting with other people because I thought that I was going to be rejected. When I started the program, I only sat next to another Black student. When working in groups, we didn't look for other people; we waited for them to come because we felt that tension.

In this instance, we see how the colonial present continues to impact racialized bodies and how racialized students are affected by internalized racism.

Marco (2018), a Colombian IDP who won a scholarship to study at a private university, experienced discrimination at the intersection of race and class. He narrates:

That clash was very hard because everybody had money. The first months I studied, I didn't have the resources to bring or buy food. I ate guavas from the trees with water. I suffered discrimination from classmates because they didn't want me there. They thought that I was an embarrassment for the university, a poor person that can't hide his poverty.

Marco has shared in previous testimonies that he grew up in a very violent context; he had to learn to exercise violence to survive in that space. By the time that he entered university, he had changed many of those violent and criminal behaviours, but still knew how to defend himself, and the racist and classist attacks that he received at university did not remain unpunished. Marco (2018) shares: *"I had a few fights with other students, I pricked one with a knife, I pierced another one with a sharp pencil. The first days I bowed down because it was a new context. I didn't know these people, and I was scared too."*

Lisandro argues that racism in academic spaces goes beyond the everyday life microaggressions that interviewees have shared. Racism in academic spaces is directly connected to epistemological racism. Lisandro highlights that the academy is racist towards Indigenous and Afrocolombians because it sees them as inferior. Structural racism is complemented by epistemological racism. Lisandro (2018) states: *"in the education structure, the classroom, the school, the professors teach using Eurocentric ideas and excludes content that relates to the values and the identity of Indigenous and Black people."* The academy ignores knowledge produced by these communities. Consequently, Indigenous and Afrocolombian cultures and individuals are devalued. They cannot legitimize their values, which affects their construction as subjects. Lisandro (2018) continues:

You aren't taught to love your culture, to appropriate your values because it is in the books, it is what professors teach [...] the black girl doesn't braid but straighten her hair.

There is a loss of cultural value there because braids are synonym of resistance, of identity, they have symbolic meaning in black culture.

Lisandro explains that racism comes from different places and targets much more than the skin of the individual. It devalues the way people speak, their accent, their cultural practices. Lisandro (2018) concludes that “*the state structure, but also the academy, have contributed to devalue, to annihilate, to despise, the values of our culture.*” This subject is of particular interest to Lisandro. Motivated by these encounters with racism, he has become an Afrocolombian leader, community organizer, and anti-racist activist. He works with the organization *Palenque de Egoya*, which seeks to empower Afrocolombian people and culture.

During fieldwork, I came across a situation that exemplifies epistemological racism. One of the IDPs interviewed, Leonardo (2018), is from the municipality of Quinchía in the Coffee Region. Quinchía is the municipality that has produced more IDPs in Risaralda. A research group from *Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira* researched historical memory in this space. While visiting the municipality and conducting the interview with Leonardo (2018), a community organizer and representative of the armed conflict victims, he complained that he had not received copies of the product of this research, even though he collaborated actively with the research group. This dynamic is an example of epistemological racism because it takes knowledge from a racialized group, uses individuals from this group in the knowledge production process, but it does not give them a central role in the final product. It alienates them from their knowledge and uses it to benefit the normative and privileged group, in this case, White and urban *Mestiza* bodies who are already well-established academics or students seeking to advance their careers.

Activist Spaces and Exploitation of Refugees

These testimonies speak of racism in spaces expected to be safe for racialized people, such as union and activist spaces. Ignacio (2017), a Colombian exiled in Toronto, shares his

work with the union. He had to present a report representing people of colour, Indigenous, gays, and lesbian members of the union at the annual human rights conference. Ignacio (2017) explains that he was cut during his presentation of the report by the leaders of the union:

They cut me off, I got mad, but of course, they weren't going to tell the truth; they make it about the time. Nobody in the union is going to say it because they have policies against discrimination. They don't say, "you are a racialized man, and you're talking too much." They know that you're a threat because, at some point, you could take their position. The problem is that you want to participate in this space, and you have to push hard to be part.

Here we see a similar dynamic when Simón (2017) was describing the difficulties that racialized bodies face when climbing the work ladder to improve their income and status and the different strategies that normative bodies in power use to keep their privileges. Ignacio (2017) continues sharing his experience of racism and discrimination in union and activist spaces. He often felt resistance from White, lesbian and trans-women:

I think it is the intersection between masculine identity and being a person of colour. They aren't going to assume that I, a straight racialized man, am going to be conscious about the complexities of sexual orientation, they don't assume that I support the rights of trans people, they don't assume that I'm not homophobic. Why don't they assume that? Because they have their prejudices about how I'm, they see me in a certain way. These prejudices put you in a box. You're not the ally that they expect (Ignacio, 2017).

This dynamic is a very familiar scenario for me since I also took part in these spaces at different moments and was subjected to similar microaggressions. This discussion is a very complex subject because it sits at the intersection of many oppressions and stereotypes. Ignacio, as a cis *Latino* man, is perceived under the stereotype of the *macho Latino*, in spite that he is an activist and supports feminist and LGBTQ struggles.

A different racial dynamic experienced in activist spaces is exploiting refugeness. This oppression is not about exploiting refugees' labour. It is about organizations, institutions, and individuals exploiting the refugee status of individuals they support for political purposes. Soledad (2017), a Colombian refugee in Toronto, feels that she was used when she arrived in Toronto as a refugee:

A Nicaraguan friend told me once, be careful Sole, here unionists love to use refugees during the first days; they carry you like a monkey for the picture shots. After they squeeze you, they throw you away when they have taken all the pictures they need. Two years after I realized that he was right [...] I later concluded that many people make a living in the solidarity industry. I mean, solidarity work is a business.

Soledad (2017) continues to explain how unions exploit refugees,

They took me to many gatherings, and they asked me to speak of my personal case. I said my personal case, but my case is nothing compared to what people live in Colombia. They wanted to hear, “yes, it affected me deeply, and I ran and cried.” I said I’m not a poor little woman. They wanted drama. It’s because they see us dumb and poor.

This subject is a very polemic discussion because though unions and activist organizations are deemed to support refugees in significant ways, some of these organizations also exploit refugees for political purposes. This dynamic is a complex intersection of forced displacement, exploitation, and racism. In addition to the feeling of exploitation, Soledad (2017) shares a couple of situations where she felt discriminated by the organizations that were accompanying her when she arrived in Toronto as a refugee: *“the Union members were very nice, but they commented, you’re so young and with all those children, and you’re a woman unionist!”* Soledad (2017) explains that the racism that she experienced sometimes took the form of a cultural clash: *“they provided many things for us, but they didn’t realize that there are cultural differences [...] I’m only assimilating this now, it was challenging to accept second-hand clothing. In the union, they thought that they were doing the best.”* Soledad (2017) concludes by analyzing the complex relationship that she had with the union that supported her. She notices that union members in North America are not necessarily leftist. They are more focused on gaining individual and collective economic benefits, while Colombian unions are, in her experience, more political, more critical of the system, more radical. Soledad (2017) concludes with a statement that attests to her complex relationship with the union that welcomed her: *“I’ll be grateful all my life to the Canadian Labour Congress, because they saved my life, but they failed to understand our culture, they failed to understand that we don’t like drama.”* Soledad’s (2017) testimony reveals that white

supremacy manifests in cultural assumptions and practices that are not overtly racist, such as ideas about pregnancy, second-hand clothing, social priorities, among others, but that become damaging when imposed over racialized bodies disregarding their cultural practices and contexts.

Gender Inequality

These testimonies are related to gender dynamics that intersect with forced displacement and racism. Most of these testimonies speak of how the experience of forced displacement has put women in spaces where gender dynamics are somehow different and how they understand these changes. Other testimonies speak of how forced displacement has thrown women into situations that make them more vulnerable to sexism and violence.

Damaris' (2018) life story took a radical change after her father was killed. Her family did not move immediately after his death. Damaris' mother met another man and moved with him, but according to Damaris (2018), life with this man was hell for all of them. He beat her mother, did not allow her to use contraceptive methods, was abusive and stingy with Damaris' family. She recalls that they were saved by kind neighbours who provided them with the essentials her stepfather was not giving them, including contraceptive pills that her mother had to take in secret. They finally escaped to Pereira, where an aunt received them. Damaris' mother got together with another man who was even more abusive than the previous one. The situation was unbearable, Damaris (2018) recalls, *“we couldn't play, we were hungry all the time, and he beat us constantly. That was our life until the three of us decided voluntarily to go to an orphanage because we were tired of so much abuse and humiliation”*. Damaris and her siblings spent two years at the orphanage, plus another year under the custody of her grandparents. They returned to her mother's house after this period. Damaris (2018) explains that they were capable and experienced at this time so *“when we went back to our house we were stronger, we weren't going to take more abuse, if he raised his hands, we too, because*

we were fed up. In the end, he had to leave our house.” It is difficult to point to one single dynamic that caused Damaris’ suffering, but it is clear that if her father had not been killed in the context of the armed conflict, they would not have been forced to leave their house, and her mother would not have involved with abusive men who made their lives even more difficult.

Pilar (2017), a Colombian refugee in Toronto, shares her reflection about how gender and race intersected when working in Colombia before she was forcibly displaced to Canada.

I was a lawyer, head of a department in my work, with economic resources, but I was also the only woman among many men, and I wasn’t called doctor, even though I was a specialized lawyer, I was called Florecita [Little Flower], Mami, or Reina [Queen]. I was constantly told in many spaces that the only thing that I needed to be Black was the skin colour because of my features. But this was said as an insult, as a way to say you’re ugly, not adequate, and don’t have the beauty standards. I also had to make sure that I didn’t wear short skirts when I was going to some meetings because I knew it would be more complicated to be in that space with a short skirt.

Public officials and professionals are called “doctors” in Colombia, even if they do not have a doctorate degree. The fact that Pilar was not called “doctor” in her office, while her colleagues were given this informal title, is a manifestation of sexism.

Leandro (2017), a Colombian refugee in Toronto, reflects on how gender dynamics are different in Canada than in Colombia. These differences have forced him to reflect on his gender ideology. As Leandro (2017) shares:

My first boss here was a Filipino woman. She was very small, and I never had a female boss in my life. I was working in construction for the first time, and there was this woman boss managing about nine men. I saw that woman climbing in the site, driving a big truck; all this world was new for me. I found that women here do jobs that they don’t do in Colombia. Women drive buses, lots of them, a woman who was my boss in construction. It is beautiful, but it’s also challenging for you to get used to that.

On the other hand, Soledad (2017), a Colombian refugee in Toronto, clarifies that gender dynamics are not perfect in Canada, “*women earn less money than men. For example, Bell Canada has been trying for 20 years to make all workers earn the same, but men earn more*

than women.” Salary inequities are persistent and this is something migrant women are inevitably confronted to.

Conclusion

This chapter addresses the experiences of racism of Colombian IDPs and Venezuelan migrants in Colombia’s Coffee Region and Colombian refugees in Toronto. It used a methodology that combined the testimonies of interviewees, notes from field diary, and analysis drawing from theoretical insights on race, class and gender. The testimonies used in this chapter were selected from 25 interviews conducted with these populations. The analysis tries to grasp the complexity of racism. The themes that have emerged from the testimonies in connection with racism are complex, whereby some of the most interesting findings relate to tropicality, as evident in Colombia’s geographical racism. This concept explicates how Colombia presents a particular racial ideology that relates to the geography of the country. Tropicality is a crucial aspect of Colombia’s racial ideology that the Colombian diaspora has carried to other nations, as Colombians refugees in Toronto have attested, reproducing exclusion and discrimination in these new spaces.

Another critical discussion that has surfaced in this chapter is the relationship between structural and everyday racism. The testimonies and the categorization advanced in this chapter illustrate how difficult it is to separate these two forms of racism. They are complementary and reinforce racial ideology in different spaces, through the legal system, the workplace and labour issues, the housing market, even in spaces that should be safe, such as the academy and activist spaces. A third relevant dynamic that has emerged in the testimonies analysis is the relation between race and class. These two categories are profoundly entangled and make the lives of racialized working-class people difficult in many ways. Racism affects the materiality of racialized people by contaminating all spaces related to work. In some

cases, racism becomes the main obstacle to employment mobility and must conform to low income and low-status positions.

The main conclusion of this chapter is that we must understand racism as a dialectic relation between those oppressed by racism and those who benefit from it. The internalization of racism provokes the loss of confidence of the people targeted by racism; it translates as an internalization of the racial inferiority of racialized bodies that feeds white supremacy. In turn, it increases the power of those who benefit from racism, the oppressors or racists, because it builds and reproduces a hierarchy that puts them on the top. This chapter reveals how this dynamic operates in all social spaces. It works to the detriment of racialized bodies and benefits normative bodies at work, school, university, unions, NGOs. It permeates everyday life, the space where we live and move, the institutions that regulate our social reality, including the legal system and migratory regime. This dialectic dynamic is not always a conscious decision. It is the logical consequence of white supremacy as a racial ideology normalized and reproduced by individuals via structural and everyday racism. The main advantage of conducting transnational comparative research about racialization processes with three different populations in two different places is that it reveals white supremacy as a racial ideology with roots in the colonial past and consequences in the postcolonial present, and how it operates similarly at the global scale despite the development of local racial ideologies.

9. CONCLUSION

Los Nadies

Sueñan las pulgas con comprarse un perro y sueñan los nadies con salir de pobres, que algún mágico día llueva de pronto la buena suerte, que llueva a cántaros la buena suerte; pero la buena suerte no llueve ayer, ni hoy, ni mañana, ni nunca, ni en llovizna cae del cielo la buena suerte, por mucho que los nadies la llamen y aunque les pique la mano izquierda, o se levanten con el pie derecho, o empiecen el año cambiando de escoba.

Los nadies: los hijos de nadie, los dueños de nada. Los nadies: los ningunos, los ninguneados, corriendo la liebre, muriendo la vida, jodidos, rejodidos.

Que no son, aunque sean.

Que no hablan idiomas, sino dialectos.

Que no profesan religiones, sino supersticiones.

Que no hacen arte, sino artesanías.

Que no practican cultura, sino folklore.

Que no son seres humanos, sino recursos humanos.

Que no tienen cara, sino brazos.

Que no tienen nombre, sino número.

Que no figuran en la historia universal, sino en la crónica roja de la prensa local.

Los nadies, que cuestan menos que la bala que los mata.

Galeano, 1989

The Nobodies

Fleas dream of buying themselves a dog, and nobodies dream of escaping poverty: that one magical day good luck will suddenly rain down on them—will rain down in buckets. But good luck doesn't rain down yesterday, today, tomorrow, or ever. Good luck doesn't even fall in a fine drizzle, no matter how hard the nobodies summon it, even if their left hand is tickling, or if they begin the new day with their right foot, or start the new year with a change of brooms.

The nobodies: nobody's children, owners of nothing. The nobodies: the no ones, the nobodied, running like rabbits, dying through life, screwed every which way.

Who are not, but could be.

Who don't speak languages, but dialects.

Who don't have religions, but superstitions.

Who don't create art, but handicrafts.

Who don't have culture, but folklore.

Who are not human beings, but human resources.

Who do not have faces, but arms.

Who do not have names, but numbers.

Who do not appear in the history of the world, but in the police blotter of the local paper.

The nobodies, who are not worth the bullet that kills them.

Galeano, 2011.

A series of questions inform this research on the relation between forced displacement and racialization. These questions are: what are the reasons that propel internally displaced persons (IDPs), Colombian refugees, and Venezuelan migrants to leave their homes? What are the ideologies of racism and the mechanisms and practices that facilitate the processes of racialization that affect IDPs and Venezuelan migrants in Colombia and Colombian refugees in Canada? What are the experiences of racism where IDPs, Colombian refugees, and Venezuelan migrants arrive? How do IDPs, Colombian refugees, and Venezuelan migrants relate to the peace processes in Colombia? What is the role of antiracist work in these peace initiatives? This comparative research uses a combination of qualitative methodologies, including in-depth semi-structured interviews, participant observation, field diary, and policy and document review. 25 Colombian IDPs, Venezuelan migrants, and Colombian refugees were interviewed for this research between 2017 and 2018 in Colombia's Coffee Region and Toronto, Canada.

Summaries

Chapter 3 traces the origins of coloniality to modernity in the fifteenth century, including the origin of racism. Europe's early exploration of the world, the encounter with different peoples, their conquest and colonization, and the emergence of capitalism and modernity are critical historical events in the origin of racism. Europe's colonization of much of the world imposed white supremacy as the global racial ideology. This ideology of racism organized the societies that were colonized on racial terms, dividing the resources among the different racial groups, privileging the interests of White bodies, and oppressing and excluding racialized bodies. Two key concepts in this process are racialization and racial formation, the active processes that create the racial groups of white supremacy's hierarchy, dictating what humans are considered superior and inferior. White supremacy was not limited to biological arguments, represented mainly in

skin colour and physical characteristics, to determine the superiority and inferiority of humans. White supremacy also used culture, religion, ethnicity, and language, among other characteristics, in processes of racialization and racial formation. White supremacy and colonization established the racial superiority of European descendants and created binaries such as Whites/racialized, colonizers/colonized, and possessors/ dispossessed; dividing the world between the zone of being and the zone of non-being, between those whose humanity was recognized and those whose humanity was not respected. The racial ideology of white supremacy and colonization were not limited to the appropriation of territories and resources. To secure the reproduction of white supremacy's world order, it used internalized racism to colonize the minds of the peoples that it encountered and deemed inferior.

Chapter 4 explains the origin of the Colombian social and armed conflict from the 1940s, although it focuses on its development after the 1980s because during this decade the number of people forcibly displaced from their land increased dramatically. The 1980s brought new actors and dynamics to the conflict, including the emergence of drug cartels and paramilitary groups, while subversive groups became more powerful and expanded their territorial control. Overall, the Colombian state lost power and legitimacy after this decade. During this time of turmoil, the main actors of the armed conflict were the Colombian government, including its Armed Forces, the subversive groups (FARC, ELN, EPL, M-19), the drug cartels, paramilitary groups, and the US government. This research has highlighted the protagonist role of drug production and trafficking in the Colombian social and armed conflict considering it involves each armed actor in the conflict. US imperialism is particularly important in this discussion, its War on Drugs goal is officially to end the illegal drug business, but its actual objective is to advance a two-fold strategy. On the one hand, it affirms US geopolitical interests to Colombia's detriment as a nation. The repercussions of this dynamic are particularly felt by Afrocolombians, Indigenous

peoples, and *Mestiza campesinas*, who are displaced from their valuable territories. On the other hand, the War on Drugs manages a surplus racialized population within the US while feeding the industrial prison complex. This two-fold strategy targets racialized groups in both nations. Even though legalization and regulation are the most viable solution to the “drug problem,” the ruling class in Colombia does not even contemplate this option. The US would not allow it, and Colombia’s neocolonial status makes it unrealistic to think about this alternative. This reality is an obstacle to any peace process in Colombia. As long as drug production and trafficking are illegal, the immense amount of money involved in this business will continue corrupting Colombian society, including the Colombian government, the political and economic elites, the armed forces, subversive and paramilitary groups, and ordinary Colombians.

Chapter 5 argues that forced displacement results from the social and armed conflict and it is a development strategy. More than 8 million Afrocolombians, Indigenous peoples, and *Mestiza campesinas* have become IDPs, while close to one million Colombians have been forced into exile. The armed actors that cause forced displacement include subversive groups, paramilitary groups, the state and its armed forces, and those involved in the War on Drugs. Nearly 90% of IDPs originate from rural spaces. They have been dispossessed of 8 million hectares of land, which has been claimed by *latifundistas*. Forced displacement has caused Colombia’s de-peasantization and destroyed national food security, resulting in more than 2.5 million job losses in rural spaces. Colombia’s forced displacement can be understood as a development strategy whereby three processes coalesce causing forced displacement, a counter-agrarian reform, and the imposition of neoliberalism as the national economic system. These three events have caused damaging redistribution of wealth from the bottom to the top. On the one hand, a small elite of latifundistas, agro-industrialists, mining companies, regional and national political clans, urban land speculators, and developers have increased their wealth. On the other hand, millions of

Afrocolombians, Indigenous peoples, and *Mestiza campesinas* have been dispossessed of their land. Forced displacement represents the continuation of colonial dynamics that dehumanize racialized communities, as expressed through the discourse of tropicality, whereby the nation exclusion is polarized between racialized spaces considered to belong to the “zone of non-being” and normative spaces or “zones of being”.

Chapter 6 explores the causes of the Venezuelan massive migration during the last decade. The discussion about Venezuela’s migration has become a polarizing subject from the perspective of opponents and proponents of the Bolivarian Revolution, represented in binaries such as progressive/conservative politics, socialist/neoliberal, and anti-imperialist/neocolonialist debates, which are the result of Latin America’s complex history, marked by colonialism and imperialism. This debate loses context and depth when it centers exclusively on the difficulties experienced in everyday life, without a historical or geopolitical concern, which is the predominant view in corporate media and popular discussions. This research analyzes these events theoretically through postcolonial geographies, critical geographies of race, and history. These theoretical foundations support the self-determination of nations in the global South against the global North’s imperialism and neocolonialism. The complexities of this analysis require contrasting theoretical perspectives with the arguments of authors that are critical of the Bolivarian revolution and including the testimonies of Venezuelan migrants who blame their government for the forced migration crisis. This research argues that the social, political, and economic crisis that currently affects Venezuela was subsequently caused by four main events: the USA economic embargo against Venezuela, an internal economic coup, fluctuations in the price of oil, and national economic policy. Emerging out of these constraints, the testimonies of Venezuelan migrants identified corruption, the economic crisis, difficulties of everyday life, the

health crisis, violence, and government ideology as the most important reasons they felt forced to migrate.

Chapter 7 examines the experience of Colombians in Toronto and explores the causes why Colombians refugees were forced to abandon Colombia and seek asylum in Canada. Colombia is the Latin American nation with the most refugees in Canada and more migrants in Toronto. Colombia is one of Canada's leading sources of refugees because the social and armed conflict has produced many IDPs and refugees, which led the Canadian government to prioritize asylum applications from Colombians between 1997 and 2004. The arrival of Colombian refugees to Canada declined after the creation of the Third Safe Country Agreement in 2004, which did not allow refugees to claim asylum from the United States. According to interviewees' testimonies, this route was common among Colombian refugees. Colombian refugees are included in the fifth wave of Latin American migration to Toronto, which consists mainly of economic migrants. Colombian refugees face very different circumstances than other waves of Latin American refugees in the 1970s and 1980s, they have been affected by the collapse of the welfare state, the consolidation of neoliberalism, and the predominance of the Canadian point system in Latin American migration. Interviewees explain that economic migrants and refugees have very different characteristics, the overall consequence of these differences is that Colombian economic migrants are more successful in integrating into the receiving society. However, they appear more individualistic in solving the challenges presented during the migration process and do not tend to participate actively in the Colombian transnational movement.

Reflection

This section merges Chapter 8, which deals with IDPs, Colombian refugees and Venezuelan migrants' experiences of racism in the urban spaces they have arrived, with general reflections that have emerged from this dissertation as a whole.

This research has shown that in the last two peace processes advanced between the Colombian government and illegal armed groups, either subversive or paramilitary groups, a significant number of members of these groups have remained in arms to maintain a share in the drug trade. This research argues that the best solution to the social and armed conflict is a peace process led by grassroots initiatives. Even though this implies a local solution, it will need coordination and support at the local, national, and international scale to succeed. Ending the War on Drugs is crucial to achieving peace in Colombia. As long as the War on Drugs is in place, the armed conflict will continue, and forced displacement will be a constant dynamic that affects Afrocolombians, Indigenous peoples, and *Mestiza campesinas*.

This research encountered similarities and differences among IDPs, Colombian refugees, and Venezuelan migrants. The most significant affinity is that the three groups were forcibly displaced, while the most relevant distinction is the scale of the displacement – IDPs are displaced at the national scale, while Venezuelan migrants and Colombian refugees are displaced at the international scale. This research found that IDP and Refugee status are not exclusionary categories; some Colombian refugees were IDPs before seeking asylum in Canada. This connection between IDPs and refugees relates to another research finding. There is a strategic difference between ordinary IDPs and community leader-IDPs. This last group shares many characteristics with Colombian refugees in Canada, the most critical similitude is their political culture. This characteristic emerged in the findings of antiracist activism and the Colombian

transnational movement, particularly concerning the last peace process advanced between the Colombian government and the subversive group FARC. In general, the testimonies of IDPs and Venezuelan migrants revealed that they were not very involved in supporting the peace process and organizing for racial justice in Colombia. On the other hand, the testimonies of Colombian refugees in Toronto and IDP-leaders, or those involved in community organizing, revealed their active participation in the peace process, and some of them in antiracist initiatives.

The political culture of Colombian refugees has developed a particular transnational movement in Toronto and Canada. While there is a negative stigma that indicates that Colombians present a “reactive identity” concerning social justice and transnational solidarity movements, a more thorough analysis reveals that Colombians’ political culture has been influenced by the complexities of the conflict, the weakness of political parties, the existence of drug cartels, distrust among Colombians, and incertitude about the end of the conflict. Colombian refugees’ role in developing the Colombian transnational movement is fundamental because their experience and political culture can shape this movement to influence Colombian migrants, and the Canadian society and its government to support the peace process in Colombia. They can offer their experience to transform the social reality of Colombia in the function of social justice and the end of the armed conflict, and it can question the role of the Colombian diaspora in Canada’s settler-colonial project.

Colonization is a concept that must be understood in the plural. Latin America and North America experienced different processes of colonization. Although both world regions were colonized by Europe and imposed white supremacy, each region developed a particular form of this ideology. Canada and North America developed as settler-colonial societies where white supremacy used “science “and “biology” to impose the racial ideology. In North America’s biological white supremacy, culture is viewed as part of a body’s DNA, not something that is

socially learned. Therefore culture and race cannot be separated. The racial ideology of North America welcomes White bodies from European nations and other settler-colonial societies. Initially, it made a racial distinction with European settlers from non-Anglo-Saxon nations but eventually integrated them into whiteness. On the other hand, Colombia and Latin America developed as middle-ground societies where white supremacy used the fluidity of mestizaje to impose its racial ideology. In Latin America's middle-ground societies, Africans, Europeans, and Indigenous were in constant contact. This situation presented Latin America's racial ideology with a dilemma. On the one hand, it needed the labour of Africans and Indigenous peoples because contrary to North American societies, it did not count on the constant arrival of European settlers to supply the labour force needed along with racialized bodies. On the other hand, these three groups' social coexistence and constant mix challenged white supremacy. Mestizaje racial ideology responded by creating the *casta* system, a racial hierarchy that put European White bodies on the highest of the scale, while racialized African and Indigenous bodies were at the bottom, and all the racial categories that resulted from the mingling of these three groups were racialized differently and located somewhere in between.

Latin American revolutions created new nations and became independent from Spain but did not transform the racial hierarchy that mestizaje racial ideology imposed with the *casta* system. They reaffirmed White bodies' (Europeans and *Criollos*) racial superiority and privileges and reinforced the racial inferiority and exclusion of Afrodescendants and Indigenous peoples. Mestizas occupy a place in between, and this study has shown that there are significant differences between urban *Mestizas* and *Mestiza campesinas*. Mestizaje today presents the fluidity of its colonial origin, but this constant trespassing of racial borders does not dismantle racism. On the contrary, it reinforces white supremacy because Mestizas seek entrance into whiteness' privileges and inclusion.

What are the disenfranchised experiences of racism in the places where IDPs, Colombian refugees, and Venezuelan Migrants arrive? Is found mainly in the analysis advanced in chapter 8, which is based on the interviewees' testimonies and tries to grasp the complexity of racism. This comparative study with three different populations reveals the depth of white supremacy as a racial ideology at different scales: local (Pereira and the Coffee Region, and Toronto), national (Colombia and Canada), and regional and global (Latin America and North America). The roots of white supremacy and its regional versions, biological white supremacy and *mestizaje*, are in the colonial past, but they still have consequences in the present. Chapter 8 offers four critical findings: first, racism must be understood as a dialectical relation between those oppressed by racism and those who benefit from it. The internalization of racism provokes the loss of confidence of the people targeted by racism, increasing the power of those who benefit from racism. This dialectical relation builds and reproduces a hierarchy that puts normative bodies on the top and operates in all social spaces. This dialectical relation is not always a conscious decision. It is the logical consequence of white supremacy as a racial ideology normalized and reproduced by individuals via structural and everyday racism.

Second, interviewees' testimonies reveal the complex interactions between structural and everyday racism. These categories of racism are very difficult to separate within the experiences of racialized bodies. Structural racism and everyday racism complement and reinforce racial ideology in different spaces. Third, race and class are deeply entangled categories. This research proves how racism affects the materiality of working-class racialized bodies. Fourth, the concept of tropicity appears as a crucial development of Colombia's *mestizaje* racial ideology that is not confined to this Latin American nation. Colombian refugees' testimonies evidence how the Colombian diaspora has carried the discourse of tropicity to Toronto, reproducing the exclusion and discrimination caused by internalized racism in these new spaces.

Contributions

This research contributes to critical geographies of race, postcolonial geographies, and urban geography by reinforcing the argument that race is a fluid and dynamic category and that space plays an important role in processes of racialization. This research explores the relation between movement -forced displacement, space -spaces of origin and spaces of arrival, and the role that the dynamic between movement and space plays in processes of racialization. The relation between spaces of origin and spaces of arrival is in many cases a dialectic relation between rural and urban spaces, this affirmation is true for all IDPs interviewed. Additionally, all Colombian refugees and Venezuelan migrants that participated in this research arrived in urban spaces. This research contributes to theoretical debates in urban geography by paying attention to structural injustices that affect Colombian IDPs and refugees, and Venezuelan migrants. Urban dynamics that stand at the intersection between economic, social, and spatial exclusion with race. The theoretical reflection on the concept of tropicality emerges as an important contribution of this research, explaining that racialization and racial formation, on the one hand, and geographical space, on the other hand, have a dialectical relation, and how forced displacement from rural spaces to urban spaces is a movement from racialized spaces to normative spaces.

This research questions a faulty assumption about race and ethnicity in Colombia, which results from Indigenous nations and Afrocolombian communities' categorization as ethnic groups. This categorization conflates ethnicity and race, which produces a limited understanding of racism because it assumes that only ethnic groups can be subjected to racism. This research challenges this assumption demonstrating that individuals that are not part of an ethnic group are racialized when they are forcibly displaced to the cities. Once more, the concept of tropicality is useful to understand how *Mestiza campesinas* are racialized in Colombia's racial ideology. On

the international scale, this research has established that Venezuelan migrants are subjected to racism in Colombia. Colombian refugees are also racialized in Toronto, independently of the racial category that they are classified in Colombia, they are outside whiteness or the normative body in Canada. In consequence, they are classified as the Other that can be subjected to racism in the receiving society. The perception of race as limited to ethnic groups is ineffective to analyze the interaction between racialization and forced displacement because non-Indigenous and non-Afrocolombians can be racialized through socio-spatial dynamics such as accumulation by dispossession and dislocation.

This research contributes to theoretical debates about local and transnational activism by examining the impact of the Colombian social and armed conflict at the national and international scales and refugees' transnational dynamics that connect Canada, Colombia, and Venezuela. This research follows the national and transnational trajectories of the people most affected by the social and armed conflict in Colombia -internally displaced persons and Colombian refugees. The outcomes of this research offer insights into how they see the social and armed conflict and the actions that they have taken, particularly refugees organizing and transnational solidarity work, to support the peace initiatives advanced between the Colombian government and the subversive group FARC. The following paragraphs expand on how each one of the groups that participated in this research relates to peace and antiracist initiatives.

Venezuelan migrants in Colombia, at the time of this research, were less likely to be involved in organizing for peace and antiracism. Interviewees did not have much to say about the peace process between the Colombian government and FARC. This might be because they are not Colombian, they do not see it as a priority, they have not experienced the social and armed conflict, and they have more urgent material needs. Concerning activism and organizing, none of the Venezuelan interviewees manifested to be part of an organization that does some sort of

activism, but at least four of them were active in the Jehovah's Witness church and declared that this religious organization has been very welcoming and supportive of them as migrants, providing material help and emotional support. Most of them also affirmed to be part of social network groups that share useful information about legal status, professional certification, and access to health and work, among other important issues for Venezuelans in Colombia. All of them shared instances where they have been subjected to different kinds of racist aggressions, but only a few of them affirm having confronted these situations, mainly by talking with the person who is oppressing them and explaining what is wrong with their racist ideas. In general, Venezuelan migrants in Colombia seem to have a lot in common with Colombian economic migrants in Canada in the sense that they, responding to the challenges of a neoliberal context, have a more individualistic approach to the migration venture and the solution to the problems that they faced.

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) present different levels of organizing for social justice, backing the peace process, and advancing antiracist initiatives. Five of the eight IDPs interviewed are part of an organization that participates in community work. Support for the peace process is not unanimous. Some IDPs think that they deserve more economic aid from the government and feel aggrieved by the fact that guerrilla ex-members received more economic benefits after the demobilization process than IDPs have received after forced displacement. This point was a common source of tension for many IDPs interviewed. There are mixed opinions about the future of the territories they were displaced from after the signing of the peace agreement, but while none of them declared that the situation has worsened, a few of them shared that it has improved and that they feel hopeful about a future in peace. Some of them even observed the possibility of returning. IDPs that are active in community organizing affirmed that they have obtained multiple benefits. They have benefited from economic projects that they framed as part of a

“solidarity economy”. These projects have an important gender component that has allowed women to train, work, and earn an income. There are also education projects for children, which have provided free high-quality programs in music, dancing, theatre, painting, and English, among others, that they could not have afforded otherwise. These programs break class exclusions, some children that participate in these programs have even won local and regional prizes (music, dancing, and theatre) competing with children from expensive private schools. In general, IDPs participating in community projects see it as a form of community healing. We could understand these initiatives as part of a grounded peace process that emerges within the communities most affected by the social and armed conflict. The Colombian government could incorporate support for similar community processes as part of prospective peace processes with the remaining armed actors of the conflict.

IDPs are the group that shared fewer instances of racism and, not surprisingly, are not very involved in antiracist initiatives. This might be because IDPs are the only group that does not leave their nation, Colombia, and therefore are not subjected to everyday manifestations of racism such as xenophobia and racism based on the accent, as is the case of Venezuelan migrants in Colombia and Colombian refugees in Canada. It also could be because of the eight IDPs that participated in the research, only one identified as Afrocolombian and another as Indigenous, and the rest identified as *Mestiza campesinas*. The last group can be subjected to racism, but it is also easier for them to pass for urban mestizas and be included in the bodyscape of the nation once they are in urban spaces. In general, IDPs face some very basic material needs after having lost everything due to forced displacement and dispossession. This situation puts material issues to the forefront, and this might be another reason why they are not very active in the peace process and antiracist initiatives. However, there were some exceptions in the IDP group. Some of them narrated instances where they experienced racism and discrimination. Some of their reactions

against racism include internalized racism, development of insecurity, and violence against racist aggressors. Lisandro (2018), the Afrocolombian IDP interviewed, is very active in antiracist struggles, he and his organization have been more systematic in dealing with racism, they have organized education campaigns, critical race cine forums, and started formal processes against individuals and companies that have done racist actions, including demands, public actions, and social sanctions against them. In some of these instances, they have counted on the support and solidarity of bodies who identified as White *Criollas* and urban *Mestizas*, groups that historically have received racial privilege or have not experienced racism in Colombia. The work of IDP leaders in antiracist initiatives and community organizing reinforces the argument that IDP leaders and Colombian refugees share a strong political culture.

Colombian refugees interviewed in Toronto are the most active group concerning peace initiatives and antiracist struggles. All Colombian refugees interviewed for this research supported the peace process and took some action to convince Colombian migrants to support it. It was in this context that surfaced the differences between economic migrants and refugees during interviews, evidencing the last group's strong political culture and efforts to convince Colombian economic migrants to support the peace process. The actions advanced by Colombian refugees to back the peace process included daily conversations, education campaigns, art installations, documentary production, and transnational activism. Concerning antiracist initiatives, all Colombian refugees interviewed shared that they have somehow been subjected to racism in Canada. Their forced displacement implies a movement from the global South to the global North, causing a racialization process where they become the Other or the Stranger in the receiving society. However, in many cases, their political culture has provided Colombian refugees with a better understanding of racism and the actions that they can take against it. Some of the reactions identified by Colombian refugees in front of racism include internalizing racism

and developing insecurities, denying their experiences as bodies subjected to racism and trying to integrate into whiteness, developing a critical analysis of racism and racial consciousness, practicing social sanctions against racist individuals, advancing collective actions and antiracist work in social organizations and educational institutions, and in some extreme cases, reacting with violence against racist individuals. Another reaction to racism sparks from a critical analysis of structural racism and white supremacy. Colombian refugees recognize the importance of having legal status and achieving professional certification as ways to minimize the impacts of structural racism.

I want to conclude by connecting some events that bring together antiracism and peace work in Colombia today. Colombia held its last presidential elections on June 19th, 2022. For the first time, a leftist party won the presidential elections in a nation that historically has had right-wing governments. The elected president is Gustavo Francisco Petro Urrego, who has been actively involved in the peace process. He was a member of the subversive group Movimiento 19 de Abril (M-19, April 19th Movement) in the 1980s, participated in a peace process in 1989, and since then has dedicated his life to fighting for social and economic justice within the democratic framework. The elected vice-president is Francia Elena Márquez Mina, a woman that wears many hats and who sits at the intersection of multiple oppressions: she is a woman and a single mother, she is Black, and she is an IDP. She is also a feminist, an antiracist leader (member of *Proceso de las Comunidades Negras* -PCN, Black Communities' Process), a community organizer, a human rights defender, an activist against resource extraction in racialized communities, an environmentalist (she was the recipient of the Goldman Environmental Price in 2018), and a lawyer. Francia Márquez was subjected to many racist attacks during the presidential election, but these attacks did not diminish her, she used them as an opportunity to start public discussions about racism in Colombia. Both Márquez and Petro embrace the struggle

for peace and antiracism in Colombia. This concluding chapter started with the poem *Los Nadies* (Galeano, 1989). This poem became popular during Petro-Márquez's campaign, as they constantly reminded Colombians that they were struggling for the *nadies* of the nation (the nobodies).

On June 28th, 2022, The *Comisión de la Verdad* (*Comisión para el Esclarecimiento de la Verdad, la Convivencia y la No repetición* -CEV, Commission for Truth Clarification, Coexistence, and No Repetition) presented its final report (2022). During the presentation of the report, Father Francisco de Roux (2022) emphasized the historical debt that the Colombian government has to Afrocolombians, Indigenous peoples, and *Mestiza campesinas*, and to the racialized territories of tropicality. de Roux (2022) called for the healing of the physical and symbolic dismembered body of the nation in a mournful discourse that I am not going to reproduce here because some excerpts are too violent -it could not be otherwise. De Roux proceeded to compare the racialized territories where the most terrible and violent events of the social and armed conflict have taken place with the parts of a body that has suffered terrible mutilations. The discourse did not end on this sorrowful note, de Roux (2022) opens a window into the horror of the past to invite us to reflect on the future that we want to create and the disgraceful events that we do not want to repeat. Colombia's current president, Iván Duque Márquez (2018-2022), the head of a government that promised to tear apart the peace process, refused to attend the public release of the Commission report (*Comisión de la Verdad*, 2022). This was the most important event in the search for peace in Colombia since the signing of the peace agreement between the Colombian government and FARC in 2017. However, the heads of the next Colombian government, Petro and Márquez, were present at the event and committed to following up on the Commission's report. The public attending the event, particularly the victims of the conflict, applauded Petro and Márquez as they see a glimpse of hope in their coming

administration. These two events: the election of Petro-Márquez as Colombia's next president and vice-president, and the release of the final report of the Commission (*Comisión de la Verdad*, 2022), are two first steps on the long road to achieving peace, social justice, and dismantle racism in Colombia.

I conclude by sharing a field diary entry from April 28th, 2018, while I was doing fieldwork in Colombia's Coffee Region. I think that this event is an example of how the construction of peace in Colombia could take shape on the ground.

San Isidro and the Fundación Comienzo del Arco Iris were having a Carnival for the Children. It was a beautiful event. We started by the main road and went down Puerto Caldas' different neighbourhoods. As we were passing by, people came out of their houses to see the kids dancing, playing music, and yelling slogans in defence of life and the rights of children. The number of participants changed, but I calculate that we were close to 200 at the peak of the march and about 120 when we were down in numbers. After the march, we went to the community center, where we were served cold lemonade. [...] I didn't have a clear role during the march, but eventually, I could take the garbage bag from Doña Hilda, the community leader, and became the garbage man! I figured out that this role was the best for me. Reflecting on my own experience doing community work, it's very common to see people like me, outsiders with academic degrees and "formal expertise" taking leadership roles in the communities that we're accompanying. But our role should be more humble, community processes should school their leaders, they should be the ones leading the marches, talking on the amplifier, and playing the most visible roles. And we, the outsiders, should be the ones performing the invisible roles that nobody notices, but that make everything possible: taking care of the children so that the mothers can participate; cooking, serving, cleaning the tables, and washing the dishes; collecting the garbage and cleaning the spaces before and after. These roles also have a gender dimension, it's common that these roles are performed by women, putting them in a position where their hard work isn't recognized. If we want to build alternative spaces where we challenge the current structures of injustice, we should start with our roles, challenging the prevalent ideas about economic and academic status, gender roles, expertise, etc. No job is insignificant, every role is immensely important in the quest for peace.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT

Study Name: Forced Displacement and Racialization: the Colombian Experience.

Researcher: Julián Gutiérrez Castaño.

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Purpose of the Research: to advance a comparative study of the experiences of racialization of internally displaced people in Pereira, Colombia, and Colombian refugees in Toronto, Canada. The purpose of the research is to better understand how the processes of racialization takes place; and from these outcomes, inform and develop anti-racist initiatives. This research uses interviews as its main methodology. The results of this research will be presented in a dissertation.

What You Will Be Asked to Do in the Research: You will be asked to answer an in-depth semi-structured interview, which could take one or two sessions of two hours each.

Risks and Discomforts: The questions of the interview are part of your daily experience. However, some of the questions ask you to recall circumstances of forced displacement and situations where you experienced racism. I will provide you, in case you want or need counsel to deal with these situations, with contact information of organizations that can help you in that process.

Benefits of the Research and Benefits to You: I hope to create a space for discussing and reflecting on issues and dynamics that are relevant for internally displaced people and Colombian refugees. You can learn more about race dynamics through the interviews. You could get the sense that you are contributing to improve the society where you live by addressing a problem that has a negative impact on people's lives and could give you ideas to participate in anti-racist initiatives. You could participate in the construction of knowledge.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time. Your decision to stop participating will not influence the nature of the ongoing relationship you may have with the researcher or the nature of your relationship with York University either now, or in the future.

Withdrawal from the Study: You may stop participating in the study at any time, for any reason, if you so decide. Your decision to stop participating, or to refuse to answer particular questions, will not affect your relationship with the researcher, York University, or any other group associated with this project. In the event you withdraw from the study, all associated data collected will be immediately destroyed wherever possible.

Confidentiality: All information you supply during the research will be held in confidence and unless you specifically indicate your consent, your name will not appear in any report or publication of the research. The interviews' audio tapes will be securely stored in an encrypted file in the researcher's laptop, which in turn will be secured with a user password. A copy of the data will be saved in an external hard drive protected with a password. The external hard drive will be kept in a locked desk, which will be accessible only to the researcher. The researcher will be the only person with access to these files. The audio tapes will be deleted from the laptop and the external hard drive in December 2021. An electronic copy of the interviews' transcripts will be kept in an encrypted file for future research. Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law.

Questions about the Research? If you have questions about the research in general or about your role in the study, please feel free to contact me or my Graduate Supervisor - Dr. Ranu Basu, either by telephone at (416) 736-5107 or by e-mail ranubasu@yorku.ca. You may also contact my Graduate Program – Department of Geography; address: N404 Ross Building, York University, 4700 Keele Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M3J 1P3; telephone 416-736-5107. This research has been reviewed and approved by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics

guidelines. If you have any questions about this process or about your rights as a participant in the study, please contact the Sr. Manager & Policy Advisor for the Office of Research Ethics, 5th Floor, York Research Tower, York University (telephone 416-736-5914 or e-mail ore@yorku.ca).

Legal Rights and Signatures:

I _____, consent to participate in 'Forced Displacement and Racialization: the Colombian Experience,' conducted by Julián Gutiérrez Castaño. I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. My signature below indicates my consent.

Signature _____

Date _____

Participant

Signature _____

Date _____

Principal Investigator

Please indicate if you agree to be audio-recorded during this interview.

Yes

No

Please indicate if you prefer that the results of this research, such as dissertation and academic presentations, use your real name.

Yes

No

Organizations in Toronto:

Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI): This umbrella organization brings together many organizations that serve immigrants and refugees. Although, they do not a specific program that focuses on racism against refugees, they do have other programs and research that takes into account this dynamic, and could be very helpful for Colombian refugees dealing with forced displacement and racism. E-mail: generalmail@ocasi.org

Access Alliance – Multicultural Health and Community Services: This organization focuses on health services for immigrants and refugees. This organization considers racism among the main systems of oppression that causes refugees' exclusion from health services, therefore they can be very useful for Colombian refugees dealing with issues of racism. E-mail: mail@accessalliance.ca

Romero House – Walking with Refugees: This organization offers different services and programs to refugees in Toronto. This organization tends to receive an important number of Latin American refugees, therefore it would offer a friendly environment for Colombian refugees dealing with issues of forced displacement and racism. Email: info@romerohouse.org

Organizations in Pereira:

Cabildo Indígena Universitario –CIU: This organization supports Indigenous people in Pereira. It can be helpful to explore issues of indigenous identity and get advise/support in cases of racial discrimination. E-mail: Cabildoindigena.utp@gmail.com.

Corporación Déjalo Ser: This Non-Governmental Organization works with communities that have been displaced by the armed conflict in Colombia and are searching for safe haven in the Coffee Region, particularly in the city of Pereira. E-mail: corporaciondejalooser@gmail.com

Movimiento Nacional Cimarrón - Pereira: This organization supports Afro-Colombians in Pereira and Colombia. It can be helpful to explore issues of Afro-Colombian identity and get advise/support in cases of racial discrimination. You can contact its representative in Pereira, Iván Alberto Vergara Sinisterra, e-mail: ivancimarron@hotmail.com.

APPENDIX B: ORAL INFORMED CONSENT

Study Name: Forced Displacement and Racialization: the Colombian Experience.

Researcher: Julián Gutiérrez Castaño.

PhD Candidate, Geography Department, York University.

E-mail: juliangc@yorku.ca; telephone: 416-736-5107; address: N404 Ross Building, York University, 4700 Keele Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M3J 1P3.

Purpose of the Research: to advance a comparative study of the experiences of racialization of internally displaced people in Pereira, Colombia, and Colombian refugees in Toronto, Canada. The purpose of the research is to better understand how the processes of racialization takes place; and from these outcomes, inform and develop anti-racist initiatives. This research uses interviews as its main methodology. The results of this research will be presented in a dissertation.

What You Will Be Asked to Do in the Research: You will be asked to answer an in-depth semi-structured interview, which could take one or two sessions of two hours each.

Risks and Discomforts: The questions of the interview are part of your daily experience. However, some of the questions ask you to recall circumstances of forced displacement and situations where you experienced racism. I will provide you, in case you want or need counsel to deal with these situations, with contact information of organizations that can help you in that process.

Benefits of the Research and Benefits to You: I hope to create a space for discussing and reflecting on issues and dynamics that are relevant for internally displaced people and Colombian refugees. You can learn more about race dynamics through the interviews. You could get the sense that you are contributing to improve the society where you live by addressing a problem that has a negative impact on people's lives and could give you ideas to participate in anti-racist initiatives. You could participate in the construction of knowledge.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time. Your decision to stop participating will not influence the nature of the ongoing relationship you may have with the researcher or the nature of your relationship with York University either now, or in the future.

Withdrawal from the Study: You may stop participating in the study at any time, for any reason, if you so decide. Your decision to stop participating, or to refuse to answer particular questions, will not affect your relationship with the researcher, York University, or any other group associated with this project. In the event you withdraw from the study, all associated data collected will be immediately destroyed wherever possible.

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Questions about the Research? If you have questions about the research in general or about your role in the study, please feel free to contact me or my Graduate Supervisor - Dr. Ranu Basu, either by telephone at (416) 736-5107 or by e-mail ranubasu@yorku.ca. You may also contact my Graduate Program – Department of Geography; address: N404 Ross Building, York University, 4700 Keele Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M3J 1P3; telephone 416-736-5107. This research has been reviewed and approved by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process or about your rights as a participant in the study, please contact the Sr. Manager & Policy Advisor for the Office of Research Ethics, 5th Floor, York Research Tower, York University (telephone 416-736-5914 or e-mail ore@yorku.ca).

Legal Rights:

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Please indicate if you agree to be audio-recorded during this interview.

Yes

No

Please indicate if you prefer that the results of this research, such as dissertation and academic presentations, use your real name.

Yes

No

Organizations in Toronto:

Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI): This umbrella organization brings together many organizations that serve immigrants and refugees. Although, they do not a specific program that focuses on racism against refugees, they do have other programs and research that takes into account this dynamic, and could be very helpful for Colombian refugees dealing with forced displacement and racism. E-mail: generalmail@ocasi.org

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Organizations in Pereira:

Cabildo Indígena Universitario –CIU: This organization supports Indigenous people in Pereira. It can be helpful to explore issues of indigenous identity and get advise/support in cases of racial discrimination. E-mail: Cabildoindigena.utp@gmail.com.

Corporación Déjalo Ser: This Non-Governmental Organization works with communities that have been displaced by the armed conflict in Colombia and are searching for safe haven in the Coffee Region, particularly in the city of Pereira. E-mail: corporaciondejalooser@gmail.com

Movimiento Nacional Cimarrón - Pereira: This organization supports Afro-Colombians in Pereira and Colombia. It can be helpful to explore issues of Afro-Colombian identity and get advise/support in cases of racial discrimination. You can contact its representative in Pereira, Iván Alberto Vergara Sinisterra, e-mail: ivancimarron@hotmail.com.

APPENDIX C: CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO

Nombre del Estudio: Desplazamiento Forzado y Racialización: el Caso de Colombia.

Investigador: Julián Gutiérrez Castaño.

Estudiante de Doctorado II, Departamento de Geografía, York University.

Correo electrónico: juliangc@yorku.ca; tel: 416-736-5107; dirección: N404 Ross Building, York University, Oficina 414, 4700 Keele Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M3J 1P3.

Objetivo de la investigación: Desarrollar un estudio comparativo de las experiencias de racialización de las personas desplazadas en Pereira, Colombia, y las refugiadas colombianas en Toronto, Canadá. El objetivo es comprender mejor los procesos de racialización y contribuir a iniciativas anti-racistas que podrían mejorar la situación de estos dos grupos. Esta investigación utiliza entrevistas como su principal metodología. Los resultados de esta investigación serán presentados en una tesis de doctorado.

Que se le pedirá en esta investigación: Se le pedirá que conteste una entrevista semi-estructurada en profundidad, la cual puede tomar una o dos sesiones, cada una de dos horas.

Riesgos y molestias: Las preguntas de la entrevista hacen parte de su experiencia diaria. De cualquier manera, algunas de las preguntas le piden compartir sobre circunstancias de desplazamiento forzado y situaciones en las que usted experimento racismo. En caso de que usted quiera o necesite ayuda para procesar estas situaciones, se proveerá una lista de organizaciones que podría contactar para continuar este proceso.

Beneficios de la investigación y beneficios para usted: La investigación espera crear espacios para discutir y reflexionar sobre temas y dinámicas que son relevantes para las personas desplazadas y los refugiados colombianos. Usted podrá aprender más acerca de dinámicas raciales a través de la entrevista. Usted podría tener la sensación de estar contribuyendo a mejorar la sociedad a la cual pertenece al abordar un problema que tiene un impacto negativo sobre la vida de muchas personas y podría darle ideas para participar en iniciativas anti-racistas. Usted podría ser un agente activo en la construcción de conocimiento.

Participación voluntaria: Su participación en el estudio es completamente voluntaria, usted puede detener la entrevista en cualquier momento. Su decisión de parar la actividad no va a influenciar la naturaleza de su relación con el investigador o con York University, ni en el presente ni en el futuro.

Renunciar a la investigación: Usted puede retirarse de la investigación en cualquier momento, por cualquier razón, cuando lo decida. Su decisión de detener su participación, o no contestar preguntas específicas, no afectará su relación con el investigador, York University, o ningún otro grupo asociado con este proyecto. En caso de que usted se retire de la investigación, toda la información asociada con usted será destruida inmediatamente.

Confidencialidad: Toda la información que usted comparta durante la investigación será confidencial y a menos que usted específicamente de su consentimiento, su nombre no va a aparecer en ningún reporte o publicación de la investigación. Las grabaciones de las entrevistas serán guardados en un archivo encriptado en el portátil del investigador, el cual será asegurado con una clave. Una copia de la información será almacenada en un disco duro externo protegido con una clave. Este disco duro será depositado en un escritorio bajo llave. La información será borrada del portátil y el disco duro externo en diciembre 2021. Se guardará una copia electrónica de las transcripciones de las entrevistas para futuras investigaciones en un archivo encriptado. Se proveerá confidencialidad hasta donde la ley lo permita.

¿Preguntas acerca de la investigación? Si tiene preguntas acerca de la investigación en general o su rol en el estudio, siéntase libre de contactarme o a mi supervisora académica – Dra. Ranu Basu, teléfono (416) 736-5107, correo electrónico ranubasu@yorku.ca. También puede contactar mi departamento académico – Departamento de Geografía; dirección: N404 Ross Building, York University, 4700 Keele Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M3J 1P3; teléfono: 416-736-5107. Esta investigación ha sido revisada y aprobada por el Sub-Comité para la Revisión de Participantes Humanos, Comité de Revisión Ética de York University y está acorde con los estándares del Consejo Canadiense para las Guías Éticas de Investigación. Si tiene alguna pregunta sobre este proceso o sobre sus derechos como participante en el estudio, por favor contacte al Director y Asesor de Políticas de la Oficina de Ética de Investigación, 5th Piso, York Research Tower, York University (teléfono: 416-736-5914 o correo electrónico: ore@yorku.ca).

Derechos legales y Firma:

Yo, _____ acepto participar en 'Desplazamiento Forzado y Racialización: el Caso de Colombia.', adelantado por Julián Gutiérrez Castaño. Entiendo la naturaleza de este proyecto y deseo participar. No estoy renunciando a ninguno de mis derechos legales al firmar esta autorización. Mi firma abajo indica mi consentimiento.

Firma _____

Fecha _____

Participante

Firma _____

Fecha _____

Investigador Principal

Por favor indique si está de acuerdo con que esta entrevista sea grabada en audio.

Si

No

Por favor indique si prefiere que los resultados de esta investigación, como tesis doctoral y presentaciones académicas, utilicen su nombre real.

Si

No

Organizaciones en Toronto:

Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI): Esta organización reúne distintas organizaciones que brindan servicios a inmigrantes y refugiadas. A pesar de que no tiene un programa específico que se enfoque en el racismo contra las refugiadas, si tienen varios programas e investigaciones que atienden a esta dinámica, y podrían ser muy útiles para las refugiadas colombianas lidiando con situaciones de desplazamiento forzado y racismo. E-mail: generalmail@ocasi.org

Access Alliance – Multicultural Health and Community Services: Esta organización considera el racismo como uno de los principales sistema de opresión que causa la exclusión de las refugiadas de los servicios de salud, en consecuencia puede ser muy útil para las refugiadas colombianas que se enfrentan con problemas de racismo. E-mail: mail@accessalliance.ca

Romero House – Walking with Refugees: Esta organización ofrece diferentes servicios y programas para las refugiadas en Toronto. Esta organización recibe un gran número de refugiadas latinoamericanas, por lo cual ofrecería un ambiente más amigable para las refugiadas colombianas que afrontan situaciones de desplazamiento forzado y racismo. Email: info@romerohouse.org

Organizaciones en Pereira:

Cabildo Indígena Universitario –CIU: Esta organización apoya indígenas en Pereira. Puede ser de ayuda para explorar temas de identidad indígena y recibir consejo/apoyo en casos de discriminación racial. Correo electrónico: Cabildoindigena.utp@gmail.com.

Corporación Déjalo Ser: Esta organización No-Gubernamental trabaja con comunidades que han sido desplazadas por el conflicto armado colombiano y que buscan asentarse en la Zona Cafetera, particularmente en la ciudad de Pereira. Correo electrónico: corporaciondejalooser@gmail.com

Movimiento Nacional Cimarrón - Pereira: Esta organización apoya afrocolombianos en Pereira y Colombia. Puede ser de ayuda para explorar temas de identidad afrocolombiana y recibir consejo/apoyo en casos de discriminación racial. Puede contactar a su representante en Pereira, Iván Alberto Vergara Sinisterra, correo electrónico: ivancimarron@hotmail.com.

APPENDIX D: CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO ORAL

Nombre del Estudio: Desplazamiento Forzado y Racialización: el Caso de Colombia.

Investigador: Julián Gutiérrez Castaño.

Estudiante de Doctorado II, Departamento de Geografía, York University.

Correo electrónico: juliangc@yorku.ca; tel: 416-736-5107; dirección: N404 Ross Building, York University, Oficina 414, 4700 Keele Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M3J 1P3.

Objetivo de la investigación: Desarrollar un estudio comparativo de las experiencias de racialización de las personas desplazadas en Pereira, Colombia, y las refugiadas colombianas en Toronto, Canadá. El objetivo es comprender mejor los procesos de racialización y contribuir a iniciativas anti-racistas que podrían mejorar la situación de estos dos grupos. Esta investigación utiliza entrevistas como su principal metodología. Los resultados de esta investigación serán presentados en una tesis de doctorado.

Que se le pedirá en esta investigación: Se le pedirá que conteste una entrevista semi-estructurada en profundidad, la cual puede tomar una o dos sesiones, cada una de dos horas.

Riesgos y molestias: Las preguntas de la entrevista hacen parte de su experiencia diaria. De cualquier manera, algunas de las preguntas le piden compartir sobre circunstancias de desplazamiento forzado y situaciones en las que usted experimento racismo. En caso de que usted quiera o necesite ayuda para procesar estas situaciones, se proveerá una lista de organizaciones que podría contactar para continuar este proceso.

Beneficios de la investigación y beneficios para usted: La investigación espera crear espacios para discutir y reflexionar sobre temas y dinámicas que son relevantes para las personas desplazadas y los refugiados colombianos. Usted podrá aprender más acerca de dinámicas raciales a través de la entrevista. Usted podría tener la sensación de estar contribuyendo a mejorar la sociedad a la cual pertenece al abordar un problema que tiene un impacto negativo sobre la vida de muchas personas y podría darle ideas para participar en iniciativas anti-racistas. Usted podría ser un agente activo en la construcción de conocimiento.

Participación voluntaria: Su participación en el estudio es completamente voluntaria, usted puede detener la entrevista en cualquier momento. Su decisión de parar la actividad no va a influenciar la naturaleza de su relación con el investigador o con York University, ni en el presente ni en el futuro.

Renunciar a la investigación: Usted puede retirarse de la investigación en cualquier momento, por cualquier razón, cuando lo decida. Su decisión de detener su participación, o no contestar preguntas específicas, no afectará su relación con el investigador, York University, o ningún otro grupo asociado con este proyecto. En caso de que usted se retire de la investigación, toda la información asociada con usted será destruida inmediatamente.

Confidencialidad: Toda la información que usted comparta durante la investigación será confidencial y a menos que usted específicamente de su consentimiento, su nombre no va a aparecer en ningún reporte o publicación de la investigación. Las grabaciones de las entrevistas serán guardados en un archivo encriptado en el portátil del investigador, el cual será asegurado con una clave. Una copia de la información será almacenada en un disco duro externo protegido con una clave. Este disco duro será depositado en un escritorio bajo llave. La información será borrada del portátil y el disco duro externo en diciembre 2021. Se guardará una copia electrónica de las transcripciones de las entrevistas para futuras investigaciones en un archivo encriptado. Se proveerá confidencialidad hasta donde la ley lo permita.

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Derechos legales:

Acepto participar en ‘Desplazamiento Forzado y Racialización: el Caso de Colombia.’, adelantado por Julián Gutiérrez Castaño. Entiendo la naturaleza de este proyecto y deseo participar. No estoy renunciando a ninguno de mis derechos legales al firmar esta autorización. Mi firma abajo indica mi consentimiento.

Por favor indique si está de acuerdo con que esta entrevista sea grabada en audio.

Si

No

Por favor indique si prefiere que los resultados de esta investigación, como tesis doctoral y presentaciones académicas, utilicen su nombre real.

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APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW SAMPLE QUESTIONS

1. Introductions and explanation of the research (share Informed Consent document).
2. How would you define yourself in terms of age, gender, race, ethnicity and sexual orientation?
3. What are your occupation, studies, and qualifications?
4. Could you speak about racism in the place where you migrated from?
5. Could you share your history of displacement (only if you are comfortable doing it)?
6. How long has it been since you left your home?
7. How was it when you first arrived in this city (either Pereira or Toronto)?
8. Did you come to the city by yourself, with your family, or another group of people?
9. What were the reasons for choosing this city? Did you have any contacts here?
10. In general, what has been your experience in this city?
11. Have you felt welcome or rejected in this city?
12. Have you ever been discriminated against? Would you mind sharing those situations?
13. In general terms, how would you compare your situation here with your situation in the space where you were living before the displacement?
14. (For Colombian refugees and Venezuelan migrants) What do you think are the differences between your nation's government and the nation where you are now?
15. Are you part of any organization or group dealing with the issues of displacement and/or problems that affect you in this city? If yes, what is your role in this organization?
16. Do you see any connection between your experience as an IDP, migrant, or refugee, and the peace initiatives in Colombia? If yes, could you elaborate on this relation?
17. Closing comments: is there anything that was not covered in the interview that you would like to add?