Identity as a weapon for peacebuilding

Strategies and practices of the Indigenous Guard from Northern Cauca, Colombia

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IDENTITY AS A WEAPON FOR PEACEBUILDING

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Thesis

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To my roots,
Edu, Angelita and Nancy

"I like roots. Plants don't grow well without them. People are the same."
This is a quotation from a child cited in the book: Who needs the past?
(Layton, 1989, p. 28)

A mis raíces,
Edu, Angelita y Nancy

"Me gustan las raíces. Las plantas no crecen bien sin ellas. La gente es igual".
Esta es una cita de un niño entrevistado en el libro: ¿Quién necesita el pasado?
(Layton, 1989, p. 28)

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All the pictures have been taken by the author.

The graphic design in the cover was created by Michael Guetio. It represents an indigenous chumbe, a woven fabric with symbols of the Nasa community.

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"… Once the storm is over you won't remember how you made it through, how you managed to survive. You won't even be sure, in fact, whether the storm is really over. But one thing is certain. When you come out of the storm you won´t be the same person, who walked in. That's what this storm's all about."

Haruki Murakami, Kafka on the Shore

My relationship with this research was very similar to a romantic, passionate, and conflictive marriage. I loved it and hated it at the same time, but love prevailed. Thus, even in the most difficult times, I did my best to work it out. The result is this thesis, which makes me feel that all the neurons and the physical, emotional, and psychological efforts were not just necessary but also worthwhile.

For a while, my life became completely devoted to this thesis, even if I did not want it. For some periods, I isolated myself, trying to keep all my focus and energy to finish this task. However, this project was never just mine. I believe that no achievement is individual; everything is done collectively. In my case, some people never left me really alone. They were there waiting for me to come back. These people appeared during different periods of this long process; thus, I offer my gratitude organizing this section in chronological order or in relation to specific places. Moreover, some people will appreciate it if I write part of this section in Spanish. Thus, my apologies for the non-Spanish speakers but, when appropriate, I will switch my writing to my native language. To compensate for this, in the following paragraph I summarize this section, and, thus, the English readers will have a general idea of to whom I am referring in each paragraph.

I want to thank first the people from my personal life. Many people omit this part from their PhD thesis, maybe because the process is long and hard and one's personal life, most of the time, pays the price for it. For me, it was my personal life that kept me going. Thus, I want to thank first to my family, because I owe this thesis to them. Second, my gratitude goes to the Nasa communities of Northern Cauca, without whom this research would simply not have been possible. Third, to my supervisors, who were there from the very beginning to the very end. Fourth, to my CPT colleagues and friends, who were my support group. Fifth, to my friends in Colombia, The Netherlands, and others parts of the world. Sixth, to my colleagues from the Cinara Institute, and, finally, to my dogs. In the following, I develop in a little more detail my relation with all these important people and their role in this thesis.

Quiero agradecer primero a mi madre, Nancy, que con su fuerza e integridad siempre me ha inspirado a ir más allá de lo que creo posible. A mi hermana Tati, por ponerme

los pies en la tierra cada vez que tiene la oportunidad. A mis abuelos, Edu y Angelita, por recordarme quién soy, de dónde vengo y, así, ayudarme a volver cuando me sentí perdida. A mis tías Angie y Jenny, por tenerme siempre en sus oraciones, y a mi primo Sebas por ser mi parcero. A Jhon y Johan por aguantarnos. Ustedes, mi familia en Cali, son mi hogar. Gracias por las risas, las comidas, los bailes y hasta las peleas, ustedes se encargaron de recordarme siempre que había vida más allá del doctorado. Edu, gracias por ser la fuerza de todos! Igualmente, desde la distancia, mis primos Jennifer, Camilo, Diego, Diana, Carolina y mi tía Alcira estuvieron apoyándome y enviándome cariño. Siempre sentí su apoyo.

A la comunidad Nasa, especialmente al Tejido Defensa de la Vida de la ACIN, a Michael, Germán, Feliciano, Edwin Mauricio, Jhonier, Albeiro, Tatahuala, Cynthia, y a los demás Guardias del norte del Cauca por inspirarme y permitirme hacer esta investigación. Estar en la ACIN con ustedes fue un privilegio, me enseñó a entender mejor mi país, su compleja historia, sus contradicciones y sus riquezas; me permitió entender nuevas formas de ver y hacer el mundo. ¡Gracias por la paciencia, la generosidad, la comida, los chumbes, el chirrincho, el buen humor y la amistad! Su fuerza es un ejemplo para todos. A los miembros de la vecindad y la Casa de Pensamiento, Rosalba, Celia, Maye, Cata, Clara, Diana, Jorge, Luis y Marcela gracias por guiarme, retarme, confrontarme, enseñarme y compartir.

To my supervision team. I have always felt very comfortable around powerful women; thus, I chose Professor Dr Noelle Aarts as my promotor and Dr Severine van Bommel as my co-promotor. Noelle, thank you for your sage advice, for always being there for me, for quickly responding to each interaction, for the energy you put into the things you do, for always allowing me to be passionate and share that passion for my research topic. Your feedback is present throughout the thesis, because even when we disagreed, that forced me to make my argument more rigorous and to handle my data more clearly and explicitly. Thank you for letting me be and having my point of view, which you always appreciated and valued. Finally, thanks for your concern for my success. Severine, thank you for motivating me to do this research and giving me enough freedom and having the patience to allow me to get lost and find my own voice. You always helped me to make my ideas clearer, to improve my writing, and to be aware of the methodological challenges and considerations of this research. This thesis is better thanks to your guidance.

I was part of the Communication, Philosophy, and Technology (CPT) section, located on the fourth floor of the Leeuwenborch building. I like to think in the spaces of interactions and the meanings attached to these places. As a foreigner, for some periods this floor was like a home for me. I had breakfasts, lunches, and dinners there. Sometime alone, but most of the time with friends. I shared different offices with different people and in different periods. I was in the Strategic Communication Group (COM), but I always managed to hang out a lot with the people from the Knowledge, Technology, and Innovation (KTI) Group. During my first year, I shared

my office with Nathalie Kpera; she was pregnant at that time, and I saw her struggles and her strength to overcome the difficulties. She was an example for me. In that first year, I also met a group of PhD candidates who were finishing and became my friends. As I was a first-year student, I received all their advice, knowledge, and jokes. So, thanks to Diana Córdoba, Horacio Narváez, and Catherine Kilelu for sharing your wisdom and continuing to be my friends after all this time. In the CPT, we created informal regular meetings to discuss our PhD research and also our feelings about it, while we shared food and made very nerdy jokes. We called these meetings the Super Secret Conspiracy (SSC) meetings. In this group, I also made friends for life, like Jaye de la Cruz, Rica Flor, Marilou Montiflour, Debashish Sen, Antonio Castellanos Navarrete, and, one of my favourite subgroups, the Cucumbers with anxiety, Mirjam Schoonhoven, Marie Garnier, Kelly Rijswijk, and Mariola Acosta. Ladies, you are better than any therapist! The SSC meetings became more formal and the name changed to Paper Support Seminar Series (PSSS). This opened an opportunity to meet new people and share more specific concerns. By then, I was the one giving advice to the new people. It was very rewarding for me to give back the support I had received. Thanks to Katarzyna Cieslik for getting the budget for food and my sweet friends Yenenesh Tadesse, Iman Nawireja, and Mikinay Seifu for their warm smiles. I was already sharing my office with Mirjam Schoonhoven and, in a couple of weeks, our friendship had gone to many levels of confidence and complicity. Dear Mirjam, I hope we will be comparing shoes for many years! After my fieldwork, I shared an office with Tim Stevens, and we were so eager to have these philosophical talks and compare our cultural backgrounds that we were often forced to leave the topic unfinished, in order to finish someday our research. Thanks, Tim, for being such a good officemate! Marie Garnier was just three steps away from us, and it was very easy for me to go to her office and start any type of conversation. From food to politics, any topic was exciting with Marie and, soon, her husband Eduardo joined us in these debates. Guys, I am sure your baby is going to be a genius! I hope to see at least a picture of him/her growing each year.

Along the corridors and on different floors of the building, there were also many friends to visit and share a coffee with. Any interaction was an opportunity to try to figure out our research puzzle and our life experience. I am grateful to Onno Giller, María Angélica Naranjo, Cheron Constance, Giacomo Galli, Elias Assefa, and Murat Sartas for all the inspiring, vibrant, and funny conversations. Thanks from the bottom of my hearth to the Birds of Paradise for the knowledge about popular culture and the karaoke nights! You made my time in Wageningen lighter and brighter. There are also the much-loved friends from Wageningen, Andrea Diaz, Matthijs Montsma, and their children, you are my family there and I love you! Oscar Castellanos, Cristian Timmermann, George Felix, Victor Hugo Lascano, and Carlos Mogrovejo, fellows, thanks for always being ready to drink, eat, dance, and, most of all, talk. Wieteque Willemen, you showed me Wageningen for the first time; somehow all the changes in my life are related to you and I owe you forever my friendship. Of course, many of the people mentioned here overlapped in different spaces of interaction. With some,

Jimenez and Federico Pinzón, maybe we do not know each for that long but these last years you have become a great support for me to finish the PhD. Your friendship refreshes me and reminds me of the beautiful side of life. Thank you for being so nerdy, so funny, and, especially, such good people. For more Fridays to come!

A la gente de la compañía de teatro Dulce Compañía, gracias por escucharme cuando más lo necesité, por darme un espacio artístico para expresarme y por hacerme reír de mi locura. Por los viajes, la música y el humor tan particular. Gracias Rodrigo Vélez y Miguel Angel Achury por el arte y la amistad, por la vida bohemia, la adultez y la adolescencia compartida. ¡Espero que siempre nos encontremos!

The PhD was not easy at all, but it was totally worthwhile because I learnt to have a healthier relationship with myself and I owe that to the efforts and struggles of the PhD. La doctora Lucía Restrepo fue clave en mejorar mi parte personal, enseñarme a conocerme a mí misma, mi potencial y mis falencias. Usted me ayudó a ser una mejor versión de mí misma. Muchas gracias por eso y por enseñarme tantas cosas. ¡Como lo prometimos, este grado lo celebraremos juntas!

Finally, to Chaussette, Perla, Nino, Tara, Morena, Muñeca, Pongo, Tabata, y Teo. I do not need words for you. My love is yours!

Picture 1.1 A guard's bastón rests on a column of an old wooden house, during a territorial control walk in the Resguardo of Canoas. →››

CHAPTER 1

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1   Setting the Scene

On 1 April 2019, I saw indigenous[1] guards from the Nasa community playing football on the Pan-Americana highway – the longest highway in America – using the road like a football field. I have never seen the highway empty of cars. I was wearing my rubber boots and it was raining heavily. I had to make a lot of arrangements to be there in the middle of the protest. Only indigenous people and close collaborators were allowed. It was the last time I was in Cauca before writing this chapter.

Indigenous people from Cauca joined forces with other communities and closed part of the Pan-Americana for 21 days, as a protest against the current government. The Minga[2] for Peace and Life, as it was called, ran between 10 March and 5 April 2019, shutting down five kilometres of the Pan-American highway and the alternative roads using debris, stones, trees, concrete blocks, and many other elements. The provinces of Cauca and Nariño were isolated as a result, compelling the government to re-evaluate the National Development Plan that laid out the budget for the period 2019–2022 to include a dedicated rubric for the indigenous communities. The Minga also aimed to pressure the current government to keep the broken promises of previous presidents (El Espectador, 2019).

The day I arrived, an extraordinary meeting was being held by representatives of various indigenous organizations from Colombia, discussing the ongoing negotiations with the government. Apparently, the government tried to divide the protest by offering different deals to each group. An agreement was made to continue negotiating jointly, and an official communication was conveyed in different media (ACIN, 2019). Indigenous people had managed once again to put the Colombian administration into a difficult position, forcing it to negotiate. The non-violent actions of the Nasa community, such as the Minga highway protest, presented me with a puzzle.

1.1.1   Problem statement and knowledge gap

The Cauca region has copious natural resources that attract many actors and interests. For instance, the Northern Cauca region is part of the Pacific corridor, an entry and exit point for narcotics and weapons smuggling for drug cartels (CNAI, 2012; FSD, 2008). Moreover, the region is one of the territories where the former

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1   The United Nations Sub-commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities defines indigenous peoples as: '…those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, considered themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing in those territories... They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems.' UN, Study of the Problem of Discrimination Against Indigenous Populations (New York, I986. Paragraph: 379).
2   A traditional form of communal work based on groups exchanging labour power.

guerrilla Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People's Army (FARC–EP)[3] had a strong influence until the end of 2016. In that year, a peace agreement was signed between the Colombian government and the guerrillas, bringing an official end to the war between these two actors. Nonetheless, given that the most affected areas – like Northern Cauca – have been historically marginalized from State support and management (Chagas-Bastos, 2018; Velasco, 2016), since the agreement was signed new criminal bands have been fighting to control these territories (Valencia et al., 2017). In light of these events, pessimism is spreading about the sustainability of peace.

More local leaders have been assassinated in Cauca Province than in any other province in the last three years. In 2018, 26 indigenous people were killed. While I am writing these pages, in August 2019, as many as 36 indigenous Nasa have been killed during the current year, to the point that indigenous organizations have had to declare themselves in a territorial emergency (Rueda, 2019). Despite the violence that characterizes the conflicts that surround the Nasa, they do not respond with more violence. Instead, Cauca indigenous groups have developed and maintained various alternatives to survive and attract the attention of governments, NGOs, and human rights organizations. Some of these initiatives are transitory, such as the periodic blockages of the Pan-American highway or specific territorial control actions such as demanding that illegal and official armies leave indigenous territories (BBC, 2012). Other initiatives such as the Guardia Indígena (GI), Indigenous Guard, are more permanent. The GI is a sort of neighbourhood watch that patrols the territory and reports suspicious activity. Its role is to consolidate some forms of self-justice and preserve people's safety and autonomy in their territory. Nasa people themselves present the GI as a non-violent group that protects indigenous territory using symbolic weapons.

Research shows that indigenous organizations from Cauca have played an important role in struggles for indigenous rights recognition (Benavides-Vanegas, 2009; Hristov, 2009; Rappaport, 1990b; Velasco, 2011). They are known for recovering extensive indigenous lands in Cauca, participating in the 1991 new constitution process, obtaining legal autonomy, and promoting indigenous culture (CRIC, 2007; CRIC, 1981; Hristov, 2005, 2009; Velasco, 2016). Rappaport has conducted extensive research in Nasa communities, exploring Nasa indigenous practices related to territorial defence (1987a), the role of historical memory in their political strategies (1990b), and the influence of indigenous intellectuals in their organizations (2005a), among other things. However, as will be argued below, the overemphasis on indigenous political struggles with the State eclipses the question of indigenous people's everyday struggles for survival. By means of an in-depth study of the GI in the Colombian context, this thesis aims to better understand the possibilities,

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3   Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia - Ejército del Pueblo.

challenges, and limitations of local, bottom-up non-violent strategies and initiatives for peacebuilding over time.

So, this research focuses on the creation and development of the GI, as an example of a non-violent initiative. The research analyses how interactions among GI members and with others result in non-violent initiatives for survival, the consequences of these interactions for wider structures and developments, and how processes of group identity construction take place and play a role in these processes. The aim of the research is to find principles for conflict resolution from a complexity perspective, by understanding how the Nasa manage to preserve themselves in contexts of continuous violent conflicts.

1.2 Preliminary Theoretical Considerations

My research goal and interest focus on understanding the possible contributions of Nasa actions to peacebuilding in Colombia and beyond. Thus, some concepts have to be defined a priori to show my starting point in peacebuilding studies. After that, I present the sensitizing concepts that I used during data collection.

1.2.1 Peacebuilding

In academic discourse, the meaning of the term peacebuilding tends to cover all actions undertaken before, during, or after violent conflicts to prevent, finish, and transform these conflicts and generate circumstances for sustainable peace (Reychler, 2010). The term became fashionable in the 1990s, when the United Nations Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, presented the concept of post-conflict peacebuilding in the Agenda for Peace: "There is no development nor democracy without peace", he said (United Nations, 2004). Since then, most academic studies have focused on what is called liberal peace, defined as the dominant form of peacebuilding favoured by leading states, international organizations, and international financial institutions (Mac Ginty, 2010). After some years of research however, many studies ended by concluding that sustainable peace was not possible without local empowerment (Cox, 2009; Putnam, 2002; Richmond, 2012). Hence, in the last decades, there has been a critical approach to liberal peace called the 'local turn', which advocates attention on the challenges, opportunities, and misunderstandings of research on peacebuilding in local spheres (Hughes et al., 2015; Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013; Randazzo, 2016). There is also a trend called hybrid peacebuilding, advocating the need for a combination of top-down and bottom-up strategies (Mac Ginty, 2010, 2011; Richmond, 2012). Many of these studies opened up the complexity, incoherence, and epistemological challenges of local actions and helped to make visible the actions taken in local spheres that contribute to the peacebuilding goal.

This approach does not deny the importance of structural changes necessary for peacebuilding, but it emphasize that, in the absence of formally recognized and

people-orientated reconciliation strategies, individuals and communities are left to their own strategies and self-organized survival mechanisms (Mac Ginty, 2014).

This thesis focuses on bottom-up and localized conflict de-escalation measures, in contrast to top-down and institutionalized approaches to peace (Mac Ginty, 2008, 2011, 2014). However, instead of using the fixed categories of local, micro, or macro, this study adheres to the complexity perspective. Complexity refers basically to the countless features and properties of a multifaceted and highly dynamic context. Thus, my choice is materialized in an analysis of the dynamics of conflict settings, in which many events occur and uncertainty is very high.

Everyday peace

From peacebuilding studies, I use the concept of everyday peace. According to Mac Ginty (2014), everyday peace is a type of agency that refers to everyday methods and practices as building blocks for peace formation. The concept of everyday peace, thus, gives us the opportunity to observe local innovations in conflictive settings, such as for instance the GI, and analyse the interactions inside the group and with outsiders. Moreover, from this perspective, communities are seen as a set of heterogeneous and active agents, instead of homogeneous passive victims.

The assumption behind this is that, to contribute to a sustainable peace in Colombia, researchers need to study civic groups beyond dichotomous roles of victims and victimizers and pay serious attention to processes and strategies mobilized at local level.

Non-violence

Another important concept from peacebuilding studies that applies to this case is non-violence. Statistical analysis has shown the effectiveness of non-violent campaigns in making social changes in different times and different parts of the world (Chenoweth & Stephan, 2008). Many factors attract participants to non-violent campaigns, for instance, fewer dilemmas in relation to morality, physical involvement, and commitment, and, besides, successful non-violent resistance leads to more durable and peaceful democracies, which are less likely to regress into civil war (Chenoweth & Stephan, 2008). These inferences highlight the importance of non-violent actions in conflict resolution.

The basic principle of non-violent resistance encompasses abstaining from using physical violence, yet it also encompasses engagement in resistance to oppression, domination, and any other forms of injustice (Dudouet, 2008). Most literature nowadays relates the concept of non-violence to Gandhian theory or to the Gene Sharp pragmatic approach, although non-violent actions can also occur in specific settings, resulting from many different interactions and historical and political

changes in specific contexts.

In relation to conflict resolution, non-violent initiatives have been studied as a pragmatic method to deal with conflict, and empirical cases have been analysed, highlighting mainly categories of non-violent actions and strategies among different groups (Eddy, 2014). These types of initiatives help to empower grievance groups that are looking for constructive ways to achieve justice, human rights, and democracy without using violence (Dudouet, 2008). My assumption is that the GI represents a good example of a group interested in justice, protecting traditional cultures, and conserving natural landscapes using non-violent actions in asymmetric conflicts. In this study, non-violence is a sensitizing concept to observe GI practices and analyse the different layers and complexities of their application through all the chapters.

1.2.2   *Complexity and conflicts*

Violent conflicts involve complex interactions with many sources of hostilities located at multiple levels – individual, group, communal – that often interact with one another (Vallecher et al., 2010). The complexity or dynamic approach is an emerging framework for conflict studies (Burnes, 2005; Coleman et al., 2007; Gray et al., 2015; Hendrick, 2009) that offers a range of tools for analysis and for understanding the implications of local actions in broader contexts.

From a complexity perspective, the internal Colombian conflict is seen not as a binary process between two actors, but as a set of complex and ambiguous processes and interactions that have evolved and changed over the years and in which civic groups –including the indigenous communities – are immersed (Kalyvas, 2003). This situation requires a systematic analysis of the interweaving of individuals, groups, and local contexts. These three factors should not be considered separately, as social changes emerge from the interplay between them. As Elias (2000) put it, changes and evolution occur because of the interactions driven by differentiation and integration of diverse elements that give rise to new and different structures.

It is therefore assumed that, to find long-term solutions to violent conflicts, research needs to study civic groups beyond the role of victims and pay attention to processes and strategies at local level for managing violent contexts (Arjona et al., 2015). In the Colombian post-conflict setting, the strategies and practices of groups that have shifted to non-violent tactics, like the indigenous Nasa, may be essential for everyday peace building.

Self-organization

To operationalize the complexity approach, I have used the concept of self-organization. Most definitions of self-organization originate from the natural sciences, referring to processes whereby order emerges from the interactions among elements

of a system, rather than from interventions by higher-order agents (Johnson, 2001). Definitions of self-organization vary in line with the theoretical traditions within social science (see for instance Aarts, 2007; Boonstra and Boelens, 2011; Escobar, 2014; Sherwood et al., 2016). Regarding social movements, Escobar (2014) explains that self-organization denotes bottom-up processes in which individuals using simple principles create complex collective behaviour. Thus, this concept highlights the autonomy of elements or the possibility of agency in a decentralized organization (Anzola et al., 2017). Self-organizing processes also emerge, however, from a complex interplay between the intentional behaviour of individuals and unintended and contingent factors (Goldspink & Kay, 2004). Therefore, self-organization indicates connections and interactions of individual components, leading to collaboration and collective behaviour, but also to other unintended changes. From this perspective, social organizations, such as the Nasa group, can be studied in terms of self-organization processes in a dynamic system.

1.2.3 *Sensitizing concepts*

A Nasa proverb claims: "*The word without action is empty. Wordless action is blind. The word and the action outside the spirit of the community are death.*" I would like to say that the sensitizing concepts of this research came directly from that Nasa proverb, which explains the relation between language, practices, and identity. However, during my PhD proposal, I was already inspired by the insights of van Woerkum et al. (2011, p. 148), who identify three sources of change: events, language, and practices. Thus, I was influenced by both ways of thinking.

This is visible in the thesis chapters. Chapter 2 adopts a language perspective, Chapters 3 and 4 analyse practices, and Chapter 5 gives priority to events. In addition, for this research, Nasa identity is a key feature of the group; the way in which it is framed, performed, reconstructed – collectively and individually – and the consequences of these processes is analysed through all the thesis. Thus, these sensitizing concepts were tools for me to focus on specific types of data during fieldwork.

Identity

Rappaport identified the role of identity as an important factor in creating initiatives for survival (Rappaport, 2007b, p. 10). Most studies on conflict and identity focus on identity-based conflicts related to rights of ethnic groups to preserve their identity, to obtain equal recognition, and to have equal status with other groups (Fearon & Laitin, 2000; Rothman & Olson, 2001; Rothman, 1997). This study looks at the role of indigenous identities in the escalation/de-escalation of conflicts.

Figure 1.1. Relation of sensitizing concepts
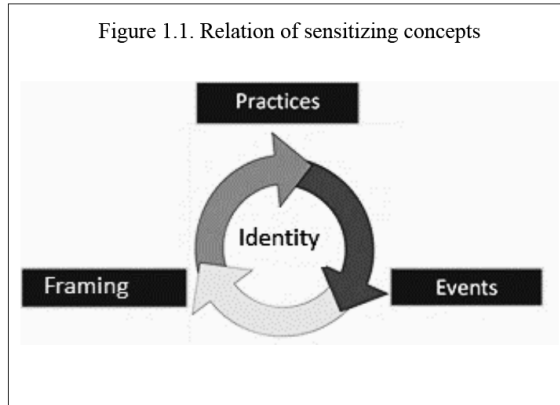
Studying the GI could help to elucidate how such processes of constructing and reconstructing identities take place in daily interactions and play a role in the creation of self-organization initiatives for peacebuilding. Therefore, this study looks at collective identity, which refers to points of identification occurring within discourses of history and practices (Hall, 1990, p. 226). A group identity is a source of power because it creates an 'us and them' relation, a dynamic process of inclusion and exclusion evolving over time (Elias, 1994). So, identities are different from cultures, because the former are performed in relation to others to emphasize differences (Grimson, 2010). Furthermore, collective identities respond to dynamic processes of interactions between historical events, discourse strategies or framing, and practices shared in a group and different from other groups (See Figure 1). Therefore, collective identities – even those with very old roots like ethnic identities or religious identities – are socially constructed, reconstructed, and conveyed in everyday interactions and practices over time.

Framing

Framing refers to the discursive strategies that people use to achieve certain goals. The concept of framing offers a method to describe the power of written and oral communications. When talking, people define situations, diagnose causes, make moral judgements, and suggest remedies (Entman, 1993). In political situations, people articulate their identity and goals through framing and, accordingly, attract allies and respond to their contenders' counter-frames (Benford & Snow, 2000). When framing, therefore, people become active agents for change (Aarts & Woerkum, 2005). From this perspective, framing is seen as a strategic and political tool.

The assumption is that people frame stories to achieve mutual understanding and to produce opinions and rules that help in the construction and reconstruction of collective identities and that can be turned into effective collaboration (Hardy et al., 2005; Kim and Kim, 2008). Moreover, in conversations, history and the future are brought into the present (Ford, 1999). Past events are communicated as stories that

help to create a shared vision of a situation, to produce and recognize a specific group identity, and to guide people in taking specific positions when facing new situations (Haslam, 2004). Stories allude to formal oral and written texts that are conveyed in a group and bestow an identity. People use stories to make sense of what is confusing (Pepper, 1995), and at the same time these stories may provide expectations about the future (de Vries et al., 2013). This strategy is especially important for dealing with changes or for living in a highly uncertain environment.

Practices

A holistic perspective on practices is necessary to understand that actions come from history and traditions, as well as from changes in the environment and context. Practices therefore always need to be drawn to the fore, made visible, and turned into an epistemic object (Nicolini, 2009). From that perspective, practices constitute the horizon within which all discursive and material actions are made possible and acquire meaning, and they are inherently dependent, materially mediated, and cannot be understood without reference to a specific place, time, and concrete historical context (Nicolini, 2009). As authors such as Heidegger and Wittgenstein made clear, practice constitutes the unspoken and scarcely notable background of everyday life (Bourdieu, 1977). For this research, GI practices are seen from this holistic perspective as units of analysis that link GI discursive strategies and hinge on Nasa identity construction strategies. That is, GI practices are doors to Nasa history, their belief system, and their collective identity.

1.2.4   *Research questions*

Following from the above, I have derived the main research question and formulated four sub-questions that will allow me to answer my main research question.
My main research question is:

How do indigenous guards organize themselves to survive in an extremely violent environment and what is the role of processes of identity construction in their everyday contexts?

My sub-questions are:

1. *How do the Nasa frame the Indigenous Guard history and what is the role of these framing processes in how indigenous guards manage violent conflicts every day?*
2. *How does the GI operate and how do its practices contribute to peacebuilding?*
3. *Why did some indigenous people from Northern Cauca join the GI, whereas others joined guerrilla groups like FARC?*
4. *How have the Nasa adapted their identity throughout time to different socioeconomic regimes and what can we learn from this for purposes of conflict*

management and peacebuilding?

1.3 Methodology

1.3.1 Interpretive research

This study adopts a qualitative interpretive approach in which individuals are seen as members of a community of meaning, where traditions, practices, language, and other cultural elements provide them with the materials to produce their meaning-making of everyday events (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006). Hence, instead of having a hypothesis or theory a priori, the focus is on understanding how a social phenomenon occurs and why.

Researchers using the interpretive approach interact with their informants in the latter's own conditions and circumstances (Haverland & Yanow, 2012). This entails the use of ethnographic methods. Ethnographic research refers broadly to the process of translating other people's worlds into descriptions (Geertz, 1973). It implies fieldwork with a particular focus on identifying processes of meaning☐making; writing findings in a way that places both author and reader at the scene and provides detailed descriptions; and analysis of data to focus on interaction processes between actors and their context, with theories developed from the data (Ybema et al., 2009). This implies an abductive reasoning and human-centred analysis, driven by the wish to learn about different actors' multiple social realities in their environment (Agar, 2010; Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006). Thus, the main focus is on understanding the reasons why a phenomenon occurs and how.

This research starts from a perspective that privileges the study of cultural and identity elements for understanding collective actions (Escobar, 1992a). This implies a translation of indigenous concepts and actions into scientific terms that can be discussed in current debates on peacebuilding studies. I aim to engage in what Viveiros de Castro (2004, 2014) has called a *controlled equivocation*, that is, I start from my own perspective to analyse indigenous practices, but I 'compare' my ideas with indigenous concepts to find different meanings and understand perspectives from both sides.

My goal is to help to create dialogues among different realities and build bridges that help to understand, make visible, and even scale up indigenous Nasa actions for conflict transformation and peacebuilding (Rodriguez et al., 2015). Achieving this requires a big ethical commitment and a constant attitude of reflexion. This double hermeneutic or hermeneutic cycle enables the researcher to reflect on on-going social processes, first, by using empirical data or fieldwork experience and, from there, to engage in the deeper level of reflection that is required to understand how people attach meaning to events, practices, and experiences, and interpret them (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006). Hereafter, my methodology was never linear or oriented

by a hypothesis; in fact, it involves strong reflexivity and a dialectical relationship between empirical data, theories, and relevant literature during the entire research process. Hence, it looks more like a spiral than a line.

1.3.2 Description of the case study area

In Colombia, three peace agreements have been signed with different armed actors in the last 30 years, including the Peace Agreement of 2016 signed by the government and FARC-EP, the country's largest and oldest guerrilla group. Despite the many efforts to end the internal conflict, it is still evolving, mutating, and continuing. Since the last agreement was signed, up to May 2018 as many as 702 social leaders have been assassinated (Redacción Judicial, 2018). Many studies highlight the role of the State in allowing or even contributing to the violence, unveiling structural problems that fuel the violence in Colombia and, hence, justifying marginalized people in their use of violent strategies to achieve their goals (Albertus & Kaplan, 2012; Duran-Martinez, 2015; Oliver Kaplan & Nussio, 2016; Steele, 2011). In the case of indigenous groups, according to Hristov (2005), the militarization and repression that have accompanied policies imposed by the government have constantly undermined recognition of indigenous territories and cultural rights.
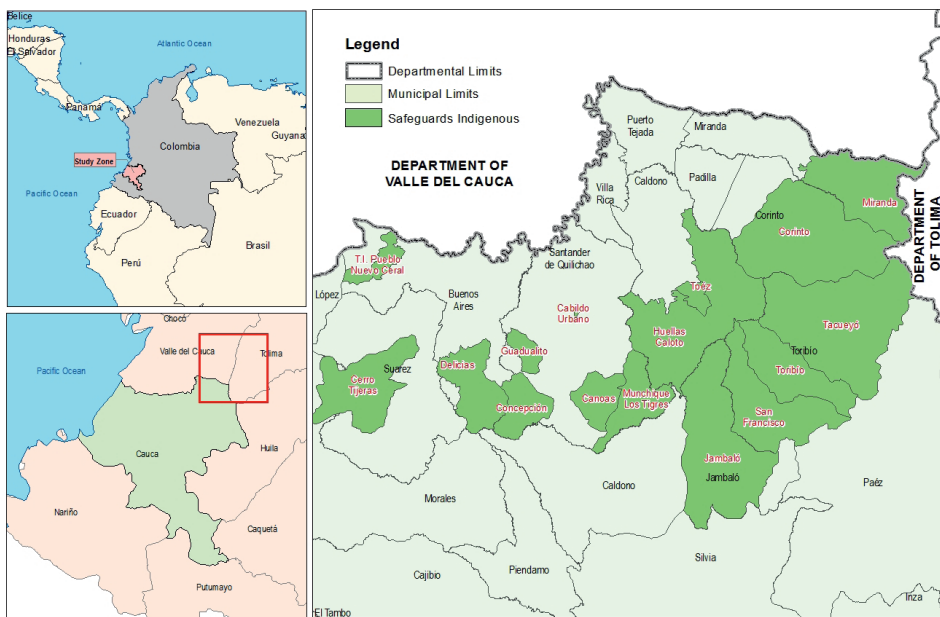
Map 1.1 Study area

Indigenous groups are located in distinct legal entities under Colombian law, called *resguardos*. The *resguardos* are recognized as communal, unavailable for sale or rent, and governed by indigenous authorities or *cabildos*. In Cauca, indigenous people are

organized in the Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca (CRIC), founded in 1971 in Toribío and representing more than 250,000 indigenous peoples and cabildos. The Association of Indigenous Councils of Northern Cauca (ACIN) is a federal organization created in 1994 as part of CRIC. It represents around 110,000 people from the norther part, mainly of indigenous group Nasa. There are 16 indigenous Nasa resguardos of 23 indigenous communities, which territories are about 1700 Km^2 (see Map 1.1). With some other indigenous organizations in Cauca, CRIC and ACIN represent a network of indigenous organizations that is frequently referred as the Cauca indigenous movement.

During my fieldwork in 2015, in Northern Cauca, the GI consisted of 1,820 people between 13 and 68 years old, of which 460 were women and 1,360 were men, from 21 communities represented by ACIN. The GI works as a decentralized entity, in which each *cabildo* decides upon its own guards' daily activities. Community members become guards on a voluntary basis. Their role is to consolidate some forms of self-justice and preserve people's safety and autonomy in their territory. Indigenous guards' activities include: patrolling to inspect for illegal mining and the presence of armed groups; protecting leaders and the community in general from outsiders; acting against crimes like robbery, street fights, and kidnapping; and conducting inspections to check for dangerous artefacts like landmines that could injure people. Guard members also participate actively in organizing meetings, rituals, and capacity-building workshops. Indigenous people themselves present the GI as a non-violent strategy to protect indigenous territory using symbolic weapons. For example, each guard has a *bastón* (stick), symbolizing power bestowed on them by their community.

1.3.3   *Data collection and data analysis*

The data in this thesis derive from a one-year ethnographic and interpretive investigation conducted in Northern Cauca, the researcher working as a communication collaborator within ACIN and with indigenous guards. It took place in ACIN's headquarters in the city of Santander de Quilichao from March 2014 to March 2015. Afterwards, regular conversations with, and visits to, ACIN members continued. It took three months of emailing and visiting before I was accepted as an intern in the organization. Moreover, before I started fieldwork, ACIN members consulted *The Walas*, Nasa shamans, for advice, who conducted rituals requesting advice from the nature spirits, and finally they gave their approval.

At different points in time, I observed the GI practices for extended periods (days or a week) in the context of the daily routine and followed guards in their daily activities. I embarked on participant observation in 14 GI actions to manage conflict, collaborated in workshops organized by ACIN in 13 communities, and participated in total in 53 meetings and community activities. I conducted and tape-recorded 31 ethnographical, semi-structured, and other styles of interviews, with leaders, guards,

shamans, and collaborators of the indigenous organizations; collected and analysed official documents, brochures, and news; and travelled to different communities where guards conducted their activities (see Table 1.1). Field notes of these events were collected in written records with date, activity, and people involved and, when permitted, videotaped. With the participants' permission, meetings and interviews were audio-taped, transcribed verbatim, and then translated from Spanish to English.

Starting from an interpretive approach, data were analysed from an interactional framing perspective. Sensitizing concepts that result from a literature study that connects to the research question at hand were used for coding, as explained in more detail in each empirical chapter.

Table 1.1 List of activities in fieldwork

Activities in fieldwork	Quantity	Observations
Fieldwork days	220 (approx.)	March 2014 to March 2015
PO* workshops	6	
PO ACIN internal meetings	13	
PO assemblies	20	
Indigenous guard actions	14	
Total activities	**53**	*PO = Participant Observation
News articles		
News articles systematically collected	1131	After fieldwork
News articles collected intuitively (particular events)	406	During fieldwork
Total news articles	**1537**	
Interviews		
Guards	12	Plus four key informants
Traditional healers or *The Walas*	4	
Authorities and leaders	5	
Guard key informants	4	With whom I had constant interactions during fieldwork and after
Collaborators and researchers	6	
Total interviewees	**31**	
Official documents		
Official documents collected intuitively (particular events)	43	During fieldwork
Official documents about the organization and its structure	33	After fieldwork
Total Official documents	**76**	

1.4   Outline of the Chapters

The thesis is composed of the introduction (this present chapter), three empirical chapters, one ethnographically informed literature review, and a synthesis chapter.

In each of these chapters, specific elements of everyday indigenous guards' identity are examined and their approach to peacebuilding is critically analysed.

Chapter 2 is based on a pragmatic question about how the GI was created, but my fieldwork experience took me in the direction of identity construction and the role of history in this construction. Thus, my research question was: *How do the Nasa frame the Indigenous Guard history and what is the role played by these framing processes in how indigenous guards manage violent conflicts every day*? To answer this question, a language-based perspective was used. Framing refers to the discursive strategies that people deploy to achieve certain goals. Three types of framing processes were analysed: framing the issue, framing identities, and framing others.

Chapter 3 addresses the question of *how the GI operates and how its actions contribute or not to peacebuilding*. On 5 November 2014, while peace talks were ongoing between FARC and the Colombian Government, two GI members were shot dead by FARC members. Without using guns or physical violence, GI guards captured seven guerrillas responsible for the crime, held a trial, and sentenced the rebels to imprisonment. These events are carefully described, investigated, and serve as an illustration of GI organization, activities, and responses for managing conflict. As I was present during these events, rich data were collected that allowed me to appreciate how things were organized on the spur of the moment. The concept of self-organization is used to gain insights into the mechanisms and strategies applied.

Chapter 4 answers the question of *why some indigenous people from northern Cauca joined the GI, whereas others joined guerrilla groups like FARC-EP*. Studies on the Colombian conflict have shown that, in a context of injustice and violence, there can be many motivations and justifications for joining armed groups. However, the question remains as to why people under the same circumstances would take different paths. Participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis were used to collect data. Therewith, I describe the GI practices and identify motivations that could affect individuals' choice. Further, four individual life stories are analysed, revealing considerations, moments of relevant choices, in combination with specific circumstances under which individuals chose to join the guard.

Chapter 5 is mainly based on an extensive literature review about Nasa indigenous history, but it also uses insights from fieldwork experiences. The chapter aims to explain the context of the Nasa's struggles through time. It answers the question of *how Nasa people have adapted and changed their collective identities to survive and how these processes of identity reconstruction contribute to peacebuilding in the Cauca region and the country in general*. This chapter is considered as an *ethnographically informed* identity history of the Nasa. It presents junctures at which, according to my research, Nasa people deployed strategies to survive that generated changes in their identities.

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Chapter 6 links the questions in the different chapters with the overall research question of the thesis. It further discusses what this research adds to existing debates on identity, peacebuilding, and conflict studies. Finally, the findings are debated by reflecting on the methodological and practical implications.

Picture 2.1 A guacamayo tree from the forest of the Central mountain range in northern Cauca. →››

CHAPTER 2

RECONSTRUCTING COLLECTIVE IDENTITY FOR PEACEBUILDING*

Chaves P., Aarts N., and van Bommel S., 2018

The indigenous Nasa are recognised in Colombia for using innovative strategies to deal with violent conflicts and to claim political rights. One of the most visible and permanent strategies is the Guardia Indígena – GI (Indigenous Guard), a community watch to patrol and protect indigenous people. This study investigates how the Nasa frame the history of the GI, with what purposes and consequences. A language-based perspective was used to analyse how the Nasa frame the GI history and how this framing process affects their actions and practices. Our analysis shows that the Nasa refer mainly to four historical events when talking of GI history. These events function as identification points that contribute particular elements to the guards' collective identity in specific situations. This framing process has become an important power resource for constructing a non-violent collective identity and reconstructing their historical memory for peacebuilding.

Keywords: historical memory, framing, stories, collective identity, peacebuilding, indigenous Nasa, Colombia

Abstract

2.1   The Indigenous Nasa and Conflicts in Colombia

At the end of 2016, a peace agreement was signed between the Colombian government and the guerrillas, Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People's Army (FARC–EP). This agreement put an official end to the war between these two actors. However, the implementation of the agreement is not self-evident, as the areas most affected by the conflict have been historically marginalised from State support and control (Velasco, 2016). Furthermore, when the agreement was put to a plebiscite, it was narrowly rejected, with 50.2 per cent against, and 49.8 per cent in favour. Two years later, doubts remain about who will take control of FARC territories – the government or new criminal bands? (Valencia et al., 2017). Pessimism is therefore spreading about the sustainability of the peace.

The northern part of Cauca Province is one of the marginalised territories at high risk of persistent conflicts and violence (FIP, 2013). Land and resource struggles among different sectors have led to the presence of both left- and right-wing armies. The now demobilised FARC and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN, a guerrilla group of around 2,000 people which at time of writing had still not signed up to the peace agreement) were formed in 1970, and paramilitary groups, with different names, have appeared sporadically since 1950. Modern paramilitary groups were organised as self-defence forces against the guerrillas, funded mainly by landowners and drug traffickers in the 1980s. By 2000, these criminal bands were equipped with sophisticated weapons, trained by foreign mercenaries, and grouped in the Self-Defences United of Colombia (AUC). Their goals were to take control of regions where they could extract large rents and deny or expel guerrilla access (see for instance, Gray 2008; Hristov 2014; Ugarriza and Craig 2013). Furthermore, north Cauca holds a strategic geographical position as part of the Pacific corridor, an entry and exit point for narcotics and weapons smuggling for drug cartels and for provisions for the armies (CNAI, 2007c, 2012; FSD, 2008). Finally, violent conflicts also involve legal and illegal mining exploitation and land disputes between landlords and indigenous people.

As many as 504 indigenous people from Northern Cauca were killed in armed conflicts between 2000 and 2014 (ACIN- Tejido de Defensa de la Vida, 2015). One of the most critical junctures of the conflict was from 2001 to 2004, when confrontations between the army and the guerrillas and massacres of indigenous leaders increased considerably (Bolaños Maya, 2012; CNAI, 2007c, 2012). Moreover, since 2016 when the peace agreement was signed, 56 social leaders have been killed in Cauca (Nación, 2018). The large indigenous population in the region, mainly from the Nasa community, have the official rights to manage their own territories, and therefore various actors consider them as obstacles to their interests (CHCV, 2015; CNAI, 2012; Toro, 1994). The Nasa, nonetheless, have taken a conscious decision to stay in their territories because their culture, community, and survival are inextricably linked to land; therefore, in their view, displacement implies a dramatic deterioration

in community life and physical health (Wirpsa et al., 2009). They have developed various initiatives for survival. The most permanent is the Guardia Indígena (GI: Indigenous Guard), a community watch to patrol and protect indigenous territory and communities, particularly from armed groups.

Researchers exploring indigenous groups' role in conflicts in Cauca have focused on political struggles (See for instance: Findji 1991; van de Sandt 2003; Hristov 2005; Findji and Rojas 1985). Some conclude that the non-violent Nasa initiatives are an innovative and integral approach to peacebuilding, based on indigenous cultural practices and traditions (see for instance, Hernandez Delgado 2006; Wilches-Chaux 2005; Wirpsa et al., 2009), and that the GI is a logical response to the violent context (Sandoval Forero, 2008). Rappaport (1990b) conducted extensive research among indigenous groups in Cauca revealing that the Nasa use historical memory to achieve political rights and recognition. She analyses the influence of oral stories in the political practices of the Nasa and shows how the reinterpretation of the past is a mechanism that they use to address political struggles. Following Rappaport on how Nasa historical memory might help them to survive the present, this study aims to ascertain how the Nasa frame the GI history and the role played by these framing processes in how indigenous guards manage violent conflicts every day. My interest derives from fieldwork, as I could observe that these topics are a clear and important part of Nasa survival strategies. Furthermore, in a post-conflict context in Colombia, initiatives like the GI could bring valuable insights about challenges and opportunities for a sustainable peace.

This study adopts a qualitative interpretive approach in which individuals are seen as members of a community of meaning, where traditions, practices, language, and other cultural elements provide them with the materials to produce their meaning-making of everyday events (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006). Researchers using the interpretive approach interact with their informants in their own conditions and circumstances (Haverland & Yanow, 2012). Therefore, during fieldwork ethnographic methods were employed. In this study, how the Nasa frame their GI history, and how this framing process affects their actions and practices, were analysed from a language-based perspective. Framing refers to the discursive strategies that people deploy to achieve certain goals (Benford & Snow, 2000; Entman, 1993). Depending on what is being framed, Gray (2004) distinguishes: issue frames (what the situation is about), identity frames (who we are and what we do), and characterisation frames (who they are and what they do). Therefore, three types of framing processes were analysed: framing the issue, framing identities, and framing others. It is argued that the Nasa strategically frame GI history through four identification stories and, by doing so, construct their historical memory and reconstruct their collective identity, moving towards a non-violent collective identity which, indeed, aims to contribute to sustainable peace in Colombia.

2.2 Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected by the first author living in Santander de Quilichao, Cauca, and working in ACIN headquarters for over 220 days in a 12-month period from March 2014 to March 2015. The researcher collaborated in the activities of the organisation, supported communication tasks, and joined informal events. The idea was to live, as much as possible, as an ACIN member.

The primary methods used for data collection were participant observation, semi-structured interviews, informal conversations, and document analysis. Field notes were collected on date, place, activities, perceptions, and fragments of conversations. In total, the author visited 13 ACIN communities, engaged in participant observation in 31 ACIN meetings about immediate political and violent events relating to the organisation, and joined 14 GI actions to manage conflicts. In addition, a convenience sample of 31 indigenous guards and leaders from different communities and of different ages were interviewed (video-recorded) during their daily activities. From this group, six key informants were selected, who constantly provided background information in specific situations and contexts. These interactions were recorded on video or audio, except for those that took place spontaneously, which were described in field notes. Also, 33 official documents were collected, including previous assemblies' minutes and brochures about the organisation and its structure. Interviews were audio-taped, transcribed verbatim, and then translated from Spanish to English. Framing analysis was conducted for interviews and official documents. Events and frames relating to GI history were coded and selected. Field notes were used for reflection, reviewing my interpretations, and elaborating thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973) that show details of the framing context.

2.3 Identification Stories

It was found that in North Cauca, when talking about the creation of the GI, the Nasa refer mainly to four historical junctures: i) their struggles with the Spanish in the sixteenth century, ii) the creation of indigenous organisations in the 1960s and 1970s, iii) the Armed Movement Quintín Lame (MAQL) guerrilla in the 1980s, and iv) paramilitary incursions in 2000–2003.

How these stories were chosen and became the keystones of GI identity was beyond the scope of this study. Guards participate in community assemblies, capacity-building activities, political training, and workshops in general, and they perhaps learn some of these stories there. In fieldwork, however, it was possible to observe that oral tradition is a cornerstone in how the Nasa organise the GI. Young guards are constantly curious and ask the elders about their past stories, and, in conversations, people mention *caciques* (leaders; female *cacicas*) as if they know them and add characteristics and adjectives to describe them. Hence, historical characters are very much present in their conversations.

In the following section, I present a historical introduction to each identification point, followed by an analysis of the framing processes in each story, this is, which events they select when talking, how they present their actions and themselves, and with what purpose.

2.3.1   First Identification Point: The Warrior

In pre-colonial times, indigenous communities in Northern Cauca were not pacific people that lived in harmony with their environment. Indeed, these communities were recognised as warriors (Bonilla, 1982; Rappaport, 1990b; Wilches-Chaux, 2005), and there are chronicles of clashes among indigenous neighbours in this region that continued even after the arrival of the Spanish (Gómez & Ruiz, 1997). According to the literature (Rappaport, 1990b), the Nasa became a political unit in the eighteenth century, when caciques Juan Tama and Manuel de Quilo y Sicos negotiated their status as legal tributaries of the Spanish crown, in exchange for indigenous people keeping their territories, called *resguardos*.

Resguardos and cabildos were created by the Spanish conquerors in 1592 to organise and allocate indigenous populations in particular territories. Indigenous people took advantage of the legal structure established by the crown, as communities who possessed these land titles had the possibility of setting up their own community government and keeping some of their traditional customs and social control systems (Wirpsa et al., 2009). With time, indigenous people appropriated these concepts and kept them as part of their strategies for land struggle. Today, the resguardos represent indigenous territories, which are distinct legal entities under Colombian law since 1991, recognised as communal, unavailable for sale or rent, and governed by indigenous authorities.

Although the Nasa became a formal political unit in the eighteenth century, in fieldwork I found that people had identified themselves as a group much earlier. Before the Spanish arrival, indigenous people were dispersed in the Cauca region and did not belong to a single tribe. At the beginning of the sixteenth century however, they had to group themselves to combat a new common enemy, the Spanish, with whom they fought many fierce battles. It took the Spanish almost a century to conquer these people (Bonilla Sandoval, 1982; Rappaport, 1990b; Wilches-Chaux, 2005). The first identification point of the GI, the warrior, relates to a historical character from the sixteenth century, Cacica Gaitana.

Gaitana was first described by the Spanish chronicler Juan de Castellanos (1850) as a leader respected and followed by many people, around 1537. The story says that the Spanish conqueror Pedro de Añasco arrived at Timaná, sent for the cacica's son to pay tribute, but burned him alive in front of the cacica because he did not want to pay. Claiming justice, Gaitana raised an army of many thousand indigenous people and defeated the Spanish. The chronicle says that the cacica tortured Pedro

de Añasco before killing him.

The historian Victor Bonilla (1982) identifies the battle of Peñon de Tálaga in 1538, in which the cacica defeated the Spanish, as the beginning of Nasa organisation (Bonilla Sandoval, 1982; Yule, 2012). On the CRIC website, the cacica is mentioned as one of the first indigenous leaders (CRIC, 2013). Rappaport (1990b) includes a re-telling of the story by Julio Niquinás in 1971, a leader from Tierradentro who described a vivid story of the cacica and her son. All these sources agree that the cacica was an indigenous leader whose son was killed by Pedro de Añasco, provoking a war with the Spanish that the cacica and her army won.

Framing Their Identity as Millenarian Warriors

The Nasa agree that the GI has its roots in colonial times. For them, there is no doubt that the Guard is *millenarian*, and they express this openly during public events. An informant explained her experience: '*I started in the Guard in 2001, but the Guard is millenarian because it is the same resistance of indigenous people to survive, from the Spanish invasions until now.*'[1] The respondent is emphasising the continuity of their actions by stressing '*same resistance*'. Continuity is an essential function of framing their identity as warriors because it connects their actions as guards with their indigenous roots.

This historical reference contributes many elements to the GI identity. The GI National Coordinator described the GI's origin as follow: '*The Indigenous Guard is a process of resistance that started with Cacica Gaitana in 1500. One could almost say that the first Guard was the Cacica, who defended our territory from the Spanish invaders...*'[2] There are at least three frames in this quotation. First, by choosing Gaitana as the first guard, he wants to present the guards as fierce warriors able to win any battle. Two, by talking about a *process of resistance*, this guard is framing the issue to reinforce the function of continuity. Moreover, in daily conversations the Nasa consistently frame their actions as a *process*. When, for instance, new people arrive at ACIN, members often say: '*Welcome to our process.*' By framing the issue as *a process*, they emphasise continuity and change, suggesting that they recognise their actions as part of a continuous transformation instead of, for instance, as part of a traditional past that they are trying or want to preserve. Thus, in the process frame they include the past and the present. Third, by framing the situation as *Spanish invasion* instead of, for instance, war, the boundaries with their enemies are constructed in such a way that the Nasa are local people forced to defend themselves and the Spanish are outsiders. Thus, the GI identity is also based on the exclusion of external adversaries, in this case: *Spanish invaders*.

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1   Personal interview, indigenous guard from Tacueyó *resguardo*, 21 Mar. 2014.
2   Personal interview, an indigenous guard from Huellas-Caloto *resguardo*, 14 Oct. 2014.

Cacica Gaitana, however, is also renowned for another story. It is said that, when she captured Pedro Añasco, she ordered his eyes to be removed and dragged him behind her horse, exhibiting him in many towns until he died (González 1978). Therefore, the cacica is also associated with violent actions, but the data show that the Nasa do not want to present themselves as violent. The millenarian warrior, therefore, represents an apparently contradictory violent identity that needs to be justified. Various discursive strategies are deployed to deal with this apparent contradiction, as shown in the next utterance. '*If we look at history, at some junctures, when there was systematic aggression against us, we had to use guns. If we look at history, that is what Cacica Gaitana did...,'*[3] claims the Coordinator of ACIN's *Tejido de Defensa de la Vida,* the branch of ACIN that coordinates activities with the guards. This respondent defines the situation as *systematic aggression.* Consequently, indigenous people *had to use guns*. Thus, the violence wrought by their ancestors is framed as self-defence, which makes it acceptable. As Entman explained, when talking, people define situations, diagnose causes, make moral judgments, and suggest remedies (Entman, 1993). In the next quote, similar and even stronger justifications are made:

> *Cacica Gaitana struggled strongly against the Spanish invasion, resisted all the attacks...Her fights left us a legacy, an important motto: defend our lives and our territory... Cacica Gaitana taught us to defend life, as warriors, not because we Nasa women are warriors, we are not. You cannot defend life by destroying it, turning yourself into a murderer. But there are times when the invading forces are so destructive, their arrogance and ambition so blind, that the only way to stop the destruction is to resist with strength the blindness, hatred, and ambition of some; because domination can be so strong that non-warrior people are forced to become warriors, even against their own nature... The dignity of the Nasa and other indigenous people cannot be sold or negotiated. We, as people and community, are peaceful... but the moment that we have no choice and our life and our territory are going to be taken away, then we also fight and resist.*[4]

This respondent discursively justifies her ancestors' actions by adding negative moral judgements about the outsiders. In contrast, the Nasa are depicted as having positive moral principles. However, she also emphasises that the Nasa will fight and resist when necessary. This fragment highlights another function of framing their identity as warriors: it allows guards to present themselves as strong and to fight and resist when presented with unscrupulous opponents.

In these examples, we can observe that the framing process is very important for identity construction, as collective identities involve the articulation of differences in relation to others (Escobar, 2008). Moreover, these identities have cues for an interior

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3   Personal interview, 29 Jan. 2015.
4   Leader of Jámbalo *resguardo*, 2005 interview, in Centro de Memoria Histórica 2012.

and an exterior common recognition (Von Busekist, 2004), which can be based on visible features, practices, and actions. For instance, the differences between the indigenous people and the Spanish is visible because, according to the Nasa, the Spanish were intrinsically violent and therefore the indigenous people had to use violence for self-defence.

The idea of Nasa as millenarian warriors also circulates in meetings and public demonstrations through posters, magazines, and banners, where drawings of strong indigenous people appear, reinforced by sentences about strength and resistance. In informal conversations, a guard from Cerro Tijeras explained: '*You know? We are warriors. We do not like to be dominated...We are fighters; this is the reason why we still exist.*' He is framing an identity of invincibility and freedom here. Similarly, in the next quote, the National Coordinator of the Guard affirms:

> *Here in Cauca I think [the Guard] has been a way out for the warrior spirit that the Nasa and other indigenous groups have...We are savages in the epistemological meaning of the word. Because the word savage has been mistreated, misunderstood, so we are taking this word back. We are savages. Savage people are from the forest, the ones who have not been deformed, who are still fierce to run freely across the savannah and the valleys, and who do not allow others to hunt them.*[5]

This quotation has several features of an identity. This is a different warrior than the previous one, he is not brave or violent, he is a savage warrior who has been controlled. He is an ideal type, free, independent, connected with nature. Moreover, the informant acknowledges the power of words and their meaning, explaining that savage has been misunderstood, deploying a discursive strategy that eliminates the pejorative meaning. As he is a leader, this description could be used to motivate guards or to encourage people to join or support the GI.

On many occasions during fieldwork, deployment of characteristics of the warrior identity for managing violent conflicts could be observed, when the guards sat together and recounted anecdotes of different dangerous situations, heated discussions with FARC members, confrontations with the police, or rescues of kidnapped people. They frame their actions in utterances such as: '*We do not run, we have to defend our territory'; 'If we do not defend our territory, no one else is going to do it'; 'We have to be strong to survive...'; 'I do not care if I die, because the others [Nasa] will continue our struggle...' 'If you work with us, you have to be fearless*.' In these interactions, guards are framing their identity as 'not dominated', 'fighters', 'autonomous', 'brave', 'independent', 'strong', and 'invincible'. Moreover, a contrast is implicitly constructed in relation to other indigenous people that were dominated and no longer

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5   Personal interview, 14 Oct. 2014.

exist. The Nasa have survived because they are brave, strong, and they do not fear to die. I suspect that these characteristics of Nasa identity are very old, at the core of their identity. The chronicler Juan de Castellanos (1850) described indigenous people from this region as fierce warriors. Young guards might learn from early childhood that being brave is important, in their homes and community assemblies and through rituals and training.

A key informant told us the following story. In 2011, in Cerro Tijeras resguardo, in a confrontation between the army and FARC, an old lady was caught inside a house in the crossfire. The informant was young and new in the GI, but he was assigned as GI coordinator in his community and therefore had to manage the situation. At some point, a male guard leader from ACIN and a group of other guards arrived at the village and gave him instructions to rescue the woman. The ACIN leader ran towards the woman's house, and the informant followed him:

> *When we saw ACIN representatives we were happy. We did not feel alone... when I saw [the leader], I told him there was this old woman. He didn't delay and started to run in the direction of the house. I could hear the bullets crossing, but I felt strong with him... We protected the woman with our own bodies and rescued her. I felt like a hero! He [the leader] is one of the big guards.*[6]

In this fragment, the respondent correlates his personal feelings and experience with the GI identity. Equally, by making a positive moral judgement about the capacity of the other guard to deal with emotions in dangerous situations and act to protect other people, he is seeking a construction of the GI identity as a fierce and brave hero. This image could also be ascribed to a warrior identity.

In this section, it is shown that Cacica Gaitana represents the first point of identification of the Nasa and, more specifically, the GI identity, namely, *the warrior*. To sum up, this identity has three main functions: i) it works as a key point of identification linking current actions to the past, supporting the guards in the reconstruction of a continuous and strong identity; ii) it makes the guards and their strategies different from non-indigenous groups, but it also allows a difference to be drawn between them and other indigenous communities that were dominated; iii) it encompasses features such as bravery, strength, being good fighters, and not being dominated, which are necessary abilities for the guards to deal with the dangerous and uncertain situations that they face in their everyday practices as guards.

The warrior identity, however, also represents a challenge to their identity construction because it is associated with violence. Therefore, the guards continuously deploy

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6   Personal interview, 28 Nov. 2014.

different discursive strategies to justify the actions of their ancestors, making moral judgements. In conclusion, by framing these various elements, the respondents assemble a narrative of a peaceful community that was occasionally forced to fight. The framing process helps them to promote a particular interpretation of their ancestors' actions and to reconstruct their identities and act accordingly in specific situations in the present.

2.3.2   *Second Identification Point: Defenders of the Land*

In the nineteenth century when Colombia gained independence from Spain, indigenous people struggled to be included in the politics and land rights system (Sanders, 2004). A new tax regime allowed hacienda owners to exploit indigenous people through a labour institution called *terraje* (Velasco, 2011)*,* which consisted of a labour-rent paid to landowners by tenants (Hristov, 2005). In 1890, Law 89 provided indigenous people with land stewardship. Manuel Quintín Lame, an important indigenous leader from Tierradentro (1883–1967), studied the law and found a legal basis for recovering indigenous resguardos. Lame was born in El Borbollón, part of the Polindara hacienda, where his parents were *terrajeros* (sharecroppers). Having a Nasa father and a mother from the Misak ethnic group, he fought for the economic and social autonomy of indigenous people, starting with the abolition of terraje.

His movement, called the Quintinada, was very active between 1914 and 1918. It had the following objectives:

- Defence of indigenous territory and rejection of any law that adversely affected the resguardos.
- Total refusal to pay terraje or to comply with personal obligations for land rights.
- Declaration of the cabildos as legitimate authority.
- Land recovery from usurping landlords and refusal to recognise land titles that are not based on royal certificates.
- Rejection and condemnation of the racial discrimination to which Colombian indigenous people are subjected.

These goals constitute a bond of continuity between the manifestos of Juan Tama and Manuel de Quilo y Sicos and the current indigenous movement. In this way, Manuel Quintín Lame laid the roots for the indigenous movement, its actions, and its struggle platform, in a process that led to the creation of CRIC in 1971 (Bonilla et al., 1972; Gómez Cardona, 2012a; Rappaport, 1990b, 2005b; Romero-Loaiza, 2006; Vasco Uribe, 2008).

Framing Their Identity as Guardians of Indigenous Land

The literature suggests that the GI appeared during indigenous land recuperation processes at the end of the 1960s, when it was called the Civic Guard (Caviedes

& Caldón, 2007). The Civic Guard appeared in 1969 when indigenous people and farmers mobilised with the aim of recovering their lands (CECOIN, 2007; CMH, 2012). Guards organised sporadically for activities like patrolling the territory, warning about the presence of enemies, and taking the lead in confrontations with the police. They also helped with the logistics in assemblies and *mingas*, a traditional form of communal work based on groups that exchange labour-power. The leading organisations in these processes were the National Association of Farmer Users (ANUC) and CRIC, representing indigenous claims.

In both formal interviews and informal conversations, indigenous people recognised the importance of the Civic Guard in the history of the GI.

> *In 1969, the Guard was born, but it was born as Civic Guard. Why? Because in 1969 or 1970 the political land struggle was undertaken not just by indigenous people, but by farmers also... It was for controlling the land recovery process and watching... They [indigenous guards] had to be aware of security... The Indigenous Guard was created for land recovery and events also, because, when CRIC was created, assemblies, meetings, strong mobilisation processes started, and we needed a group of people to take care of the discipline in these events and control the mobilisations,'* explained the National Indigenous Guard Coordinator.[7]

In this quote, the informant aims to draw the boundaries of guards' specific tasks at a specific juncture. The Civic Guard's role is framed as for control, security, and discipline within the indigenous organisations. All of these tasks are still part of the GI's activities. Also, the identity is framed in relation to other indigenous people, who might need help or to be controlled by the guards in specific situations, like public events and mobilisations.

The respondent also implies a subtle boundary with farmers, suggesting that not all outsiders are enemies. To that end, he defines the situation as a political land struggle, which was developed together with farmers. This indicates that, when it comes to the struggle for land, indigenous people and farmers are part of the same alliance. Moreover, on some occasions, the Nasa also frame themselves as farmers. In daily conversations for instance, the Nasa remark on their farmer identity by talking about their bodily strength. '*I am getting weak by working in the office, I need to go back to the farm,'* affirmed a leader from Canoas on arriving at a meeting in ACIN. '*A respected guard does not just stand firmly with the bastón, he also has to sow,'* explained another leader in a meeting. This equivalence with farmers is important because, when talking about contemporary issues, they frame themselves in opposition to outsiders or external groups, but not by means of ethnic affiliations

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7   Personal interview, 14 Oct. 2014.

or origins *per se*. Therefore, the Civic Guard story, in terms of identity construction, creates a subtle distinction and a partnership with farmers.

2.3.3   *Third Identification Point: The Armed Movement*

After CRIC was created, many indigenous leaders were killed and persecuted, and different indigenous self-defence groups were organised sporadically, leading to formalisation of the MAQL, in 1984, the only guerrilla group in Colombia that is recognised as indigenous (Tattay and Peña 2013; CMH 2012; Peñaranda 2015). The MAQL was organised with support and training from other guerrillas such as the M-19. However, the group's main goal was self-defence of indigenous organisations from State repression and the eradication of terraje. Thus, their actions were only regional and in self-defence (Tattay & Peña, 2013), whereas guerrillas like the ELN, FARC, and M-19 were strengthening their strategies in many regions, including Cauca, with the goal of becoming national movements.

During the 1980s, the war intensified in Cauca, and confrontations between guerrillas were frequent, even by mistake (Peñaranda, 2015; Tattay & Peña, 2013). FARC presented the main threat to indigenous leaders who did not follow their instructions, and many young Nasa were recruited into the ranks of different guerrilla groups (CMH 2012; Pécaut 2003; Peñaranda 2015). Furthermore, 15 Nasa traditional shamans were accused of witchcraft and killed by FARC members (Peñaranda, 2015, p. 224). Thus, there was a very tense and distrustful relationship between indigenous communities and the guerrillas.

In 1990, the MAQL and other guerrillas signed a peace agreement with the Colombian government. A new constitution was created in 1991, and indigenous territories were recognised. In 1994, CRIC became a decentralised organisation, an umbrella for many local organisations, and leaders from Northern Cauca funded ACIN.

Framing Identity as Different from Other Guerrillas

In an interview in 1996, a leader from Toribío and former member of the MAQL, explained:

> *We didn't want to take power, we wanted to support the organisational process in communities. So, communities really could have access to land, basic needs, and also their cultural, political, and social rights would be respected. Naturally, not just indigenous communities but farmer communities that were struggling for autonomy. This is important because some groups like FARC wanted to control indigenous leaders and communities. Our movement gave an opportunity for communities to continue their position of autonomy, autonomy from the government, the landlords, and the leftist organisations. (Tatay and Peña 2013, 42).*

In this quote, the respondent frames the MAQL by drawing boundaries between themselves and other guerrillas, especially FARC. He explains the main differences by contrasting each group's goal: one group wanted power and control, whereas the MAQL offered autonomy to indigenous and farmer communities. This interview occurred a few years after the MAQL signed the 1990 peace agreement with the government, and since then indigenous organisations have emphasised their separation from any guerrilla group.

In this quote, communities are an essential part of the MAQL identity. This is an important aspect for indigenous people, as very often and in different settings the Nasa frame the power of indigenous organisations in relation to the support that they get from their communities: *'Here the people rule and the government obeys'* is a frequently expressed view on posters in organisations and graffiti in communities.

Equally, framing the issue as autonomy represents a key part of Nasa identity, mentioned very often in ACIN documents and meetings. The Nasa define autonomy as: *'people's rights to control, watch, and organise their social and political life inside the resguardos, with guidance from cabildos [indigenous authorities] and rejecting impositions from externals or outsiders'* (CMH 2012, 194). The boundary work of this definition is evident; when the respondent refers to *autonomy from* ..., he reinforces the idea of rejecting outsiders' authority. The constant framing of externals or outsiders together with moral judgements, as for instance *imposition*, supports the story function in which these outsiders become external adversaries. Framing the issue as a land struggle, which also appeared in the Civic Guard story, is an important strategy that justifies the Nasa communities' actions because it relates to their own motivations and wishes to keep their ancestral territory.

A former member of the MAQL, currently a guard Coordinator, explained the transition from the MAQL to the Civic Guard and the GI, as follows:

> *´When a group takes guns and it is not clear why, they forget, they take different ways far-away from the policies; the essence of the struggle gets lost in that moment. If you want to have a strong-armed group, it's not just a concept of defending the territory. Members start kidnapping, extorting, and getting power through guns; so, the essence is neither defending the territory anymore nor supporting the process of recovering land. So, we saw that the movement [the MAQL] was becoming bigger, it was going to [Provinces] Chocó, Tolima, so the leaders met and said: no, if we continue like this, then, there is not going to be territory, not cabildos, and not leaders. Our option is to work through peaceful means, working in the [indigenous] organisations and getting the territory through a peaceful process and the political formation of people... At that time, the Civic Guard was there, and*

many of us became part of it.'[8]

The key informant here emphasises differences from other guerrillas by making moral judgements about their strategies and goals. In contrast, the Civic Guard is framed as an option to '*work through peaceful means*'. As in previous quotations, this respondent tries to legitimise violent actions in the past, but at the same time considers violence as a wrong strategy.

Interestingly, the MAQL, which was mentioned by ACIN guards, is not referred to in official documents as part of GI history. However, the data show that this historical reference is articulated by indigenous guards in informal conversations, especially because some former MAQL members have strategic positions as coordinators; and I observed that they explain to young guards that, after the MAQL, the indigenous organisations shifted to a strategy of non-violence. Thus, the MAQL story entails a close experience with violence, and the strategy of non-violence can be framed as a lesson learned from past experiences, thereby making this story a powerful discursive strategy to attract new members.

Throughout this section, it is shown that the Civic Guard and the MAQL represent the second and third points of identification, which have various functions: i) they distinguish between the guards and other indigenous people who might need control and discipline; ii) they create a partnership with farmers; iii) they help to draw boundaries between the Nasa and FARC members (this seems to represent an expulsion of the FARC from their identity, which most likely implies an expulsion of violence); iv) finally, these stories separate the Nasa from external groups that want to control them. All this boundary work is also constructed by framing the issue as a land struggle.

These stories are closely related to CRIC's and ACIN's principles, which relate mainly to land struggle and cultural resistance. Also, it became visible that guards aimed to reconstruct their identity as different from the guerrillas. This is a critical strategy for protection, distancing themselves from the conflict between the official government and leftist guerrillas. Finally, the MAQL story introduces the non-violent strategy as a key element of GI identity.

2.3.4   Fourth Identification Point

When talking about the specific point at which the GI was formalised as it is nowadays, the Nasa refer to a period between 2001 and 2003 when paramilitary armies entered Cauca Province. The paramilitary goal was to take control of some territories managed by the guerrillas FARC and ELN. Civil communities living in the region, including indigenous people, were caught in the crossfire. By 2004, 21

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8   Personal interview, 13 Jan. 2015.

municipalities had been attacked, 52 indigenous leaders had been killed, and around 153 indigenous people had disappeared (CNAI 2007). In 2001, the Nasa formalised the GI to prevent displacement of their communities and to protect people against armed groups.

Framing Identity as Non-Violent Human Rights Defenders

In interviews, guards explained that from April to May 2001 they received training from indigenous leaders on topics like indigenous rights and indigenous political history. In addition to that and supported by international collaborators, the guards were also trained on human rights and how to handle dangerous situations.

Under resolution 003 of 28 May 2001, the GI was formalised and its principles, main goals, and activities were explained in an official document:

> *The Indigenous Guard has the fundamental objective of preserving the integrity and autonomy of the territory, defending human rights in general and our rights as indigenous communities in particular, while respecting and spreading our culture. The Indigenous Guard is supported by communities and their authorities; training, formation, and discipline are based on the Origin Law and the rights recognised in the National Constitution. It is not an entity of military character* (ACIN 2004, 33).

In this document, the GI's goals are first framed in relation to autonomy and territory, which are also used to justify the MAQL actions. However, new framing processes appear relating to the legal system, the constitution, and human and indigenous rights, and this differs from the warrior, the Civic guards, and the MAQL stories. Whereas the Cacica Gaitana and the MAQL stories related mainly to military strategies, the current GI represents a non-violent human rights defender identity, explicitly framed as non-military, perhaps to reinforce distance from other groups – paramilitaries and guerrillas – that use violence.

In interviews and documents, the formalisation of the non-violent GI gives the impression of a strategic and conscious decision by indigenous organisations to manage the violence around them. A key informant explained:

> *We had reviewed our history and concluded that it was a mistake when we took up guns, and indigenous authorities and communities decided we do not want more guns because guns are synonymous with death and we are defenders of life,*'[9] argued the *Tejido Defensa de la Vida* Coordinator.

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9   Personal interview, 31 Jan. 2015.

The GI identity is framed by establishing a moral principle: '*we are defenders of life.*' This framing process functions for drawing boundaries between the Nasa and other groups that use guns, reinforcing the idea of using non-violence to confront external adversaries, but it also functions as boundary work with their own past and their own previous violent strategies. Moreover, as we have seen in many quotations, there is an inherent idea that violence brings more violence, as guns equal death.

On 17 January 2007 in Toribío, indigenous authorities in a general assembly decided to change the name of the GI to *Kiwe Thegnas*, which in the Nasa language – Nasa Yuwe – means 'earth beings'. A key informant explained the meaning of this name:

> *Kiwe Thegnas has a deep cosmologic meaning rooted in indigenous values and history. Kiwe Thegnas is the one that takes care of the land, takes care of people, especially children. Kiwe Thegnas take care of indigenous history and organisations, of our cultural values framed in rituals and spirituality. We feel Kiwe Thegnas, it starts there, understanding the land, the problems in the territory; because the territory is part of us, it is the beginning of life, and it cannot be without Indians. This is what the elders have interpreted and told us,* explained the *Tejido Defensa de la Vida Coordinator.*[10]

The framing used in this quote suggests that the warrior identity story and the military strategies are less important, and that cultural values, rituals, and spirituality are becoming more relevant. Thus, the Kiwe Thegnas reaches a different level, a spiritual leader and protector of indigenous traditions and territories. The frame brings together the political and the spiritual world, which, according to this research, is a relatively new strategy for the Nasa. This revitalisation of indigenous cosmology most probably is the result of long processes relating to their previous experiences with the MAQL but also to formal processes that preceded the formalisation of the guard: CRIC's foundation and the creation of CRIC's Bilingual and Intercultural Education Programme in the 1970s (PEBI/Cric 2004), the Planes de Vida (community life plans) in the 1980s, ACIN's creation in 1994, among many others.

Changing the GI's name and using members' own traditional language is a clear example of reframing and re-signifying the GI identity. At the same time, the Kiwe Thegnas story links to indigenous worldviews and therefore gives continuity to the Nasa identity. Likewise, the Kiwe Thegnas connects the GI with the international discourse on *noble savages* (Ulloa, 2001a), which links up with international ecological and social movements.

By framing new identity stories as peaceful and defending human rights, the Nasa adapt the GI identity to new circumstances and link it to wider, contemporary, and internationally recognised identities. This section shows that the Kiwe Thegnas

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10   Personal interview, 31 Jan. 2015.

identification point serves different functions: i) it positions the GI as a non-violent strategy; ii) it encourages indigenous guards to use non-violent methods; and iii) it links their actions to non-violent and ecological social movements and human rights organisations around the world.

Framing their identity as non-violent is a relatively new and perhaps conscious Nasa strategy. However, this non-violent feature did not replace that of the warrior story. Instead, the Nasa have managed to adapt the 'less conscious' warrior story to a new context where some of its features have been dropped and others have been preserved. Consequently, the Nasa have constructed a narrative of a complex and resilient set of identities to face difficult challenges in their environment. The current GI identity refers to a non-violent, human rights defender, a spiritual person, and a millenarian warrior.

> *We decided rather focus on civil and peaceful resistance... We needed to establish our own form of protection as indigenous peoples [The Indigenous Guard], based on four principles: unity, because if we are disorganized we cannot resist, unity is equal to organization; land, because it is all we have and the land is part of us and it also has rights; culture, because our culture makes us different from others, makes us feel the need to continue our own way of living as indigenous peoples...And finally, with these three principles, we have autonomy, and we are building autonomy. Autonomy is the reason for the persecution by both the government and the guerrillas...Autonomy is living happy and free in our land,'*[11] argued Coordinator of the northern guard.

From this quote we learn that the GI as a collective identity links past events to current decisions and relates these decisions to specific principles: indigenous organisations, indigenous culture, communities, resistance, and autonomy. However, all of these principles are framed in relation to one constant issue: *indigenous territories*. Framing the issue as indigenous territory also helps to construct continuity in their identities. For them, the externals who want to take indigenous territories can change in different periods, but the Nasa are here in this territory since before the Spanish arrival, they are the first inhabitants. Interestingly, when they talk about Cacica Gaitana, the issue is about *defending the territory*; when they speak of the Civic Guard and the MAQL, the issue is *land struggles or land recovery*; and when they talk about the GI, the issue is again about *defending the territory* or even *controlling the territory*. The difference relates mainly to the legal status of the situation. The issue of the indigenous territories is transversal to all the stories identified in this study and is directly related to Nasa identities.

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11   Personal interview, 31 January 2015.

2.3.5   *Different Narratives and Different Strategies*

Official CRIC and ACIN documents frame the GI history with vague sentences and without specific historical events. The CRIC website describes the guard history as follows:

> *The functions of the guards come from the past at different stages:*
> *- Since the colonisation time: when we were invaded, and we had to defend ourselves from the invader.*
> *- The time of Juan Tama: Rebuilding the resguardos, when surveillance and resistance are given.*
> *- The time of CRIC creation in 1971: with the process of recovering the land, when the guards were in charge of giving alarm against the landowner* (CRIC 2016).

If we compare the stories, the Cacica Gaitana character is replaced by Cacique Juan Tama and the MAQL has been deleted. The Juan Tama story could convey a political strategy related to diplomacy and dialogue. As mentioned, Tama negotiated the possibility of creating the indigenous territories under the Spanish crown. Thus, each historical character brings a set of features to the collective identity (see Table 2.1). In previous studies also, indigenous leaders use both characters, indicating that one identity story does not exclude the other. Choosing which character to present in CRIC's official website is a political decision, and it could be related to this idea of excluding violence from guards' actions.

Table 2.1 Identification points for collective identity reconstruction

Identification point	Historical justification	Functions for collective identity construction
Cacica Gaitana Struggles	It refers to the same goals than the GI	- Continuity: It links current actions to past actions and helps in the reconstruction of a continuous and strong identity - Distinguishes them from other indigenous groups and external groups - Brings features like bravery, strength, being good fighters, un-dominated, thus helping guards to deal with dangerous and uncertain situations
Civic Guards	The first practices of the current GI appeared here	- Distinguishes guards from other indigenous people who might need control and discipline - Creates a partnership with farmers - Distinguishes Nasa from external groups that want to control them - Land as the main issue, helps them in the claim for autonomy
MAQL	It refers to the same goals than the GI and some practices also appeared	- Distinguishes guards from FARC members - Rejects violence as a strategy
Paramilitary incursions	The current GI was formalized	- Positions the Guard as non-violent - Links their actions to non-violent social movements and human rights organizations
Kiwe thegnas	The GI is resignified with cultural aspects	- Continuity: It links their worldview with current actions - Features relating to taking care of land and nature link them with *noble savages* identity and link their actions to international ecological social movements

2.4   Discussion

The data show framing processes of historical memory. In these framing processes, we can unveil a collective identity construction. Collective identities are grounded in the action of retelling the past (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). Thus, in this case, historical memory becomes a tool for collective identity reconstruction, and this is translated into specific practices and actions.

It is shown that these stories work as historical identification points that contribute particular elements to the current guard collective identity in specific contexts. According to Hall (1990), collective identities hinge on points of identification made within discourses, history, and practices. Collective identities are a relational and socio-cultural phenomenon that are visible and circulate in local contexts of interaction (for a language perspective on identity see Bucholtz and Hall 2005).

Moreover, these identities maintain a close relation to political systems in which they are immersed and their values, whether by approbation or rejection (Von Busekist, 2004). In the results, we see that the framing for GI identity construction is about drawing clear boundaries between it and other groups that use violence and creating images about the ideal behaviour of group members: use non-violent tactics, but be brave.

Organisational studies have shown the power of daily conversations in constructing group identities, developing trust, and creating change (de Vries et al. 2015; Kim and Kim 2008; Noelle Aarts et al., 2011). Previous studies show that an indigenous presence can serve as a barrier that controls the free exercise of dominion by armed groups, including the Colombian military (Hristov, 2009; Rappaport, 2002). Rappaport (2005a) suggests that, as armed conflicts are threatening indigenous survival in Cauca, indigenous people can survive if they participate in processes of group identity formation that promote the construction of innovative strategies, like the GI. In this study, it is revealed how a complex and multi-layered collective identity is constructed by means of stories from the past. In addition, we found characteristics that strengthen these collective identities and make them useful for dealing with violent conflicts in a non-violent way.

Among Nasa communities, the struggles of Cacica Gaitana, the Civic Guard, and the MAQL are communicated as stories that are being collectively constructed to create logics and justifications for yesterday's, today's, and tomorrow's practices and decisions. This is not necessarily a conscious process, but the ongoing collective framing helps them to create a shared vision of their situation, to produce and recognise a collective GI identity, and to guide members in taking specific positions and actions when faced with new situations (Hardy et al. 2005). The Nasa mobilise the warrior story in different contexts and times. It would seem easier just to delete the warrior from the story, as was done in the CRIC website. However, in Northern Cauca, the violent context demands a warrior identity. It is necessary to clarify, however, that in the current situation indigenous people do not claim to be proud of being violent; instead, as they are tired of violence, they express pride in being brave when faced with violent situations.

Clearly, as explained by Rappaport (1990b), the Nasa do not simply reflect on past events; instead, they constantly inquire into the relationship between past events and their manifestations in the present. In this way, the Nasa make their historical memory a useful tool for understanding and acting in the present. The framing of past stories is thus an example of what Rappaport calls *historical reinterpretation*, in which the past is fully experienced every day in the present (Rappaport, 1990b).

Studies on the Nasa focus more on political struggles with the State and less on the daily struggles for survival. Here, it is exposed how framing processes play a role in the alternative strategies that emerge from indigenous day-to-day struggles. Studies

using framing in conflict management have analysed the everyday interactions among opponents in a particular conflict (Aarts et al., 2011), and framing studies in social movements have examined the strategies deployed to convince people to join in and the collective action frames that serve to motivate collective action (Alte, 2008; Donoso, 2013). It is shown, however, that framing is not just a strategic and political tool for convincing people outside the group, and neither do framing processes represent only political opportunities for collective action. The framing analysis here has revealed deeper historical motivations behind people's actions and wishes – motivations that are essential for collective identity construction. In this case, the action of framing historical events goes beyond any conjuncture and helps the Nasa to make sense of their everyday activities and the changes that they need to make to reconstruct their identity and adopt non-violent strategies, depending on the specific context with which they are dealing. These framing processes represent a type of agency. As explained by Malksoo (2015), the core part of our identity is created from our inheritance, but moving forward, in terms of security, *would require the ability of political actors to learn to tell new stories about themselves* (Malksoo, 2015, p. 231). In this sense, the reconstruction of historical memory plays a key role in Nasa survival strategies.

Constructing a collective identity by means of framing leads to mobilisation, unites people, and guides communities to action. In this way, the process of framing the past in terms of everyday interactions has become a major power resource for the Nasa in their dealings with threatening situations and events every day. This strategy plays a key role in Nasa survival as, in a highly dynamic and violent environment, making 'the right decisions' is not always easy for either individuals or indigenous organisations. Moreover, the framing process that was found for the GI history might change in the future when the Nasa are confronted with new challenges and changes.

2.5   Conclusions

Although not always consciously, but still actively and strategically, the Nasa constantly construct and reconstruct their collective identities by framing past stories. These stories can appear paradoxical or even contradictory, but indeed they are complementary. The Nasa take some elements from the warrior, like bravery and courage, while rejecting others, such as the use of violence. In their stories, they exchange guns for human rights and indigenous rights in the Constitution, and they use symbols and rituals to protect themselves. Both the warrior and the non-violent guard represent the connection between past and present. The apparent contradiction of a non-violent warrior is eclipsed by the need for both continuity and adaptation to change. That said, these stories might not reflect the challenges entailed in adopting a non-violent identity, as it is not easy to deal with the feelings of anger, despair, hope, revenge, frustration, and disappointment associated with efforts to survive in violent and unjust environments. Thus, questions remain about the non-violent or the violent performance and practices of the indigenous guards.

Whereas non-violence was defined as a pragmatic strategy, I argue that the Nasa frame it as a principle. The GI identity construction can be pictured as a form of resistance that questions the political and social regime and points out the violent ways in which the State aims to resolve the issue of public order (Arendt, 1999). Accordingly, the non-violent principle represents a challenge also for the State and supports a step forward to peacebuilding.

This study shows that collective identity construction – based on historical memory – guides Nasa actions when they are dealing with conflicts in an innovative and non-violent way. Therefore, this study supports two conclusions: 1) history, as a tool of the present, confers power (Rappaport, 1988) and 2) historical memory is a cultural resource that could work as a collective foundation for peacebuilding (Bender Shetler, 2010). Equally, the findings in this research illustrate the importance of everyday conversations and discourses when strategies are being created to mobilise historical memory for peacebuilding. It connects with notions of everyday peacebuilding, everyday diplomacy, and practices that can move society towards conflict transformation (Mac Ginty, 2014).

In relation to peacebuilding, one of the greatest challenges facing democratic societies is that of including claims of distinct group identities and cultural norms into a single State governed by a constitution that reflects and supports the identities and norms of all its citizens (Cott, 2000). Framing identities from past events in conversations is a political practice. As Marisol de la Cadena (2010) has explained, indigenous politics claim a pluriversal politics, a new configuration that would connect different worlds with the possibility of becoming legitimate adversaries. Pluriversal politics adds a dimension of conflict but allows for conflicting views about that multiplicity to be discussed into argumentative forums (De La Cadena, 2010). Therefore, the GI represents a strategy to resist violence, but also to resist the worldviews and lifestyles imposed by outsiders.

The GI could play a key role in the future of the Northern Cauca region. In a context of violent conflicts, the process of identification with different groups could make a difference between joining an armed group or not, using violence or not, in the struggle for justice and political inclusion. This is very relevant in a post-conflict setting, where new interactions will appear among groups that have decided to exchange a violent for a non-violent strategy of resistance.

Picture 3.1 Morning training of the guards from northern Cauca.
Extraordinary Congress of the CRIC. 14 October, 2014 →››

CHAPTER 3

Self-organization for Everyday Peacebuilding*

Chaves P., Aarts N., and van Bommel S.

The Nasa indigenous group's Guardia Indígena, whose primary goal is to protect indigenous people and their territories from all types of armed groups, is a nonviolent self-protection organization in Northern Cauca, Colombia. On 5 November 2014, while peace talks were ongoing between the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the Colombian government, two Guardia Indígena members were shot dead by FARC guerrillas. Without guns or physical violence, indigenous guards captured seven guerrillas responsible for the crime, and, four days later, indigenous organizations held a trial and sentenced the rebels to imprisonment. This article describes those events and investigates how the unarmed guards managed to capture the guerrillas and bring them to trial. The self-organization concept is used to gain insights into the mechanisms and strategies deployed. The mechanisms of the Guardia Indígena include constructing and applying specific social norms and values, developing a common goal, and applying a flexible mix of centralized and decentralized ways of organizing. By combining and activating these mechanisms at carefully chosen moments, indigenous people have succeeded in organizing themselves as a collective movement that is powerful enough to confront armed groups without using violence.

Keywords: Collective action, Colombia, indigenous communities, peacebuilding, self-organization

Abstract

3.1   Introduction

The Northern Cauca region is one of the territories in which the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia–Ejército del Pueblo: FARC–EP) had a strong influence until the end of 2016, when a peace agreement was signed with the Colombian government. The agreement aimed for a reduction in inequality and a long-term development plan for Colombia (Chagas-Bastos, 2018), and even included an innovative gender perspective whose goal was to ensure women's leadership in peacebuilding and prevent sexual violence in armed conflicts (Boutron, 2018). The treaty thus represented a real opportunity for change. However, when put to a plebiscite, the agreement was narrowly rejected, with 50.2% voting against and 49.8% in favour. After several changes, however, the agreement was subsequently approved by Congress and immediately resulted in a general decrease in violence. Nonetheless, given that the most-affected areas by the conflict – like Northern Cauca – were historically marginalized from state support and management (Chagas-Bastos, 2018; Velasco, 2016), new criminal bands were already fighting to control these territories by the end of 2017 (Valencia et al., 2017). Moreover, in 2018, as many as 56 social leaders were killed in Cauca by unknown assailants (*El Tiempo,* 2018). In the same year, a new president was elected, representing the party that had opposed the peace agreement. By August 2019, in Northern Cauca alone, 33 leaders had been assassinated (*Semana,* 2019). That same month, former top FARC commander Luciano Marín, known as Iván Márquez, vowed to return to war because – in his words – the government had violated the peace agreement (Casey and Jakes, 2019). Pessimism is therefore spreading about the sustainability of the peace.

Since 2001, the indigenous Nasa, represented mainly by the Association of Indigenous Councils from Northern Cauca (ACIN), has employed a local self-protection strategy based on what is known as the Guardia Indígena (Indigenous Guard). The Nasa claim that the Guardia Indígena represents a nonviolent initiative because its members are unarmed. Guards use only a bastón (stick), which symbolizes the power bestowed on them by their community. Previous researchers have explored indigenous groups' role in conflicts in Cauca, focusing on political and land struggles (CECOIN, 2008; Findji, 1991; Findji and Rojas, 1985; Hristov, 2005; Van de Sandt, 2003; Velasco, 2011; Villa and Houghton, 2005). More specifically, research on the Guardia Indígena has focused on historical recounting, indigenous cultural practices, and political goals and outcomes (Hernandez Delgado, 2006; Wilches-Chaux, 2005; Wirpsa et al., 2009). These studies argue that the Nasa's nonviolent initiatives are an innovative and integral approach to peacebuilding based on cultural practices and traditions. Nonetheless, little is known about how the Guardia Indígena operates and how its actions contribute (or not) to peacebuilding. This study addresses those questions.

In contrast to top-down and institutionalized approaches to peace and conflict, our study adopts a critical approach, focusing on bottom-up and localized conflict de-escalation measures (Andrieu, 2010; Hirblinger and Simons, 2015; Mac Ginty, 2014). Accordingly, the data collection for this study focused on Nasa people's strategies for managing violent conflict in their everyday local context.

As the main interest is the Nasa contribution to peacebuilding, this study implies a translation of indigenous practical and discursive concepts (Viveiros de Castro, 2004) into terms that can be discussed in current debates on peacebuilding studies. According to Viveiros de Castro (2004), ethnographic research implies a constant comparison of the perspectives of both researchers and their subjects. Thus, the aim is to perform what Viveiros de Castro (2004, 2014) has called a *controlled equivocation* – that is, to start from the researchers' own perspectives in the analysis of indigenous practices, but to 'compare' their ideas with indigenous concepts in order to find different meanings and understand perspectives from both sides. To do so, in this study the concept of *self-organization* – referring to order created from the interaction of elements following simple rules (La-Mantia et al., 2017) – is used. Self-organization serves as an instrument for unveiling the practices of the Guardia Indígena and analyzing and reflecting on their impact on everyday peacebuilding.

In this chapter, first, our definition of the self-organization concept is presented. Then, the ethnographic methodology is described, with a focus on the strategies that Nasa people use in their everyday local context to manage violent conflicts. This is followed by a background section that is necessary for understanding both the context of the Guardia Indígena's actions and this research. The events of 5 November 2014, in which two guards were shot dead by FARC members, are described, and the features of self-organization that can be seen in those events are identified. The different characteristics of the GI organization are then analysed. This analysis is followed by a discussion of how the concept of self-organization made it possible to gain insights into the mechanisms and strategies deployed by the Guardia Indígena to manage violent situations in a nonviolent way. Finally, it is shown how the present study can contribute to debates on the role of self-defence groups such as the Guardia Indígena, their mechanisms for dealing with conflicts, and their contribution to everyday peacebuilding, as well as to the design of post-conflict reconstruction strategies.

3.2   Self-organization as a Sensitizing Concept

Most definitions of self-organization originate from the natural sciences, referring to processes whereby order emerges from the interactions among elements of a system, rather than from interventions by higher-order agents (Johnson, 2001). Definitions of self-organization vary in line with the theoretical traditions within social science (see for instance Aarts, 2007; Boonstra and Boelens, 2011; Escobar, 2014; Sherwood et al., 2016). On social movements, Escobar (2014) explains that self-organization

denotes bottom-up processes in which individuals using simple principles create complex collective behaviour. Thus, this concept highlights the autonomy of the elements or the possibility of agency in a decentralized organization (Anzola et al., 2017). Self-organizing processes also emerge, however, from a complex interplay between the intentional behaviour of individuals and unintended and contingent factors (Goldspink & Kay, 2004). In this paper, the main features of the concept are used: individuals working together for collective action, dealing with uncertainty, in a decentralized way, based on simple rules. These features were expressed by Johnson (2001) as pattern recognition, decentralized control and organization through interactions and continuous feedback. These features are adapted for social groups, as shown in Table 3.1:

Table 3.1 Self-organizing features in general

Feature	Description
Simple principles (pattern recognition)	In the case of social organizations, individuals share a set of simple principles that guide their actions. These principles can be a product of, and a mechanism for, self-organization.
Decentralized power (decentralized control)	As individuals have their own values and the capacity to act independently, there is not a higher level that coordinates or gives an order; instead, there are coordinated goals and tasks.
Organized through interactions	Communication via local interactions – instead of top-down instructions – is necessary to exchange information and make the difference between an unstructured group and a group that follows the same logic.
Continuous feedback	The intelligence of a self-organized group derives from 'the densely interconnected feedback between [agents] that encounter each other and adapt their actions.

3.3   Methodology

In this study, rich qualitative data are used to observe the cultural and identity elements that might have an impact on the GI strategies and actions. To accomplish this, I ascribed considerable value to the social constructions of reality or the meaning that people give to their social realities (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006). I engaged in participant observation in different activities, interacting with GI members in their own conditions and circumstances (Haverland & Yanow, 2012). As I also aim to understand the influence of exogenous events on GI activities, responses, and outcomes, I consulted media and documents sourced in the field to obtain contextual information.

3.3.1   Methods

During the year of fieldwork, the first author embarked on participant observation in 14 GI actions to manage conflict, collaborated in workshops organized by ACIN in 13 communities, and participated in 31 ACIN meetings where immediate political

and violent events related to the organization were discussed. Field notes of these events were collected in written records with date, activity, and people involved and, when permitted, videotaped. Observations in the field were accompanied by qualitative interviews with 31 indigenous guards and leaders, in addition to frequent informal conversations in context. With the participants' permission, meetings and interviews were audio-taped, transcribed verbatim, and then translated from Spanish to English.

For this chapter, the events of 5 November were selected as an illustration of GI organization, activities, and responses for managing conflict. Moreover, the author was doing fieldwork when these events happened and, therefore, could directly collect rich data from participant observation, meetings, and interviews specifically related to these events.

3.4   Indigenous Nasa and the Cauca Region

3.4.1   *Indigenous political struggles*

ACIN is a federation of 22 Nasa local organizations from 16 *resguardos*.[1] It is part of a bigger organization, the Cauca Regional Indigenous Council (CRIC). Both organizations follow the same goals: expansion of resguardos; strengthening of the cabildos;[2] developing knowledge of laws and demanding their fair application; recovering indigenous customs, traditions, and history; and training teachers to teach according to their local needs and in their respective languages (CRIC, 1981). Resguardos and cabildos were created in 1592. According to Nasa history, the caciques Juan Tama and Manuel de Quilo y Sicos negotiated the resguardos to organize and allocate indigenous populations in specific territories, providing them with land titles, setting up their own community government, and keeping some of their traditional customs and social control systems (Rappaport, 1990; Wirpsa et al., 2009). The eventual elimination of the resguardo began in the 1700s and accelerated after Independence in 1810 (Hristov, 2009).

Manuel Quintín Lame, an indigenous leader from Tierradentro (1883–1967), studied the law and found a legal basis for recovering indigenous resguardos. In 1991, after 20 years of CRIC struggles with the Colombian government, indigenous rights and territories were recognized in the Constitution, allowing indigenous people to have a legal framework for their land claims. Today, the resguardos represent indigenous territories, which are distinct legal entities under Colombian law, recognized as communal, unavailable for sale or rent, and governed by indigenous authorities. In 1994, CRIC became a decentralized organization, an umbrella for many local organizations, and leaders from Northern Cauca funded ACIN.

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1   Indigenous territories
2   Indigenous authorities

3.4.2 *Conflict dynamics*

Northern Cauca is part of the Pacific corridor, an entry and exit point for narcotics and weapons smuggling for drug cartels and for provisions for the armies (CNAI, 2007c, 2012; FSD, 2008). Land and resource struggles have led to the presence of both left- and right-wing armies. The now demobilized FARC and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN, a guerrilla group of around 2,000 people which at time of writing had still not signed up to the peace agreement) were formed in 1970, and paramilitary groups with different names have appeared sporadically since 1950. Moreover, by 2000, paramilitary groups had come together in the Self-Defences United of Colombia (AUC). Their goals were to take control of regions where they could extract large rents and deny or expel guerrilla access (see for instance Gray, 2008; Hristov, 2014; Ugarriza and Craig, 2013).

Between 2001 and 2003, the AUC entered Cauca Province, confrontations occurred with the FARC and ELN, and indigenous people were caught in the crossfire. By 2004, 21 municipalities had been attacked, 52 indigenous leaders had been killed, and around 153 indigenous people had disappeared (CNAI, 2007). Paramilitary incursions generated a reorganization of indigenous communities (Chaves et al., 2019), and, in 2001, the Nasa formalized the GI to prevent displacement of their communities and to protect people against armed groups.

Guards were trained by indigenous leaders on topics like indigenous rights and indigenous political history and, supported by international collaborators, guards were also instructed on human rights and how to handle dangerous situations. Nowadays, the GI receives sporadic sponsorship from national and international organizations for its implements and activities. The guards perform territorial control activities, like closing down cocaine-producing labs, closing illegal mines, expelling armed groups from indigenous territories, searching for missing persons, supporting the councils, organizing security and protection during mobilizations and meetings, protecting sacred sites, constantly alerting the community about the risks of bombings or combat, and guarding checkpoints at the resguardos entrances and exits.

3.5   The Events when FARC Members Killed Two Guards

The following section is a compilation of the events linked to 5 November 2014. While peace talks were ongoing between the FARC and the Colombian Government, two GI members were shot dead by FARC men. These paragraphs emanate from an analysis of interviews and conversations with many guards sharing their versions just a few hours after the event happened. The information was complemented with fieldwork observations and participant observation.

3.5.1   5 November 2014

The FARC were commemorating the third anniversary of the death of Alfonso Cano, a guerrilla commander killed by the official army in November 2011. An indigenous leader explained that '*Indigenous communities demanded that the propaganda be taken down because the indigenous territory is not a guerrilla territory.*'[3] The Guardia Indígena is responsible for such tasks, as part of its territorial control activities. Arriving at ACIN at around 10:30 a.m., I missed the departure of many guards who had left for the villages to take down the banners by a few minutes.

Around 12:00 noon, news arrived: 'Two indigenous guards were killed by guerrilla members. All indigenous people should go to Toribío, to help catch the murderers!' ACIN members immediately organized transportation and mobilized many guards to Toribío. ACIN'S headquarters are located in Santander de Quilichao, 42.5km from Toribío (Map 3.1); the phones were ringing. All community members were summoned to join the guards pursuing the guerrillas. 'We are all Guards', a leader said to people in the ACIN headquarters. The information was still not clear. We knew that the guards were removing the street banners, that, apparently, in one small village called Sesteadero the situation had escalated, and that the rebels had shot at some guards for trying to take the banners down. Earlier, the FARC had warned: 'Any person who dares to remove the propaganda will be considered a military objective.' Indigenous leaders phoned to try to get more information, but there was no mobile phone signal in the small towns in the mountains. Meanwhile, a rumour spread that three guards were dead, maybe killed by a bomb. All this happened in less than 30 minutes. Everything was very confusing at that point, but the indigenous people's priority was to mobilize as many people as possible to where the events were happening. About five hours later, seven FARC members were captured and taken to temporary detention in a community centre.

3.5.2   *Guards capture the guerrillas*

The next day, some of the guards told me their version of the story. These guards had arrived in Toribío after the shooting and helped to hunt the insurgents. The pursuit took place in the middle of a dense forest, on a mountain of the Colombian Massif[4], with few roads and scattered communities (see Map 3.1). The guards were pursuing seven guerrilla members, two in El Sesteadero and five further up the mountain. The guards called on the mountain communities for support, and, after about two hours, the guerrillas were surrounded by nearly 400 people. The first two rebels were caught quickly and taken to El Tablazo village.

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3   Personal communication, 5 November 2014.
4   The Colombian Massif, a group of mountains within the Andes of south-central Colombia.
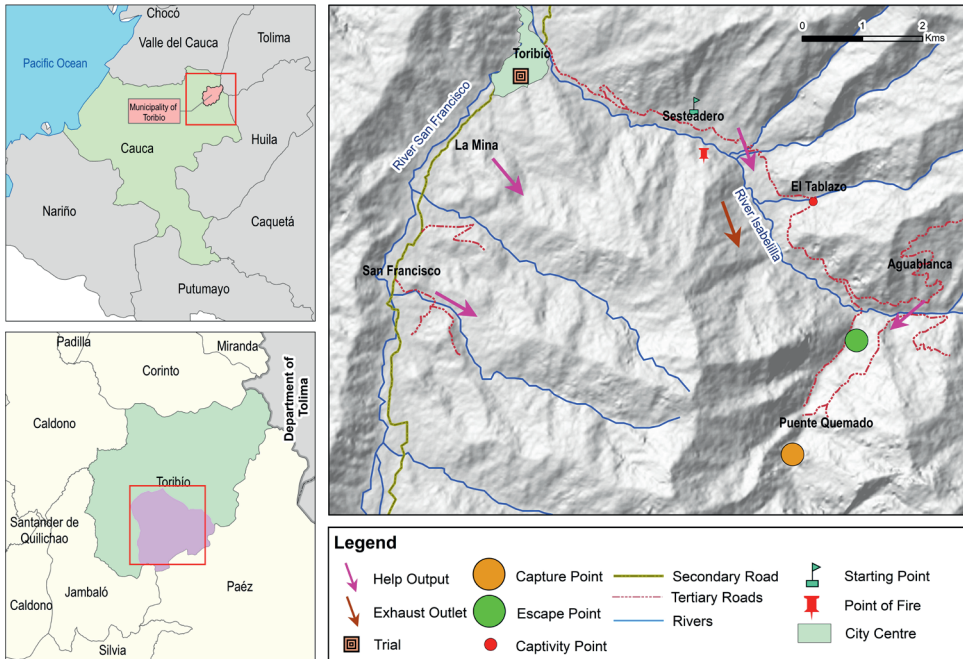
Map 3.1 Main events location during 5 November 2014

Three hours later, guards and community members caught the other five insurgents, who were heavily armed. According to the interviewees, catching the last insurgents proved very tense and difficult. First, a few guards arrived close to the guerrillas from different directions. Then, the guards began to shout to one another – on the one hand, to show the guerrillas that they were surrounding them and, on the other hand, to pretend that numerous people were already gathered there. The guards thus tried to frighten the guerrillas while giving the other guards sufficient time to arrive. Once cornered, one of the insurgents took a grenade and threatened to detonate it. *'We do not get scared with grenades, with that you kill only five of us, and the others will catch you'*, an indigenous leader exclaimed, according to the guards who excitedly told me this. A guard from Cerro Tijeras continued:

> *'At the beginning I was scared, so I threw myself back when I saw the grenade. I was a little, just a little scared. First, we were just eight people or nine around the guerrillas, but when the others arrived we started to "get happy".*[5] *There were also the brother and friends of one of the killed guards and I saw them very sure of what they were doing... There was also a "mayora" [old lady] who is a guard and looked angry and fearless; she was at the front and seeing her also motivated me. I didn't want to die, but*

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5   'Nos pusimos contentos'. In a sarcastic manner he refers to a feeling of excitement.

it is like I rub off and "se me sale el indio!"[6] *(laughs). Cause, when we are together we feel more indigenous'* explained the guard.

At some point, the guards asked the insurgents to come with them to the community for a trial, but the rebels refused. So, one leader told them: *'either you go with us, or we go with you to your camp'*. The rebels called their commanders. '*It was perhaps to ask for reinforcements, but, apparently, they were told to defend themselves as they could, that they were alone. We believe this answer was because [FARC leaders] did not want to jeopardize the peace process,'*[7] explained the guard. Finally, the guerrillas surrendered to the unarmed communities and were taken to temporary detention.

3.5.3   *The moment when two guards were killed*

Two months later, I talked to the coordinator of the guard in Toribío, who had been with one of the dead guards. According to his testimony, some guards in other villages managed to convince the rebels and removed the propaganda. However, in El Sesteadero, Toribío, the rebels rejected the guards' request and continued disseminating propaganda.

'For us to take a banner down, we do not ask the community because the community has already given us the order, but before we pulled [the banners] down, we talked [with the rebels]. First, we exhausted the dialogue. We got divided into three groups in different villages to speak with those people [guerrilla members]. The most difficult was in the village El Sesteadero because the guys didn't want to remove the banners. We gave them time, 10 minutes, 5 minutes more, 20 minutes. But, they didn't remove the banners when we asked... They said: "We have orders from our commander to keep the banners there at all cost." But, the order of our communities is to remove the banners. We have our position, and we are the owners of this territory. We are in charge here; nobody can give us orders here. Not armed groups, not people from outside. We can take care of the territory and ourselves. So, Manuel, I think, he climbed a tree... and started to remove the banners, and the rebels were here very close and started shooting as if they were fighting an armed man, right? So, some guards went over to them to demand respect, [others rebels] from the other side[8]*were covering and also started shooting the guard in the tree. The guard fell down, we thought he was dead, but he wasn't, but he managed to pull the banner down, and the shooting continued*

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6   'The Indian in me comes out' – an expression that suggests that the person has been suppressing their indigenous reactions and then releases them

7   Personal communication, an indigenous guard from Cerro Tijeras. Field notes, 7 November 2014.

8   According to other testimonies, the shooting started from up in the mountain, crossing a small river in the direction of the guard who was pulling the banner down.

as if they were fighting a military group. Authorities, people, children were close by because in this situation all community members mobilize. We all threw ourselves to the ground,' explained the guard.

After this, the two rebels left the town in the direction of the other group of rebels who were waiting in the mountains.

> *'The [indigenous] authorities came... We, as guards, we always try to talk first, but they answered like an army. We have talked to the military and the guerrilla... We have told them to explain to us, in front of the community: so, what is your goal? Are you here to protect or to kill people?... So, we decided to go after [the rebels]... Not to capture them, but to bring them to the community for an explanation... So, Manuel went ahead; he was even without the bastón. He was hanging it [on his back]. So, [the rebels] shot him and he was not even close to them. The [two guards] were like 15 metres away... They had not even arrived, and this rebel saw the guards coming and he just shot them. The [guards] didn't have the opportunity to talk, to tell them anything...',[9]* explained the coordinator.

His story is similar to the testimonies at the trial. According to which, the rebel shot the guard to scare the rest and discourage the group from continuing the pursuit. The first guard was immediately killed, the other one was seriously injured and died some minutes later. This situation, instead of scaring and discouraging the indigenous guards, generated the opposite response, people got angry and decided to take action. When the two guards were shot, many indigenous guards used their radios to call all community members.

> *'At that moment, there were not many guards because the guards were dispersed over all the territory. A person takes more time to give the information than anything else because, after anyone has given the information, the guards come from everywhere. Thus, while we were coming from behind, in the upper part of the mountain other guards were already waiting for the rebels. Practically, here in the territory, those who commit a crime, who kill someone, do not have a way to leave, because guards are going to be everywhere, in each territory, in each path,'* affirmed the coordinator of GI Toribío.

3.5.4   The trial

The Special Indigenous Jurisdiction, article 246 of the 1991 Constitution, allows indigenous people to implement their own legal system[10] on indigenous territories

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9   Interview with GI coordinator in Toribío, 2 February 2015.
10   For more about the Indigenous Special Jurisdiction see Rappaport (2003).

based upon their own uses and customs. In the events of 5 November, the rebels were from indigenous communities and the crime occurred on indigenous territory, thus giving proper jurisdiction to indigenous laws. The Nasa legal system is based on what is called the *Ley de Origen* or Law of Origin (LO). According to Marcos Yule (2012), a Nasa ethno-linguist and leader, the LO is conceived as a set of measurable fair actions based on the path charted by the elders – in interaction with the other beings of the earth – directed towards a harmonious relationship with the land, governed by the laws of nature. The main concepts of the LO are harmony and equilibrium. Actions against harmony and equilibrium are not conceived as crimes but as diseases and alterations that must be cured and balanced, given the context of the actions. In this example, the killers were seen as *desarmonizados*, people who are lost and disconnected from nature and their crime should be severely punished.

On 9 November 2014 indigenous Nasa communities held a public trial in which about 4,000 community members participated. The offenders were seated in front of the communities, secured by guards, who proudly wore their green and red kerchiefs and their *bastones*. Dozens of photographers and journalists from different national and international media were covering the event. In this dramatic performance, one of the indigenous authorities opened the trial:

> '*Greetings to the people of all the villages that are present here... and especially greetings to the Indigenous Guard; as the territorial control body chosen by the indigenous communities here in the department of Cauca. We are in this assembly to take a decision in our own legal system, given the choice that we have made – the indigenous communities of Cauca – of not leaving our territory, resisting here, and not increasing the more than 3 or 4 million people displaced in this country as a result of violence ...*'

Thereupon, the indigenous authorities presented a detailed report of the events. They had collected many testimonies very similar to the story that the coordinator told us.

> '*The community members, those who saw the murders of their two companions and guards, saw this event as severe. So, it is the same community who decided to follow the rebels and capture them and called for the support of all the communities. This is how the chasing of the perpetrators started,*' explained an indigenous leader, who continued with more details of the capture process and the confiscation of weapons.

At some point, one of the leaders clarified: '*First, we must not forget that the ownership of this territory is in the hands of the community, not of any other organization, not of any armed group. First, this should be clear. These lands are collectively owned, we have a colonial title since 1701, but they were occupied by us – indigenous peoples – even before. As this is our territory, the one responsible for social and territorial control is the community, and the*

community decides how to exercise these responsibilities; it is the community that creates the legitimate means to exercise social and territorial control ... and [for that] we choose the Indigenous Guard.'

Immediately after, the rebels got the opportunity to defend themselves and explain their actions. However, they did not talk much and pleaded guilty to killing the guards.

The indigenous people of Northern Cauca, those present at the assembly, voted and decided to pass a sentence of 60 years in prison on the rebel who shot the guards and 40 years on his companions. Among them, there were two minors. Therefore, there was a lengthy discussion about this, and they received a different punishment:

'*... And that's important to note that, if the children are going to be punished, it will have to be tempered perhaps. Anyway, it is a determination of you [assembly], but you should be aware that they should be treated as victims of the armed conflict that we have to bear in the country.'* The two minors received a *remedy* consisting of 20 *fuetazos*.[11]

It is considered a remedy because it is administered by a shaman, using special herbs to cleanse and harmonize the person. Furthermore, they were sent to a juvenile prison until their eighteenth birthday. After that, the indigenous authorities will have to organize another assembly to analyse each case.

The national press covered the situation from 5 November until the trial, generating significant interest and discussions.[12] Many political leaders expressed their opinions about the trial results on social media. In general, the guards were presented as heroes who confronted the guerrillas, and indigenous justice was introduced as an example of effectiveness: *'Efficiency of indigenous justice, an example for the Colombian State?'* was one of the most retweeted sentences. A headline in a renowned national media said: *'Indigenous justice united Colombians: The rigorous sentence imposed on the FARC satisfied even the right wing who viewed indigenous justice with suspicion'* (Wallace, 2014). However, in an official communication, the FARC expressed its disagreement with the punishment and gave a different version of the events. According to it, the shooting started because the guards tried to snatch the guns from the guerrillas. Additionally, the UN representative in Colombia expressed

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11   Fuetazos or *Pecxukya* in Nasa Yuwe language refers to the action of lashing a person on his/her back.

12   *El Tiempo* 2014 produced 17 news items about it in six days. Among the headlines: 'Government calls "inadmissible" the killing of two indigenous people by FARC'; 'Defence Minister called brave to indigenous of Cauca'; 'Indigenous people from Cauca, the country's most affected by violence'; 'FARC talk about murder of indigenous people in Cauca'; 'Ombudsman rejects alleged FARC pamphlets against indigenous people'; 'Murder of third indigenous guard aggravates situation in Cauca'.

concerns about respect for human rights in the trial (El Tiempo, 2014a). One day before the trial, 8 November, another indigenous guard was killed in uncertain circumstances (El Tiempo, 2014b), the zonal coordinator of the GI was kidnapped for few hours and interrogated about the place where the guards were holding the rebels,[13]and a pamphlet allegedly from the FARC threatened to kill 26 indigenous leaders (Semana, 2014b). During November, indigenous Nasa held meetings almost every day. On 24 November 2014, ACIN organized a General Assembly in Toéz resguardo to analyse the consequences and possible outcomes of the trial, as well as the responses to the media, the UN representative, and the FARC.

3.6   Translating GI Actions and Concepts with Self-organization Principles

The situation with the banners was a symbolic act. The confrontation between the guards and the FARC members represents a power struggle for territorial control and, thus, by giving up, one group would have been recognizing the territorial control of the other. It is interesting to analyse the strategies used by each group to gain or retain territorial control in this specific situation. The rebels had guns, which at first they used to scare the guards. The guards had the support of the communities, which they used to back their actions and claims. From a complexity perspective, when the guards started to pursue the rebels the self-organizing mechanisms started to develop. In the following paragraphs, the GI response is analysed from a self-organization perspective.

3.6.1   Simple rules

In the events of 5 November, we observed the application of several social norms and values that could be translated as simple rules. By social norms, I refer to shared understandings about actions that were required, acceptable, or forbidden in a group (Ostrom, 1999). Social values are considered as the glue that makes social life possible, because they denote standards of what is good and bad, providing quick judgements for certain situations (Oyserman, 2015). Values become norms when they guide and/or regulate or suggest a course of action (Rezsohazy, 2001). Some of the social norms identified in the guards' responses are:

- It does not matter what people are doing, in an emergency, everyone should respond to the call of the indigenous communities and authorities and go. This rule is shown in the indigenous Nasa's quick reaction in organizing themselves and travelling as fast as possible to the site. The rule applies even if it is not clear what the situation is and what their tasks are.
- The survival of the group is more important than individual lives. This norm is evident in a leader's assertion: *'We do not get scared with grenades, with that you kill only five of us, and the others will catch you'*. This idea is reinforced in

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13   Personal communication, field notes, 8 November 2014.

daily conversations when people express their willingness to die, if necessary, to achieve the group's goals. For them, the group comes first, the group continues. Thus, they are willing to sacrifice themselves. In fact, in the GI anthem one theme is repeated:

> *To the front companions, willing to resist*
> *To defend our rights, even if we have to die.*
> *Guard, guard! Strength, strength.*
> *For my race, for my land.*
> *Companions have fallen, but they will not defeat us.*
> *Because for every dead Indian, thousands more will be born.*

The GI anthem takes the main ideas from indigenous land struggles during the nineteenth century.

Those norms are reinforced by values identified in the guards' actions:

- Being brave is good. Indigenous guards should be brave and should not fear to die: '*We do not get scared with grenades'.* By being brave, they demonstrate a commitment to the group. Confronting an armed group is, then, a necessary act of bravery. In fieldwork, it was not clear that people who died were compensated with glory or recognition. It was clear, though, that being brave was an important source of respect from others. Conversely, acting in a cowardly way was a common reason for people to be mocked or even excluded from political decisions.

- The use of violence is bad, as past experiences have taught. Two values can be found here: the past is important and useful, and violence is bad. '*We had reviewed our history and concluded that it was a mistake when we took up guns, and indigenous authorities and communities decided we do not want more guns because guns are synonymous with death and we are defenders of life,*'[14] argued the *Tejido Defensa de la Vida* coordinator. Thus, the importance that they give to their past is consolidated in a non-violent attitude, among other things.

These norms and values reinforce one another and help to construct social cohesion among Nasa communities, promoting the capacity to act together. As an either planned or unplanned result, a process of collective identity reconstruction takes place, reinforced by ideas of a shared past, mentioned in previous utterances. Clearly, Nasa collective identity is not compound only from these principles, cultural practices and cosmology play an important role that makes Nasa communities unique (For more on Nasa collective identity see: Yule, 2012; Chaves et al., 2019).

3.6.2   *Decentralized control*

As shown in the trial, the communities in General Assembly are the supreme

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14   Personal interview, 31 January 2015.

authority of indigenous communities in Northern Cauca. Thus, the community has enormous political power to monitor and make decisions about local situations. This type of community power is similar to a *practical authority*, the kind of power-in-practice produced when specific actors develop competencies and win recognition within a particular policy area, enabling them to influence the actions of other actors (Abers & Keck, 2013). If the community has practical authority, the community is above authorities, and authorities are answerable to the communities. The role of cabildo authorities in this context is to facilitate the community leadership. It is a very effective strategy, as in emergencies people do not need to wait for orders from authorities to act.

According to Wilches-Chaux (2005), such community power generates what is defined as distributed thinking, in which knowledge is not confined to a few people but shared among community members. Distributed thinking could also generate distributed power, a political power that does not reside exclusively in one or more authorities but throughout the community, which is the ideal of participatory democracy, also called community leadership (Wilches-Chaux, 2005). Nevertheless, during fieldwork, I observed that many tensions exist between community members and leaders. Authorities, for instance, are crucial in administrative decisions, managing funds, undertaking development projects, giving interviews to the media, representing people in negotiations and legal matters, translating native cultural constructions for outsiders, and resolving internal conflicts in the communities. Indigenous authorities may take strategic decisions all the time, and some leaders have taken control of many administrative tasks. Thus, many leaders have gathered political power over the years. However, as shown in the 5 November example, in cases of emergency, the hierarchies fade away. The assumption is that, in events of high uncertainty, the distributed power allows self-organization; this means that, following social norms, shared values and collective goals facilitate the mobilization of large numbers of people very quickly (see 3.2).

Indigenous Nasa understand that they are more powerful when applying distributed power. A leader explained that an organization with a few strong leaders is weak because individual leaders are easy targets and can easily be killed.[15] The solution they found was to have short governance periods. The idea is that more people will be empowered. However, there are tensions in the implementation, because, in some communities, authorities do not change often; either they get re-elected or they just move to a different position in the cabildos. In response, in fieldwork, I saw that leaders are constantly criticized and monitored by the communities.

We can understand these dynamics as a process of shifting power, more specifically, shifting towards practical authority. These authority shifts do not happen without tension, and neither are they exclusive nor do they occur simultaneously. They are

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15   Personal communication, field notes, 24 February 2015.

related to situations and places. Indeed, practical authority moves from one leader to another, from leaders to the community, and from the community to leaders, depending on the situation.

3.6.3 *Organizing through interactions and feedback*

To act effectively in uncertain circumstances, Nasa people need to have a network in place, an infrastructure ready. Hence, as soon as the call goes out, it reaches a large number of people. The GI has the infrastructure to allow these interactions. The guards have radios and training, and they are dispersed in different villages. We could say that the GI works as a decentralized network: one person calls another, who calls a next person, and so on. In the example, the guards called people up in the mountain and managed to corner the rebels, but also called community members from other areas, mobilizing a large number of people who arrived one after another.

Uncertainty is also managed through interactions. For instance, when a few guards came close to the rebels, they pretended to be more numerous by shouting to one another. This strategy was developed on the spot, without planning. It was useful for slowing down the process, keeping the rebels there, and creating time for more guards to arrive. Here, we recognize a practice that emerges on the spot: when they are not many, they pretend to be. Thus, social norms and values provide an expected idea of how to act at a particular juncture, making it easier for them in an unclear situation to organize themselves through interactions instead of following instructions.

Assemblies are frequently called to make decisions or to resolve conflicts between community members or with other communities. Emergency meetings are also held during dangerous and uncertain situations. Nasa people call these meetings *context analysis meetings*. Guards, cabildo authorities, and community members participate, and together they discuss the possible intentions behind adversaries' actions, problems in the communities, political consequences of their own actions, and the relation between their local context and national trends. Indeed, during these long meetings, they share food, stories, anecdotes, and gossip. Their analyses are well informed, participants jump from local to national situations, from past to present and future events, comparing their current circumstances with previous experiences. Moreover, in each community, annual General Assemblies are held to elect local authorities. Likewise, each resguardo provides training for its guards, including workshops on indigenous history and human rights. The GI offers then a platform, an active way of participating in the indigenous organizations. It is an opportunity for young and female indigenous people to obtain information and knowledge and participate in spaces that before were exclusive to men and the elders. GI formalization is thus changing the internal dynamics of indigenous organizations, as young people who start in the GI immediately have an active political role and can easily rise to positions in the indigenous organizations.

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Another way of obtaining feedback, but this time from the surroundings, is territorial control walks. The GI organizes periodic walks in its territories, checking changes in the landscape, the presence of armed groups, or new points of illegal mining extraction. The Nasa thus keep a permanent flow of information between the context and their ideas about it, and the possible actions that need to be taken.

3.6.4 Indigenous concepts

Indigenous Nasa frame their actions in terms of formal principles clearly expressed as unity, land, culture, and autonomy. Unity refers to acting as a group, for which particular norms and values are important. The land is inextricably linked to their culture and collective identity; therefore, as expressed by the leader in the trial, all the guards' actions are motivated by the desire to keep their territories. The third principle, culture, refers to the particular way of living in their land, related to their beliefs, practices, and cosmology. The fourth principle, autonomy, is defined by Nasa as: *'people's rights to control, watch, and organize their social and political life inside the resguardos, with guidance from cabildos and rejecting impositions from externals or outsiders'* (CMH, 2012, p. 194). In legal terms, autonomy has been translated into the right to self-determination. If we compare the translation of GI actions with these indigenous concepts, the results look coherent. The principles that were identified show how these concepts are performed in a specific situation.

Table 3.2 GI Self-Organizing Principles

Social norms	– In an emergency, everyone should respond to the call and go	Construction of social cohesion and unity
	– The survival of the group is more important than individual lives	
Social values	– Being brave is good, being a coward is bad	
	– Our history is important	
	– Violence is bad	
Land	– Land is part of our history, culture, and collective identity	Motivations for collective action
Common goal	– Autonomy, as the right of self-determination, is key	

3.7 On Concepts and Equivocations

For Nasa people, concepts such as self-determination and autonomy, which they use in their meetings, may be more in tune with their own ideas than the self-organization concept. Self-determination and autonomy are, however, also translations from western legal system and these concepts could indeed explain why the GI act in a certain way; however, this analysis of a self-organization has clarified how the guards operate in concrete situations and how they manage to gain power without using violence when faced with armed groups. These results link with several discussions in different fields of knowledge. In what follows, the results and its implications are

further analysed.

3.7.1 *On collective identity*

For the GI, and the Nasa people in general, following simple rules and recognizing themselves as having a collective identity has many implications.

First, the social norms and values observed in the GI actions are a cornerstone of GI identity. When indigenous individuals join the guard, they are expected to act in line with these principles. Moreover, it could be assumed that indigenous FARC members have implicitly rejected indigenous political organizations and strategies and taken a different path. This shows that individuals can choose some features of their indigenous identity and reject others.

Collective identities imply the articulation of differences in relation to others (Escobar, 2008) and have cues for an interior and an exterior common recognition (Von Busekist, 2004), which can be based on visible features, practices, and actions. Thus, belonging to either the GI or the FARC was a very important difference, of which the most visible one was the use of guns versus applying non-violent strategies. Even more, from a Nasa perspective, indigenous people in the FARC are considered to be lost or *desarmonizados*. As Blok (2001) explained, confrontation with similar groups may be more intense, because of what he called *the narcissism of minor differences*, this is, identities are developed more strongly when communities have close relationships and share territories (See also: Elias, 1994). This could explain why Nasa people feel 'more indigenous' when confronted with outsiders, particularly with indigenous people who have decided to join a non-indigenous organization. From a current Nasa perspective, the GI identity is associated with non-violence, and, thus, indigenous people outside this social norm are rejecting their Nasa identity (Chaves et al., 2019). Moreover, their collective identity has become a category that enables them with special political rights (e.g. land and autonomy) and constrains their forms of action (e.g. non-violent and ecological). Their non-violent form of self-organization would probably not have been possible without the current legal system. In this way, their non-violence is also a form of adaptation to their complex environment (see more in Chaves et al., 2019).

Second, guards feel strong emotions associated with their identity as Nasa and guards. As explained by one informant: *'I didn't want to die, but it is like I rub off and "se me salió el indio!" Cause, when we are together we feel more indigenous.'* These statements suggest that acting together generates a contagious effect, which could be understood as a body response. In Spinoza's terminology, this is called *affect*, understood as the capacity of the body to affect and be affected by other bodies (Viveiros De Castro, 2004). Affect is a pre-personal and pre-conscious stimulation to act that emerges at the moment of the encounter (Kaufmann, 2015, citing Deleuze and Deleuze, 1978). Therefore, it is not just being together, but together confronting

others, that generates the affect. This is important because collective identities imply the articulation of differences in relation to others (Escobar, 2008), including cues for an interior and an exterior common recognition (Von Busekist, 2004), which can be visible in features, practices, and actions. In this sense, the GI identity goes beyond any conscious decision, it is also a feeling.

Third, shared norms and values help them to organize power by numbers. The strategy to construct power by numbers is indeed very powerful. *'The goal of having so many people is to make the enemies give up without hurting them. The strategy is to follow them, until they get tired and give up, and show them that we are also powerful,'* an informant from Tacueyó explained.[16] In the example here, the rebels gained power with their guns but, faced with 400 people, guns have limited power. First, in a symbolic way, in the contemporary context, the use of guns and violence is not accepted as legitimate power without justification. And, secondly, guns are powerless when there are too many people; unless there are very specific circumstances, it is not possible to kill them all.

3.7.2   *Implications for peacebuilding*

Dudouet (2008) defines non-violence as a direct substitute for violent actions: it implies deliberate restraint from expected violence in a context of conflict. In this case, the GI actions satisfy that definition. Moreover, the GI non-violent actions can be understood as a pragmatic strategy for survival in which limited violence, like stone throwing, is allowed (Eddy, 2014). Their non-violent forms of self-organization would probably not have been possible without the current legal system. In this way, their non-violence is a form of adaptation to their current complex environment (see Chaves et al., 2018). GI mechanisms and strategies to manage violent situations in a non-violent way have several implications for peacebuilding in Colombia.

First of all, social norms applied by the Nasa in dangerous situations have particular functions. Norms such as that everyone 'should respond to the call' and 'the survival of the group is more important than that of the individual' help to bring together a large group of people, no matter the risk. Values, such as 'guards are brave', 'guards defend life', are used to promote bravery and non-violent actions. Consequently, norms and values create a frame of interaction in which some actions are allowed, whereas others are not. The main literature on social capital (Ostrom, 1999), though, assumes that people are rational decision makers. The current authors instead adhere to a critical institutionalism view, assuming that people are conscious and unconscious social agents who are deeply inserted in their cultural settings and are capable of analysing and acting upon the circumstances that challenge them (Giddens, 1984; Cleaver, 2001). Nasa individuals follow these social norms, but they can also transform them in particular contexts and act accordingly. Hence, individual

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16   Personal communication, 12 December 2014.

guards keep their autonomy, and this makes a difference compared to, for instance, military organizations.

Second, the literature defines two main types of social capital, bonding and bridging (Putnam, 2002; Cox, 2009). Bonding refers to social norms and values that allow members of the in-group to rely on one another and act together. It is especially relevant for a transitional stage of latent asymmetric conflicts, as a strategy for empowering grievance groups and, therefore, transforming unbalanced power relations (Dudouet, 2008). That is clearly visible in the GI actions. However, the literature (Putnam, 2002; Cox, 2009) shows that peacebuilding involves not only strengthening in-group ties (bonding), but, even more importantly, strengthening relations with other groups, bridging, which refers to reinforcing empathy, interaction, and co-dependence across different groups. Bonding without bridging could even be a source of conflict (Putnam, 2002). GI non-violent actions have improved Nasa connections with social organizations at national and international level, helping them to expand their networks, and are thus a type of bridging. Moreover, non-violent strategies help Nasa people to protect their land and their autonomy, in terms of being independent from – and thus not part of – the armed conflict between the guerrillas and the government, becoming a type of legal measure which could also be assumed as bridging. To sum up, bonding makes individual connections with the group stronger and, thus, it makes the group stronger, and bridging strengthens their legal claims. Accordingly, the non-violent principle represents a challenge for the State and supports a step forward to peacebuilding.

Finally, this analysis shows that power fluidity, expressed in practical authority, allowed the GI to self-organize and act quickly in emergencies. The analysis of the confrontation with the FARC and the trial shows that the Nasa go beyond decentralized control in their actions. The focus on principles instead of on authorities and the rapid leadership changes in some of the cabildos are important factors in the promotion of distributed power, allowing fluidity of practical authority and permitting self-organization to occur in emergencies. Power fluidity, as applied in Nasa organizations, challenges Western thinking, which tends to organize the social world in dichotomous relations between individuals and society (Elias, 2000). In Nasa communities, practical authority is both centralized and distributed. This power fluidity provides possibilities for flexibility and adaptation. Likewise, the concept of everyday peacebuilding connects with debates on resilience and the ability of individuals and communities to cope with stressful situations (Mac Ginty, 2014; Kaufmann, 2015). This analysis of the way the GI operates (which indeed is self-defence) provides important building blocks for everyday peacebuilding. The GI non-violent actions – or perhaps even non-violent coercion – corrects power imbalances between them and the armed groups. Studies have shown that such local ownership is a precondition for sustainable peace (Cox, 2009; CMI Report, 2010; Kaplan, 2013). In this case, it allows the Nasa to remain independent from the violent civil war. The capture, the trial, and the punishments show different approaches in which

the Nasa utilize their power and present themselves as independent actors rather than victims of the armed conflict. Their actions respond to their own historical analysis, interpretations, and the local context. The capture represents an innovative strategy to deal with armed groups, the trial responds to the legal framework making use of their right to self-determination, and the punishment for the youngest responds to rooted cultural practices. These strategies represent a framework used by the Nasa to claim their territorial control and contribute to peacebuilding in such a way that they feel part of Colombian society and not dominated by hegemonic and armed groups.

Peacebuilding is then understood as the possibility of transforming relationships among conflicting actors into more sustainable and peaceful relationships (Lederach, 1999). Equivocation implies awareness of the limitations of translating concepts and actions from other perspectives. The Nasa perspective refers to a different reality, a 'world making', that goes beyond the immediate struggle or war (see for instance De La Cadena, 2010; Viveiros de Castro, 2014; Escobar, 2017). For the Nasa, peace does not mean the lack of conflict; for them, peace is related to their autonomy and their capacity to control and govern their lands. So, in some cases, non-violent conflict is a necessary step to protect themselves from marginalization. This is important for peacebuilding, as the goal is not the absence of conflict among groups but rather the de-escalation of armed conflict to a point at which differences can be dealt with in a non-violent way that respects people's needs and identities. Hence, the Nasa use non-violent self-organization to fight for a pluralist society or, as Escobar (2017) says, a society where different worlds are possible.

3.8   Conclusions

The Nasa's everyday practices for conflict management were described in this study to elucidate the potential of learning and applying some of these practices for peacebuilding in other contexts (Table 3.2).

There are some limitations for the peacebuilding initiatives studied. Managing the unintended outcomes of GI actions, for instance, represents a real challenge and requires a lot of resources and energy from indigenous organizations. Top-down efforts at peacebuilding should engage with local dynamics more consciously. In the case of Colombia, where the central government has failed to provide public goods, such as security, self-defence groups with characteristics similar to those of the GI could contribute to this issue (e.g. Masullo, 2015; Arjona, 2017). Non-violence, focused on defending human rights, appeared to be essential to control these self-defence groups and avoid their becoming a new source violence and power struggles. Therefore, interventions in the post-conflict territories should facilitate and support local initiatives such as the GI. This can be achieved if local communities have both sufficient autonomy and support to develop their own solutions and strategies.

Of course, the non-violent way of organizing may have been effective in this particular context because groups like the official army and the FARC care about their political image. Alternatively, the effectiveness of the Nasa's non-violent actions may be related to expectations. Armed groups expect people to become scared and to run away when faced with danger and guns. Nasa people do not avoid conflict and danger; instead, they empower themselves against armed actors. By reacting differently, indigenous guards pose a challenge to armed groups who may be habituated to being feared and obeyed. Lastly, many studies maintain that the success of any peace agreement in Colombia will depend on access to, and control of, land. In that sense, by exercising their constitutional right to control their territories, Nasa communities are also contributing to peacebuilding.

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Picture 4.1 Morning training of the guards from northern Cauca.
Extraordinary Congress of the CRIC. 16 October, 2014 →››

CHAPTER 4

Understanding Why Indigenous People Become Members of the Guardia Indígena*

Chaves P., Aarts N., and van Bommel S.

Abstract

The northern Cauca region is a marginalized territory in Colombia in which violent conflicts have had big impacts. The region hosts the indigenous Nasa people, which in 2001 formalized a non-violent self-protection strategy called Guardia Indígena (GI) to protect themselves from armed groups. In contexts of injustice and violence, many justifications can be made for joining armed groups like the former FARC-EP. Hence, the question arises as to why some indigenous people from northern Cauca joined the GI, whereas others joined groups like FARC-EP. In this paper, we aim to unravel motivations and processes leading to individuals joining the GI. Using ethnographic methods, we adopted two sensitizing concepts to collect and analyse data: practices and life stories. From GI practices, we conclude that the GI provides many social, psychological, and material benefits, motivating individuals to join the group. The benefits include fundamental needs, positive emotions, and practical tools for various purposes. However, these benefits can be fulfilled in many ways, including joining armed groups. From life stories, we deduce that having contact with rebels and seeing their practices and experiences helped some indigenous people to comprehend the struggles and contradictions of the FARC revolutionary identity. Moreover, personal values and needs, legal status, individual identity, and way of living influenced individual choices. Coincidence also plays a role in a person's choice of group to finally join. Therefore, indigenous individuals' decision to join the GI or FARC-EP hinges on a tipping point resulting from many factors and developments loading on a series of previous choices and coincidences.

Keywords: Collective identity, non-violence, motivations, human needs and values, tipping point, ethnography

4.1 Introduction

At the end of 2016, a Peace Agreement was signed between the Colombian government and the largest rebel guerrilla group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, FARC-EP. The northern Cauca region is one of the marginalized territories (Cairo et al., 2018; Galvis, 2009; Mouly, Idler, & Garrido, 2015; Velasco, 2016) in which FARC had a strong presence, and implementation of the agreement generated immediate changes in local dynamics. FARC, for instance, controlled parts of the drug business chain and, after FARC's demobilization in 2017, criminal organizations fought to gain control (Álvarez Vanegas et al., 2017). By April 2019, since the signing of the Peace Agreement, 128 former members of the FARC-EP had been killed, generating pessimism about the future (Colombia2020, 2019). Meanwhile, FARC dissidents, now separated in different groups, had taken over the drug business in the Cauca region (FIP, 2018). Thus, demobilized people are confronted again with decisions about continuing in the new Fuerzas Alternativas Revolucionarias del Común,[1] joining other political organizations, withdrawing from the political arena, or even returning to illegal activities.

The northern Cauca region is home of the indigenous Nasa, represented by the Association of Indigenous Councils from Northern Cauca (ACIN). The Nasa formalized a non-violent self-protection strategy called the Guardia Indígena (GI). Although the GI has historical roots, it was formally established in 2001 in response to paramilitary incursions, to prevent displacement of indigenous communities, and to protect people against armed groups (Chaves et al, 2019). The GI works as a federal structure in which each *cabildo* (indigenous council) decides upon its own guards' daily activities, and community members become guards on a voluntary basis.

Studies on the Colombian conflict have shown that, in a context of injustice and violence, there can be many motivations and justifications for joining or re-entering armed groups like the former FARC-EP. These studies show major trends that separate the micro and macro levels of the Colombian conflict. The micro level focuses on individuals and suggests that factors for joining an armed group include poverty, lack of educational attainment, political alienation, and embeddedness in social networks that facilitate recruitment (Florez-Morris, 2010; Justino, 2009; Oppenheim, Steele, Vargas, & Weintraub, 2015; Rosenau, Espach, Ortiz, & Herrera, 2014; Ugarriza & Craig, 2013). The macro perspective focuses on the role of the State in allowing or even contributing to the violence, unveiling structural problems that fuel the violence in Colombia and, hence, justify marginalized people using violent strategies to achieve their goals (Albertus & Kaplan, 2012; Duran-Martinez, 2015; Oliver Kaplan & Nussio, 2016; Steele, 2011). Another branch focuses on recruitment strategies used mainly by armed groups to attract or forcibly recruit

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1   The new name of FARC's political party.

underage individuals (Gutierrez Sanin, 2010; Salamanca Sarmiento, 2014); 47% of FARC members entered the organization while still children, and FARC-EP practised forced recruitment (Semana, 2014a). Moreover, reports show that the indigenous population represented 18% of FARC-EP members (UN, 2017). These studies reveal various exogenous factors that could cause individuals to engage in armed strategies. Nevertheless, the question arises as to why some indigenous people from northern Cauca joined the GI, whereas others joined guerrilla groups like FARC: why would people under the same circumstances take different paths?

In this chapter, the aim is to unravel motivations and processes leading individuals to choose to enrol in the GI. Using an interpretive approach, two sensitizing concepts to collect and analyse data were used: practices and life stories. These two concepts gave us access to different sets of data. Practices denote actions observed in the present, and life stories provide a window into individual experiences from the past.

Practices are the set of doings, sayings, objects, and concepts that constitute an activity in a specific field, for instance, the activities of a baker or a teacher (for a detailed discussion on a practice approach see: Arts et al., 2014; Nicolini, 2009). Through everyday practices, members of a group create and/or acquire a set of shared meanings that are expressed in and through the artefacts involved on their practices (Cook & Yanow, 2011). Artefacts help groups to transmit their values, beliefs, and feelings to new and existing members and also to strangers (Cook & Yanow, 2011). Thus, practices are the main sources for understanding people's actions and the meaning that they give to what they do (Giddens, 1984; Nicolini, 2009; Yanow, 2009). Accordingly, the study of practices pays attention to what is done, by whom, how, where, and with what (intended and unintended) consequences at various levels of community life. By studying practices, researchers learn the particular logic of the actions of individuals and groups and the motivations behind their actions. Methodologically, the study of practices implies following the actors and studying how they create reality through their practices. The concept of practices helps us to understand the everyday life experiences of indigenous people as guards. Thus, this concept helps to answer the question: *How do indigenous guards' practices motivate indigenous individuals to join the GI or not?*

Life stories refer to stories about someone's life. We focus on life stories as windows into historical periods, cultural practices, and personal events and meanings (Peacock & Holland, 1993). Life stories give the opportunity to see things from a historical perspective, how things have become or changed, and to see history and culture as lived by individuals (Peacock & Holland, 1993). Moreover, by analysing life stories, we aim to understand the influence of collective meaning systems and their dynamics, social relations, and identity constructions. Thus, life stories contribute to this study in answering the question: *How did context and circumstances influence guards to join the GI? And what process did our key informants go through to decide to be a guard?*

Now the research methods are presented, including participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Then, the GI practices are presented and motivations that could affect individuals' choice to become GI members are identified. Further, four individual life stories are presented, revealing considerations, moments of relevant choices, in combination with specific circumstances under which they chose to join the guard instead of joining FARC. In the discussion, the research questions are answered and, in the conclusion, I discuss the implications of the findings for peacebuilding.

4.2 Methods

Starting from an interpretive approach, fieldwork was undertaken working as a communication collaborator within ACIN and with indigenous guards, and took place in ACIN's headquarters in Santander de Quilichao, Cauca, from March 2014 to March 2015. Ethnographic research broadly refers to the process of translating other people's worlds into descriptions (Geertz, 1973). It implies a constant attitude of reflexion and questioning during fieldwork. This is abductive reasoning and human-centred analysis, driven by the wish to learn about different actors' multiple social realities in their environment (Agar, 2010; Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006). The main focus is on understanding the reasons why a phenomenon occurs and how.

This research started by wondering about individual motivations to join the guard, and, at the beginning of fieldwork, a convenience sample of 16 guards were selected for contextualized interviews about why they became GI members. I noticed that it was difficult for guards to verbalize their decisions in terms of individual motivations. Thus, I observed carefully how guards organized themselves in different events and activities and asked them about their practices and feelings associated with these practices, and I paid attention to the way they developed them and talked about them.

During the year of fieldwork, I visited 13 ACIN communities and embarked on participant observations of 31 ACIN meetings about immediate political and violent events relating to the organization, 14 GI activities for conflict management, and seven rituals. Field notes were collected on date, place, activities, perceptions, and fragments of conversations.

To probe more deeply the specific circumstances that could have influenced individuals to join the guard, the researcher developed in-depth interviews with four indigenous guards who at some point were confronted with the decision to join either FARC or the GI. Three semi-structured interviews of approximately one hour were conducted with each of these key informants. In addition, frequent interactions and encounters took place during GI practices. These interactions allowed me to developed a relationship of mutual trust. The researcher based the interactions in the format of life stories, which implies chronological order. However, during the conversations, the guards did not follow a chronological order but jumped from one

memory to another, juxtaposed time-frames, omitted causal explanation, refrained from narrating events in linear form, and generally they could not even remember the exact year in which events happened. Thus, I had to inquire about details and check event dates in media reports. Their narrations were truly anecdotal, like episodes they remembered in which the topic was more important than the date, and each interview revealed key moments relating to their decision. The interactions were audio-recorded, except those that took place spontaneously, which were described in field notes. With the participants' permission, meetings and guards' interviews were audio-taped, transcribed verbatim, and then translated from Spanish to English.

Data analysis started with observations of practices; my interpretations of practices were confirmed or contrasted with the 16 guards' interviews, spontaneous conversations with guards about GI practices, and documentary evidence produced by indigenous organizations. Motivations for becoming GI members were identified, coded, and studied. For the life stories, key events relating to the decision to become either a guard or a FARC member were selected, and then possible motivations were identified in context. Field notes were used for remembering contextual dynamics and contradictions, inspiring reflections, challenging and reviewing my interpretations, and elaborating thick descriptions that show contextual details.

4.3 GI Practices

In this section, guard practices are presented and motivations for joining the GI are identified.

4.3.1 *Walking the territory, practising rituals, using symbols*

Walking through their territory is an ancestral practice and is the most representative activity of the guards. The concept of territory or land, called *kiwe* in *Nasa Yuwe* (the traditional language of the Nasa), is one of the keystones of Nasa indigenous culture. In the Nasa world, the *kiwe* is alive and includes all the beings in it, which are all equally important. Nasa knowledge is produced and rooted in territory; thus, walking is a way of communicating with the kiwe, a way to acknowledge people's connection with it, and a way to learn about themselves. Therefore, it seems that, for the Nasa, being knowledgeable and being part of the territory are one and the same.

According to the observations, land is also seen as a political concept representing control of the means of production. In the most practical sense, the purpose of GI patrols is to collect information and to identify possible situations and/or actors that may generate risks for the indigenous communities. While walking, guards look for changes or traces in the vegetation and clues about recent events in the landscape, and, with this information, they should be able to anticipate problems and take measures. Frequently, guards discuss their findings with authorities, elders, and community members before taking action. Sometimes, they have to organize walks

spontaneously after they spot suspicious activity; before, however, they must always ask permission from the nature spirits to *open the path.*[2] If they do not have time for a proper ritual, they will make sure to get some *chirrincho,*[3] offer some to the spirits, and drink some themselves before the walk starts.

For the Nasa, it is not appropriate to talk about rituals; people should learn them only through observation: *´A shaman never explains to you. The only thing he does is practise, and when you are doing all the rituals you have to pay close attention and learn to conceptualize what the elder tells you´*, explained a leader from Tacueyó.[4] Thus, rituals are not conceptualized from words but from practising them. Indeed, words are not particularly important in these rituals; feelings relating to the body, called *señas*, are more significant. Thus, Thë'Walas – or spiritual leaders – interpret these *señas* to engage in a dialogue with the spiritual world.

There are two main regular GI rituals: *refrescamientos* (refreshments) and *limpiezas* (cleansing). I interpret *refrescamientos* as rituals to protect people against 'bad' energy from others and to make participants stronger, and *limpiezas* as cleaning people's own energies. Both rituals include activities like chewing coca, drinking some traditional alcohol, smoking unfiltered cigarettes, and bathing the body with medicinal herbs. These rituals are performed in specific places, mainly places with significant past stories. Chewing coca is another essential part of the rituals and helps the Thë'Walas to communicate with the spirits. It is an activity in which the Nasa engage mainly while walking and during rituals. One GI coordinator in Delicias has escaped at least three assassination attempts. *'He has not been killed because he chews more coca than a cow',* explained a key informant from Cerro Tijeras,[5] referring to the protective power of coca. Because of the Nasa's strong belief in the power of rituals, these are performed more often when violence escalates or before guards carry out dangerous activities. Thus, ideally, the first thing to do during a dangerous situation is to perform a protective ritual and consult the Thë'Walas and the elders.

Guards expressed the importance of these rituals in sentences like: '...*We have to be clean to avoid bad things happening'; 'I am dirty and, because of that, bad things happened...'* These popular sentences in ordinary conversations show that, indeed, for the Nasa, forgetting about their beliefs means danger for their communities. Before the GI was formalized, rituals were almost exclusively for male leaders and elders. Since formalization, there has been a revitalization of rituals and beliefs, as now young guards can participate.

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2   *Abrir el Camino* is a common expression in rituals whose goal is to ask the spirits' permission to undertake specific activities.
3   Traditional alcohol, an artisan-type distillation based on sugarcane, made by community members.
4   Personal communication, 14 January 2015. Audiotaped.
5   Personal communication, November 2016.

There is also a symbol, an artefact, that guards use in their daily practices: the *bastón* (stick), which symbolizes the power bestowed by the communities on the guards. It protects guards from their enemies, their evil intentions, and bad energy. Guards make their own bastón with different types of wood and customized decoration. Before the GI formalization, only indigenous authorities had bastones, which were made of a black wood called *chonta*, decorated with the seven colours of the wiphala[6] and transferred from one authority to the next at the end of the former's mandate. Unlike authorities, each guard owns of his/her bastón, and it is non-transferable. In terms of hierarchy, authorities' bastones are of a higher level than those of guards.

In conversations, guards talk of the bastón as their partner: *my companion*, *my protector*, *my (boy)girlfriend* are the most common ways to describe it. It is understood that bastones carry the energy of the owner and this explains why it is not transferable. For example, guards explained that, if they found a bastón on the road, they would probably not take it because it could have bad energy. Furthermore, at least twice a year, the guards have to harmonize[7] their bastones and clean themselves. If they do not do this, it is believed that indigenous organizations could be in danger.

Guards also wear a red and green kerchief (colours that represent Indigenous Organizations in Cauca) and, sometimes, a vest with many pockets. The vest has become popular lately, as the GI has spread in many regions of Colombia and each *resguardo* (officially recognized indigenous reserve area) uses a different colour to distinguish guards from different regions and from other indigenous and non-indigenous groups. They wear their symbols with pride and respect in their villages, at official events, and in city streets.

In a general sense, rituals enact the Nasa belief system and give it meaning. They maintain the relationship between the spiritual and the material world, and a sense of continuity from past to present actions is generated. Joining the GI, individuals have access to these ancestral practices, and, in this way, a relation is strengthened between individuals and collective discourses, stories, principles, and the spiritual world. Thus, a common collective identity is reinforced; therefore, being a guard is not a job or simply a set of practices; rather, being a guard means becoming a GI member. It is about individual identification with a particular, meaningful, and ancestral group and acting accordingly

In terms of motivations, the walks, the rituals, and the use of symbols represent benefits for members. First, they gain contextual and traditional knowledge that helps them to deal with uncertainty, make informed decisions, and connect with their ancestors. Thus, guards learn about and reinforce their collective indigenous identity. Second, their beliefs are a mechanism to justify their activities and

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6   The seven-coloured indigenous flag representing Andean communities.
7   This relates to indigenous people's search for harmony and equilibrium.

decisions, and, then, they find their actions meaningful. Third, these practices and artefacts fulfil practical functions, such as making the guards self-confident, helping them to be brave and feel protected. Fourth, the pride with which they use and talk about symbols and rituals suggests that recognition and status are key features of becoming a guard. These symbols make the GI a very visible and distinguished group inside and outside the communities and provide visible tools for collective identity construction. Overall, the GI provides an identity that translates into a sense of belonging, safety, and purpose for its members.

4.3.2   Non-violent actions

One of the most visible characteristics of the GI is that members refuse to use the violent methods used by other actors within a conflict. The Nasa claim that the GI represents a non-violent initiative because its members are unarmed. From the observations, most of the time, their non-violent actions are a direct substitute for armed actions and imply deliberate restraint from expected violence in a context of conflict (Chaves et al., forthcoming; Dudouet, 2008). However, even though their code does not permit the use of firearms, that does not mean that violence is excluded completely. Only under extreme circumstances, and as a response to violent attacks against them and their organizations, can guards respond with violence (like stone throwing). Therefore, their actions can be classified as pragmatic non-violence (Eddy, 2014).

To avoid violence and manage the uncertain environment around them, guards espouse many practices. For dangerous encounters, they gather a large crowd of people that forces adversaries to negotiate or give up (Chaves et al., forthcoming): when indigenous people made specific demands on the government, they closed the highway, preventing people and goods from moving between the south and the north of the country (El Espectador, 2019; Rudqvist & Anrup, 2013; Sandoval Forero, 2008); guards literally forced official army soldiers to withdraw (El Espectador, 2012); destroyed coca and marijuana shipments; closed illegal gold mines; negotiated with guerrillas and demanded that they leave the indigenous territories; and they also stood on the frontline during confrontations with the police. These activities require coordinated actions, physical and mental strength, and, sometimes, a lot of time. Moreover, these practices provide new experiences, excitement, and an adrenaline rush for young guards.

Indigenous leaders explained that the deployment of non-violent strategies was a practical and symbolic decision: practical because paramilitaries were more prepared for violent confrontations, as they had more resources and guns, thus, a violent response would lead to more casualties; symbolic because the use of violence would transform indigenous people into murderers, and, in interviews, guards stated that, if they had to die, they would prefer to do so defending life rather than destroying it.

Many guards stated that they joined the GI to defend human rights and indigenous rights and territories. Some female guards stated that they wanted to be a good example for their children: *'because I don't want them to take a wrong path'*, explained a young female from Conception resguardo.[8] In this case, the 'wrong path' is to become a member of an armed group. These quotations show they see the GI as a group with virtuous principles. A female guard from Nasa Kiwe resguardo explained:

> *I think most of the women [in the GI] have to struggle against interfamily violence, not just the violence of armed conflict… We also have a purpose for own children, that they learn to be in [the GI], and see that we are all equals, that nobody is different. If we have to fight, we do it, but we learn to confront our own fears. I have learnt that. In the Guard, they value that, and as a woman, other guards value us also. I think [women's] capacities are the same and we learn a lot and become strong, which is important.[9]*

In this quote, we learn that empowerment is not just against external armed actors; women feel also more empowered against family violence and female discrimination. Furthermore, by being part of the GI, they get support from their community if abused, and they even feel that their children learn to respect women as equals. A norm of non-violent practices applied to outsiders implies a norm also for insiders and, thus, can reduce gender-based violence within the community. Thus, in these quotes, we discern a new motivation: being a GI member means being a virtuous and empowered person.

According to conversations during fieldwork, armed groups may be attractive to young indigenous people because these groups could represent a source of income, revenge, power, and excitement. According to the National Guard coordinator, the GI has been a successful strategy to deal with young guards, who are at bigger risk of joining armed groups and are eager to have new experiences, because the non-violent principle gives identity, purpose, and perhaps meaning to individuals' actions:

> *We have turned the workforce from war and put it on peacebuilding. In that sense, it has become a real option for young people and kids, for elders as well. It has become a way of being. The Indigenous Guard is not the kerchief… it gives sense to the life of some people, the sense to protect and defend life.[10]*

Overall, the non-violent practices provide guards with many motivations to join, amongst which taking direct action over local problems, feeling good and responsible

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8   Personal communication, 15 October 2014.
9   Personal communication, 25 January 2015.
10   Personal communication, 14 October 2014.

people, powerful and empowered against different types of violence, all making them feel useful, with a purpose and, besides, providing excitement, adventure, and adrenaline rushes.

4.3.3   *Political meetings and capacity-building activities*

Political meetings include general assemblies, meetings with guards from other communities, meetings among guards of the same community, meetings with the cabildos and external collaborators, and meetings among guard coordinators. Capacity-building activities include conferences, congresses, and workshops on indigenous history and human rights provided by different organizations, including indigenous organizations and NGOs.

These activities imply some tasks. In big assemblies, guards must watch and protect the meeting site from strangers and take care that people behave properly and do not drink alcohol. The meetings among guards and guard coordinators give rise to information on, and discussions about, the situations in each village and the strategies to follow. These meetings are called 'context analysis'. As a group, the Nasa are very open to debates and disagreements. Thus, in these meetings, they are not afraid to express their criticism of authorities or other indigenous communities, and, sometimes, the environment can feel very hostile. However, debating is a habit, and they manage to work together even if they disagree on some aspects.

A female guard from Nasa Kiwe resguardo explained that, even if the responsibilities of the guards are very demanding or dangerous, being part of the GI brings a lot of positive outcomes, like recognition and status,[11] which become visible during public events. This leads to high self-esteem, which is a strong motivation for people to join. A key informant from Cerro Tijeras proudly said: *'From the government, I had only met the police and soldiers and they called us guerrillas. With the Indigenous Guard, I have met three ministers, who have come to negotiate with us.'*[12] This quote shows that being part of the GI satisfies needs like being visible, appreciated, important, and recognized.

Participating in meetings and workshops allows the guards to learn about policies, examples from other countries, indigenous rights, and history, and it also provides contextual knowledge. These practices reinforce guards' capacity to reflect on their own actions, debate their ideas, exercise self-criticism, and self-actualize. In this way, the GI provides new spaces in which indigenous principles and beliefs are discussed, refreshed, and even challenged, and, therefore, adapted and reconstructed. Meetings also allow guards to expand their networks. Consequently, many people who start in the GI later get a job in indigenous organizations at local, regional, and national level. Thus, the guard also offers the possibility to create networks for jobs.

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11   Personal communication, 25 January 2015.
12   Personal communication, 25 January 2015.

Participating in meetings also implies travelling and sharing time with other guards. A 14-year-old guard from Delicias resguardo told us: *'I truly think it is very good because you find many friends from other places.'*[13] Through these activities, guards create strong relationships with members of their own group and with GI members from different villages. It is common to have a girlfriend or boyfriend in one GI and belong to another and take guards' activities as an opportunity to meet a partner. A 21-year-old girl from Conception resguardo told us: *'I like [the GI] because you go out and discover many places that you didn't know.'*[14] Thus, travelling is significant. Furthermore, even in dangerous activities like closing gold mines or visiting guerrilla camps, when guards are together, they laugh, make jokes, recount old anecdotes, and act as a team. The observations, therefore, suggest that many guards join the GI also because it is fun.

Table 4.1 Summary of practices, benefits, and motivations for joining the GI

Practices	Benefits	Motivations
Walking the territory, rituals, and symbols	- Access to contextual knowledge - Access to traditional knowledge - Connect guards with their past and give sense to their future - Indigenous cosmology provides a frame of interaction that gives meaning to Indigenous Guards' actions - Identification inside and outside the communities - Capacity to be brave	- Participation - Empowerment - Sense of belonging and safety - Reinforcing Nasa indigenous identity - Status in the community - Self-confidence
Non-violent strategies	- Empower against different types of violence - Feeling important, useful, and powerful - Feeling virtuous - Excitement and adventure - Finding their actions meaningful	- Sense of safety - Recognition and status - Sense of purpose
Political meetings and capacity-building activities	- Accessing and learning knowledge on indigenous history and rights - Understanding context and political struggle - Appropriation of skills and new language - Creating and reinforcing relationships - Expanding networks - Getting a job	- Reinforcing Nasa indigenous identity - Empowerment - Self-actualization - Sense of belonging - Sense of purpose - Financial opportunities

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13   Personal communication, 5 May 2014.
14   Personal communication, 15 October 2014.

To sum up, the GI offers a range of new practices that help members to expand their personal and job networks, makes members happy, and provides self-esteem, a sense of belonging, and security. These are strong motivations for collective action and individual decisions (see Table 4.1).

4.4 Life Stories

Life stories of four key informants who, at some point, were confronted with the option of either becoming a guerrilla member or joining the GI are presented in the following section.
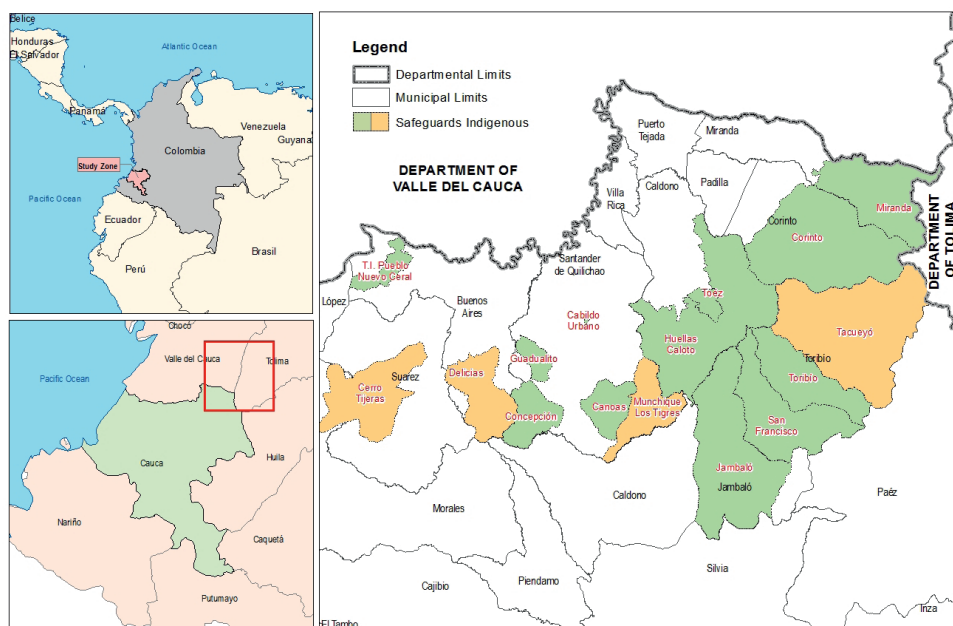
Map 4.1 Key informants' communities

4.4.1 Pablo

Profile
Pablo[15] is a male guard from Cerro Tijeras resguardo. He was 24 years old when we started data collection. By the time I developed the interviews, he was no longer an active guard and was working in the research branch of ACIN, the *Casa de Pensamiento*.

Cerro Tijeras, one the newest resguardos and an ACIN member, is located in the western range of the Andean Region in Suarez Municipality (see Map 4.1). The

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15   Informants' names have been changed to protect their identity.

area is well-known for the presence of illegal armed groups and large illegal mining exploitation sites. The resguardo was officially established in 2010, and Pablo was a guard coordinator there between 2011 and 2013. At that time, he was 21 years old, the Peace Process between the government and FARC-EP had not yet started, and confrontations between the army and FARC-EP occurred very often.

Pablo´s story
Since childhood, Pablo was used to having friends and cousins in FARC-EP. His family was not so much involved in the town's politics, and being in the guerrilla seemed quite attractive to him. The first time we talked about the guerrilla, he stated:

> *When I was a child, they showed me their weapons, they told me it could be like in the movies, that they travelled and had money. They showed me FARC's romantic aspect and handed me weapons to carry, but I was scared...'*[16]

In that interview, the discussion about the topic did not go further. He concluded that he was not interested in the guerrilla. The fact that he was scared and that this was reason enough for not joining shows that emotions played an important role in his decision. In later meetings, he was more forthcoming.

> *I used to see them [guerrillas] coming, tired from two or three days' hiking, and they had to cook and eat whatever was there. They could not even bathe, they did not have time for that, because they had to follow orders. Everything is an order; everything is done as an order of another person. They do not have autonomy. It is always following the orders of someone with more authority…Let's say that, as a teenager, the joke makes grace. A teenager sees it easy and believes that the world is at his feet, but I realized that I was not, I was not trained or tough enough for that lifestyle…but there was a moment when I was motivated to go [to the guerrilla], but I realized that it was not what I was seeking for my life.*[17]

In this quote, some indications of Pablo's decision become visible. Being able to observe closely the practices of the guerrilla provided him with information. Thus, he could compare the FARC members' stories with their practices. He could see the guerrilla struggles in daily life. He could contrast the romantic idea of the guerrilla with their daily struggles. For him, it looked dangerous, and, more importantly, it looked hard. Moreover, in the last line, he explained that he was looking a purpose for his life, and he did not identify with FARC-EP. Finally, he saw an extra cost of been in the guerrilla: losing his individual autonomy. Autonomy is an important motivation, something that most people need and want. For Pablo, apparently, autonomy is associated with not following orders; thus, being able to make decisions

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16   Personal communication, 29 October 2014.
17   Personal communication, 26 July 2016. Audiotaped.

in everyday matters.

During a previous conversation, Pablo analysed why some indigenous people might join the guerrilla:

> *In some territories, almost nothing happens. There are some basic stereotypes, two or three: the leader, the pastor of the Christian church, and the guerrilla commander. And that's all there is…Then, young people start to see the guerrilla as a way to get ahead in life. Because you see it that way, I saw it that way.*

> *The guerrillas do not use ideology to attract the boys. They fascinate them more with the presence, with the image. Because their strategy there [in Cerro Tijeras] was to pass at noon[18] riding two or three luxurious motorcycles, well-armed, and exercising control of the area. And young people liked to see that. When you see someone passing by in a community where nothing else happens, you see those guys who have money, have weapons, have cars, and have power, and, out of that, they have women. Then, the boys start to like that. And what happens here in the organized indigenous community? I tell you, back in Cerro Tijeras, there was the [indigenous] organization, and they held their meetings, but young people did not see themselves with the same status. If you were a leader, you had power, but it is a power that the young people did not care about. Young people are interested in girls or boys, to be in love with someone. That is why there were a lot of teenagers there [in FARC], because teenagers are very vulnerable.[19]*

His analysis is based on experience, mainly his own and that of his friends. Lack of opportunity is a key aspect of feeling attracted by the guerrillas, but also a range of personal feelings associated with how young people find a place in the world and a purpose for their lives and how they have access to power, money, love. Indeed, the adventurous young indigenous people did not feel attracted by the responsibilities that come with indigenous leadership, maybe because it entails power with responsibility, whereas been a guerrilla member brings power with less individual responsibility. Moreover, being a guerrilla looks more exciting than working in the community.

In a later interview, Pablo described the second time he was invited to join FARC, and I learned more about his decision. It was in 2011, when he was a teacher at the local school.

> *At that time, the same guerrilla suggested that I join. They told me: 'teacher, help us with something and we will give you money'. And of course, power*

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18   When the children are finishing school.
19   Personal communication, 22 August 2015. Audiotaped

attracts you! I was invited by two former students from the University. They were guerrilla commanders and political leaders, they told me: 'Pablo, you talk very well, why don´t you come to work with us? You make us the videos and we pay you; you walk a little and you play softly', the guys were very serious! Some boys who had given up studies in sociology. I think they had been studying and they were freshly unpacked. They were in Cerro Tijeras recruiting people. And I told them: 'I do not like that thing'. And the guys told me: 'we need people like you here because we have the structure at the base, but we need people with a political view and you have the profile'.[20]

Pablo is describing here different strategies used by guerrilla members to attract people. First, they appealed to excitement, adventure, and power. Then, they tried to motivate him with money. Both times, Pablo decided not to join, for the same reasons: he did not identify with the guerrilla organization, as he mentioned losing autonomy, and he did not like guerrilla practices, as he mentioned the hardship involved.

In a later interview, we discussed the two events. He told me that, indeed, the first time he was tempted by the proposal but, the second time, he was not. I asked him what had changed:

The way I saw my life! I already saw the guerrillas in a different way. I saw them empty. I saw that they were very basic in their thoughts, at least, the men who patrolled the area where I was. And they tried to recruit people but, let's say, the most vulnerable people. They suggested that I go with them but no, I was more attracted by the indigenous movement, even if the guerrillas told me that I was smart, I could be an ideologist, that I was not going to be in the war.[21]

In this quotation, Pablo framed his decision very clearly. Before, he thought it was scary and hard to be in the guerrillas; now, even if he was promised less work and no risks, he was not interested. His view of FARC had become more coloured by indigenous beliefs. For the Nasa, when a person makes a mistake or does something wrong, it is because he is lost, sick, and empty. Pablo is explaining his decision from a Nasa perspective. We learn two things in this quotation: first, Pablo's indigenous identity has become stronger with time and he uses more sophisticated discursive strategies to legitimize his choice. If guerrilla members were 'empty' and 'unhealthy', then joining the GI was a 'healthy' decision.

By 2011, the GI was already established in many indigenous territories in the country. Pablo had heard of the guards, but, in Cerro Tijeras, the guard was not

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20   Personal communication, 26 July 2016. Audiotaped.
21   Personal communication, 13 January 2017. Field notes.

formalized. Community members were worried because child recruitment by FARC had increased. ACIN was promoting the creation of GIs and visiting the few indigenous communities without a GI in Cauca province. Thus, when ACIN leaders visited Cerro Tijeras, immediately, the community organized their own GI, which Pablo joined.

> *We had already seen the photos of the guards in other communities, and seeing them in my own community gave me a lot of pride. People supported us and we had authority. We started controlling meetings, ensuring that people did not drink in them. We acquired political maturity in the process. I do not see it as an event, because there is no official ceremony. One day, the people from ACIN arrived and a coordinator described what a guard was and we felt ready. Before, we were already guards because we did what we had to do. That is, protect people, run errands, and help the community and the authorities. Little by little, I was emerging. The violence began to escalate and we had to organize ourselves. And we had to assume it as guards. What happens is that these guys, the guerrillas, began to besiege the army. Then, there were constant battles and bombings, so, we had to get more serious and start giving more structure to the guard we had.*[22]

The way Pablo describes the situation shows that he felt proud of his role, and he felt that, in the GI, he had more power to manage violent situations. Also, he differentiates himself from the guerrillas; in the GI, he talks as if he is part of a process in which strategies and decisions are discussed, he is not just following orders, which is important to him.

On one occasion at a party,[23] Pablo expressed that he felt like an indigenous person because of the practices, the traditional medicine, the knowledge about land that he had learnt from his father. Moreover, he said that he became a member of the guard because: *'It makes me feel more indigenous.'* Thus, we learnt that, for him, identity was a key aspect of his decision. In a later conversation, he explained:

> *Let's say, here [in the community] I am Pablo and when I go to Popayán or other places, I am 'El Indio'.*[24] *I mean, everybody calls me 'El Indio'. I do not feel bad to be called Indian, I do not care and even I feel good. For example, in the world of [motorcycle] racing, everyone calls me 'El Indio'. They classify me for what I am...*

> *...And that little organization [the GI] helps us to take care of ourselves, to have our own protection, because an indigenous person without organization*

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22   Personal communication, 13 January 2017. Field notes
23   Personal communication, 13 October 2014. Field notes.
24   The Indian.

is vulnerable to many things.[25]

Pablo describes his self-identification process as an indigenous Nasa and the GI as a reaffirmation of that identification; thus, the GI helped him in a process of identity reconstruction. He is an example of how identity is individual and collective at the same time and how his identity is constructed in relation to others; others who are different from himself and others who are equal to him. In the last part of the quotation, he mentions that indigenous individuals in general are vulnerable, but stronger when organized together, thereby associating the GI with empowerment, belonging, and protection.

Through the conversations, I noticed that, even if Pablo framed teenagers as 'vulnerable', he did not imply that he was stronger because he did not join FARC-EP. Indeed, he said he was scared and he talked about teenagers in FARC with empathy, as he had also considered the option. It is discerned that two factors were important in his decision: first, age, teenagers – and even himself as a teenager – were at more risk of joining FARC-EP; second, identification with the GI ideas and practices. He identified with the GI, and this identification process kept him out of the guerrillas.

4.4.2 Juan

Profile
Juan, a male guard from Munchique Los Tigres, was 27 years old at the time of the first interviews. He was an active guard in his resguardo, participated in ACIN activities, and was a leader among young people. The Munchique Los Tigres resguardo is one of the indigenous territories closest to ACIN headquarters (see 4.1). It is located in the western range of the Andean Region in Santander de Quilichao Municipality. The area is well known for its strong indigenous organization; 75% of the population speak Nasa Yuwe according to official information from the municipality. These features make this Nasa community one of the most traditional in northern Cauca. The guerrilla FARC, however, used the territory as a transit route for food, ammunition, and drugs. The community has a strong policy against the cultivation of crops for illicit use. Thus, it is one of the few territories where coca and marijuana cultivation is strictly forbidden.

Juan´s story
Juan's family members are well-known leaders in the cabildo. He is the second of four siblings. His parents and grandparents have a long trajectory as leaders. His mother is recognized as a leader and as a traditional healer. His father has lived in different resguardos in which he had been part of the cabildo. When I first asked Juan about his decision to become a guard, he said:

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25 Personal communication, 22 August 2015. Audiotaped.

Since before I was born, the Guard was there for a long time. Because, if we are going to talk, since 1971 there was the Guard. For example, my father was in the land recovery process, my grandparents were land claimers. So, I could say that before 1971 my family was part of this organization's struggles claiming the land. My grandparents, from my mother side, have always been guiding, always side by side with the organization and the cabildo. We can say that we have been and have grown up next to the organization, and, surely, we will die being participants of the cabildo.[26]

According to this quotation, Juan's family exerts a big influence in his life and he feels proud of them. If he did not feel proud, family might still have been an important factor, but it may have played out differently in his decision. Likewise, he appears to feel represented by indigenous organizations, values, and practices. Thus, at the time of this first interview, there was no doubt about his decision to become a GI member. Indeed, he said that he joined when he was very young.

I was a kid and I just liked it. And because my dad, my mom, they had worked a lot with the cabildo, then I also took that path.[27]

First, this quotation shows that emotions play an important role, as he says he likes it. Second, he sees his choice as a type of legacy from his family, his parents gave him the example, and the practices were there. In principle, Juan does not see his decision as a choice, or as a question, it was the 'natural' course of action. He did not have to think about it, and, at first, his commitment to the indigenous organization seems very strong.

At the beginning of 2000, the guerrillas were getting stronger his territory. Many indigenous people joined them, including some of Juan's cousins and friends. He was 12 years old.

In my family, there was always that problem, because some relatives were influenced by their anger or by other people, so they went [with FARC]. Some came back. They understood that the struggle was not with that type of guns. Here, without guns, but being clear about what are we defending, we live well.[28]

In this quote, Juan gives us his opinion about why, in his context, some indigenous people joined FARC. For him, emotions such as anger and injustice and the influence of others are important. Likewise, he used the expression *'live well'*, which contrasts with the guerrilla life.

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26   Personal communication, 25 June 2016. Audiotaped.
27   Personal communication, 15 March 2015. Audiotaped.
28   Personal communication, 26 June 2016. Audiotaped.

According to Juan, he did not interact with the guerrilla members very often. His references were from other people who had been there and came back. Juan, however, at some point thought about joining FARC. It was in the second interview that he mentioned it. He explained that he had just finished school, he was 18 years old, strong and young, looking for something to do. He thought that the guerrillas were a good option for him. When I asked him why, he said, *'I don't know'*. However, in our conversations, he made some statements that give us some clues about his reasons.

> *I was good at that! If I went there [with FARC], I would go with all the toys. So, I thought, if I go it is to stay there and that is it...Sometimes young people are very aggressive, very crazy, and one does not think about why, but just does what one wants.*[29]

In this quote, Juan in some way justifies going to the guerrilla as a good idea by making reference to the emotions of young people and the need for excitement. It should be noted that in a previous interview he had mentioned the same feelings when describing the guard members' profile.

> *The majority of the guards where I come from are young and they like to be active. Sometimes as a young person, you like walking, exploring, living that adrenaline that sometimes you have and it is like that, we are very active.*[30]

The feeling of excitement and adrenaline has been recounted by guards in their practices, as also by the guerrillas, indicating some similarities between both groups. However, joining the guerrilla implies abandoning many indigenous practices and participation in indigenous organizations. For Juan, the indigenous organizations play a key role in preventing young people from joining armed groups.

> *I have told people in the cabildos that the system of self-government has not been so inclusive with young people...One, as a young person, has some expectations of working. One sometimes offers to help, but even that is not taken into account.*

> *I have always criticized how many leaders manage the discourse that young people are important because they are the future of the organization; however, they do not know how to work with young people. So, what happens with some young people who need this guidance is that another group comes and that group gives that guidance so they go with them, probably because young men, as I say, are just growing. Or another organization comes and they ask you: do you like working on the land? So, an organization that is supported by the guerrilla comes with supplies and fertilizers, so they say: if*

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29   Personal communication, 17 March 2015. Audiotaped.
30   Personal communication, 15 March 2015. Audiotaped.

you like working, I have everything here. This is something that the cabildo still can´t do.

When I was a child, I was a guard. That's true. I was devoted to studying. Then, I left school...I finished studying and I was distracted. As I was saying, nobody pays attention to [young] people and there is another group that does pay attention and one, as young, so crazy, one goes with them.

I went with them, but they did not take me. So, later, I didn't know what to do. There is what I was telling you, if sometimes the cabildo had a strategy for young people, then, we do not think these stupid things.[31]

I discussed with Juan why the guerrilla did not accept him. A possible answer is because his family had told them not to receive him. This was common practice. Indigenous leaders negotiated with guerrilla members not to recruit young indigenous people. Thus, in many cases, to avoid problems, the guerrillas did not accept indigenous underage youths from indigenous organizations. Juan was already 18 at that time. I suspect that the guerrilla knew that his family was part of the indigenous organization and, therefore, preferred to avoid complications.

In his testimony, Juan gave us clues to understand motivations that could be relevant in many different contexts for youngsters joining different groups, such as young people feeling that they do not get enough attention from society precisely when they are looking for meaning and purpose in their lives. Juan, like Pablo, sees young people as vulnerable and at more risk of joining armed groups. Armed groups, apparently, recognize this vulnerability, and they use it to develop strategies to attract new members. Money for supplies and fertilizer and a place to work are some strategies mentioned.

Juan used adjectives such as distracted and stupid when referring to joining an armed group. Thus, at the time of the interviews, he had concluded that joining was a bad idea. My interpretation is that, as Juan was not accepted in FARC-EP, the juncture at which he went to join them was a defining moment in his life, but it was not defined by him. Coincidence, therefore, plays a key role in this case. More precisely, the Indigenous organizations worked as a barrier to protect Juan.

After Juan failed to join FARC, he went back to his community and became part of the cabildo as an *alguacil* (sheriff). In indigenous communities, an alguacil does not use guns, and his activities are closely related to the guards but with a focus on the community's internal problems. Moreover, the alguacil is part of the cabildo, and thus supposed to have more authority than guards.

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31   Personal communication, 17 March 2015. Audiotaped.

I looked around and I went to the cabildo and here I am. I was in the cabildo as alguacil for two years. There, I learned to be a councillor, to walk the territory, to collaborate. I lived that experience! Any young person feels ashamed to have that experience, but I lived it and I feel good about it. I could say, I am proud of that because it is an experience in the organization... Now, I am aware that before I was going nowhere. I finished in the council, and there was the guard in the resguardo, the cabildo supported it, and there were many activities. So, I joined.[32]

Juan could have gone to another guerrilla, or maybe could have left town, or even participated in the cabildo in a different role, or not participated at all. Thus, the question remains about his choice to become a guard. There are two constant notions in his story: one, emotions are important, this is shown in his need for excitement and his pride at being a guard and, two, he was looking for a group of which to be part, even if he was already part of the indigenous community. These two notions recur very often in this study, in the interviews with other guards and in the life stories. They could be translated into satisfied needs and, thus, motivations. From Juan's story, we learn that young indigenous people are looking for alternatives to give meaning and purpose to their actions and existence, but they are also keen to experience different emotions.

Juan also mentioned that young indigenous people feel ashamed of being part of the cabildo because there is no salary, no money. Furthermore, the alguacil has lost its authority in some villages, and, therefore, there is neither status nor social recognition associated with it. The alguacil has a similar job to a guard but without the group to support him and without so much status; the GI offers both. Thus, joining the GI is a way to find emotions, a group, and meaning, as members find their place and their contribution to society.

Juan was an active indigenous guard between 2008 and 2015 in Munchique resguardo. He met his current wife in 2014. She was a guard from a resguardo in south Cauca. By 2019, they had a 4-year-old girl and were no longer guards. This merits some reflexion. From my observations, my interpretation is that, for many indigenous people, the GI is a temporary occupation that attracts mainly young people, but also people who do not have a career in the indigenous organization but want to participate, for instance, adult women without formal education and old people who are not Thë'Walas or leaders. This is a type of profile for GI members.

4.4.3 *Carol*

Profile
Carol, a guard from resguardo Tacueyó, was 45 years old when I started data

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32   Personal communication, 10 February 2016. Audiotaped.

collection. She had been in the guard for eight years, five years as coordinator and three as a regular guard. At the time of the interviews, she was working in the research branch of ACIN, the Casa de Pensamiento. We worked together developing workshops in different communities on topics related to indigenous political history and laws related to conflict victims. She is mother of a 22-year-old boy and two girls 20 and 16 years old. Carol is a recognized leader of her community, guiding indigenous people with children in the guerrillas to help them in the reincorporation process, and supports women to become empowered and struggle against domestic violence. Carol was the first female guard coordinator in the region. At that time, in 2001, she was 28 years old. The indigenous organizations had just formalized the GI, and Tacueyó was one of the first communities to implement it.

The Tacueyó resguardo is located in the central range of the Andean Region in Toribío Municipality (see Map 4.1). It belongs to the indigenous territory together with Toribío and San Francisco, which was recognized by the Spanish crown in 1701 and whose title deeds were finally recognized by the Colombian government in 1991. The indigenous organizations are very strong in this territory, and the Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca (CRIC) was founded here in 1971. Currently, Tacueyó is one of the centres of ACIN and many other indigenous organizations. Until 2016, this area was well-known for the presence of guerrillas, mainly FARC-EP, and extensive cultivation of marihuana and coca.

Carol's story
According to Carol, her father was a steward who never had any affinity with any political or armed group. When Carol was a child, the indigenous organizations were not yet formalized, and Carol's father had to work with various groups. He learned Spanish to communicate with landlords and was recognized as a leader. Carol is the youngest of eight siblings. Her older brothers were also leaders in the community. Her family was from the Nasa group, practised traditional Nasa medicine, and spoke Nasa Yuwe.

Carol speaks with an awkwardly structured Spanish; her first language is Nasa Yuwe, and she learned Spanish when she was about 11 years old.

> *My grandparents, in those times, they had their tulpa.[33] They made their appeals to the souls, they made the offering to the souls. But they did not explain that to me. I understand today and begin to remember what they were doing...As I experienced it when I was a child, for me it is very easy to understand. For my daughters, it is difficult, as I do not practise it because, unfortunately, everything has changed a lot. Sometimes when we talk, we*

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33   Tulpas are the three hearthstones in a traditional Nasa wood fire. Their name derives from the *tul*, which refers to the principles that govern the community, such as solidarity, conservation, autonomy, resistance, respectful use, harmony, spirituality, reciprocity, and good management.

make a chocolatada[34] *for them to learn. While with my parents we chewed coca and they called and offered it to the spirits. If you see? I lived it, so today I understand it much more. Now, to my daughters I have to explain it and do a little practice, doing the things that can be done.*[35]

Carol explained the importance of learning the rituals and their meaning by practising them when she was a child. Thus, in this sense, Carol seems to have positive feelings about her family. Her experience is very common among indigenous people of her generation. Rituals were part of the daily life experience, as well as the traditional medicine in which local plants and herbs were used to cure physical and spiritual diseases. The significance of these cultural practices hinges on individuals' strong relation with their indigenous heritage. In this sense, Carol's indigenous identity became tangible very early in her life. The situation is different for young guards who do not speak Nasa Yuwe and their experiences with cultural practices are less frequent. For the last 20 years, however, these practices are a part of a formal strategy of indigenous organizations. Many schools teach Nasa Yuwe and, in the guard, as it has been shown, young people practise some rituals. The format is different, however, as for older generations these practices were informal and familiar.

At the end of the 1970s, Carol's elder brother, Pedro, and her father worked together to get resources for the school in the town. Their goal was for indigenous people to learn Spanish and, in this way, access financial resources from the government. Pedro was a leader in his community, helping his father with the school and helping people to get the materials to build houses. He decided to join FARC-EP when he was 22 years old. At that time, the separation between indigenous organizations and guerrillas were not as strong as now, and, besides, they had a common 'enemy': the government.

My brother, the eldest, the one who died. He was commander of block 30 in Buenaventura. I remember so much that I went to the political socialization meetings of the guerrilla FARC…I was about seven years old, and I was with him…Then, they talked until late…until twelve or one at night…and that word, I heard it, the famous oligarchy. I do not know why my brother took me there, it was forbidden to bring children. They were all adults, over 40 years, not even teenagers were admitted.[36]

Over the course of her life, Carol was strongly influenced by FARC-EP. Pedro became a recognized commander and, from her childhood, tried to train her to be part of the guerrilla. Carol explained that, during the 1970s, many indigenous leaders participated in FARC meetings.

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34   Drank hot chocolate together.
35   Personal communication, 14 January 2015. Audiotaped.
36   Personal communication, 13 October 2014.

There was not an [indigenous] organization as strong as now, so the elders went to these meetings to listen. Because it was a fight with the state, as I said, with the oligarchy. Then, my brother always said that we could not let ourselves be manipulated, we could not let ourselves be controlled by the oligarchy, we had to go to overthrow that oligarchy.[37]

At that time, Carol explained, indigenous people in FARC-EP could retain some of their practices and beliefs; indeed, there were a few shamans working for FARC. Carol's experience is an example of the tensions between the indigenous organizations and FARC. After 1990, when the Armed Movement Quintin Lame – MAQL, the only group recognized as an indigenous guerrilla – signed a peace agreement with the government, the separation between the guerrillas and indigenous organizations became explicit and clear. Since then, FARC has accused indigenous organizations of helping the government, and the GI formalization made the relation even worse. Indigenous organizations accused the guerrillas of trying to impose guerrilla thinking on them; thus, the rebels jeopardized their indigenous identity. It is important to note that, in Carol's story, the separation between guerrillas and indigenous organizations was always very solid. When Carol was 11 years old, she was sent to Bogota to learn Spanish.

My brother said: 'see Carol, you cannot be one of those women who wash dishes, give birth to children and wash nappies.'

He told me stories, he used to tell me: 'you should bring me food. If you know where I am, you should bring me food'. He told me stories, stories as if he was Simón Bolivar[38] *or someone like that. Because he used to say that he will come on a horse and I should bring him food and I should learn to read and help him, I should become his secretary.*[39]

Pedro disappeared from Carol's life for almost 10 years. He was immersed in the guerrilla life, and she was sent back to Cauca. During that time, Carol became pregnant with her first child and started a life in her community. In the same interview, I discussed Carol's brother wanting her to join the guerrillas: why did she not join? She replied: *I don't know, don't have an answer'.* However, she mentioned one situation.

I remember so much that he arrived, yes, like in 2003, and he met my children, and he told me that I had disappointed him…first, because I was dedicated to having children and I had not done much. Second, because I was very

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37 Personal communication, 13 October 2014.
38   Simón Bolivar, a Venezuelan military and political leader, liberated the republics of Venezuela, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Panama from Spanish rule.
39 Personal communication, 13 October 2014.

intelligent, so why was I involved in an organization that had no future, as an indigenous guard; what would happen when the paramilitaries entered and I am there with a stick! Third…because I had just finished secondary school.[40]

At that time, her son was 8 years old and her daughters were 6 and 2 years old. Furthermore, Pedro accused her of being an informant for the government.

I said to him: it is contradictory because you say that you are fighting against the state, and we fight against the state also. The difference is that you are an armed group, we are not.

Pedro replied to Carol:

The [religious people] betray us while holding their bible; the indigenous organizations betray us with their policy, which makes them [government] informants.

Carol had chosen not to follow her brother' path, but she did not have a narrative established to explain why. When she met her brother in 2003, she had already made her decision. With two children and another on the way, she was chosen by her community to be the guard coordinator from 2001 to 2008. It was a very violent period in Cauca, and she participated in many confrontations with armed groups, including FARC-EP. Therefore, we can infer that Carol's participation in the GI implied antagonizing her brother.

Pedro died in 2011, killed in combat, after 40 years of service in FARC. Carol was the only relative that could bury him because the other siblings were *wanted men*. Carol had not seen him for many years. She told me that, when she saw him dead, she saw the face of her mother in him and, somehow, she felt at peace.[41]

I think that, for a while, I did feel a lot of anger. Above all, I was very angry at the guerrillas. But I think that the same process helped me to understand why armed conflict happens. Why, as I said, why that contamination of civilians in armed conflict, right? So, I began to analyse and reached the conclusion that, unfortunately, all begins with needs. All begins with family problems, with economic needs, and not only in the family but at state level. It is a social problem that touches everyone, and it is growing… If I had continued with the anger, I would have contributed to the conflict, and, our process, the indigenous movement, would not be an alternative. Because, if people from our process are full of resentment, it could not be an alternative for anyone.

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40   Personal communication, 13 October 2014.
41   Personal communication, 4 November 2014.

This quotation gives us clues about Carol motivations for joining the guard. Carol refers to the GI as a different option than the guerrillas, an alternative to armed conflict, and, as she talks about leaving resentment behind, it appears to refer to the GI's non-violent aspect.

Her experience shows new aspects of the choice of joining the GI. Her indigenous identity was very strong because of different practices in her childhood; thus, the GI appealed to her. This could have applied to her brothers, but they were older than her and the GI did not come into being until much later. At the same time, she was strongly influenced by FARC-EP. Her decision was a process, possibly related to her role as a mother. Carol often mentioned that her main priority was her children. The guerrilla lifestyle does not lend itself to raising a family, she mentioned at some point. It looks like many factors came together and created a tipping point and a decision was made. In this case, she was chosen by the community, her brother had left, and she had had children.

4.4.4   Andrés

Profile
Andrés, a male guard from Delicias resguardo, was 36 years old and the operative GI coordinator in northern Cauca during data collection. In 2019, he was on the GI coordination team, and his role consisted of coordinating the guards' daily strategies at regional level. As he had to work very closely with the Tejido de Defensa de la Vida, he participated in most of the GI activities during my fieldwork. Andrés was a recognized leader of the GI since its formalization in 2001 to date.

The Delicias resguardo is famous for its strong cabildo and its active group of young guards. It is located in the western range of the Andean Region in Buenos Aires Municipality (see Map 4.1). The area is well-known for the presence of illegal armed groups and illegal mining exploitation sites. FARC-EP used this territory as a transit route for food, ammunition, and drugs.

Andrés has a very kind face but is not very talkative. He has survived at least three assassination attempts, but he does not like to talk about these experiences. He carries a *jigra*, a woven bag for carrying coca and medicinal plants, and chews coca very often. He is very busy and focused, and arranging interviews was always a challenge. The interviews were always interrupted by people who needed him, and he was very cautious and chose his words very carefully to answer my questions. He explained that his past, as a member of the MAQL, made him a target for several armed groups.

Andrés' story
According to Andrés, his becoming a guard could be traced back to his childhood.

Let's say that I was born in the context of defending the territory. The struggle and land recovery processes in my territory were hard because many people were killed. At that time, they were called pájaros and now we call them paramilitaries. The pájaros were looking for the leaders to kill them. Many of our older colleagues went to jail, many were persecuted, so let's say that since childhood one has grown up in that environment. Even my family, my father took us to hide in the mountains because, at that time, they started killing children. If they did not find the father, they killed the sons. So, let's say that from that moment you have been aware that you have to defend the territory. The parents and elders taught us and, from there, one begins to defend the territory and to defend the leaders.[42]

Andrés explains that participating in the GI was almost an expected choice, like a responsibility that he learned as a child. However, before he became a guard, there were other strategies to defend the territory. In the 1980s, the MAQL started to operate in the region. Andrés was a child, but many members of his family joined the MAQL.

At that time, I was very young. I think I was about 11 years old. Most of my family were part of that process; my brothers, my cousins, my uncles, my friends, were part of the Quintin Lame Movement. They always came to the sites, met and took us with them and, from there, we started to participate but more in the [political] focus. We had close relatives. Then, the information arrived that [my brother] had died in combat, so, in the house, I was the oldest man left and, on my parents' initiative, we decided that I should become part of it and that's how I was integrated into the MAQL.

Andrés's participation in the MAQL was short. In 1990, the MAQL and other guerrillas signed a peace agreement with the Colombian government. These negotiations led to the creation of a new constitution, which recognizes indigenous autonomy in indigenous territories. Thus, it officially recognized indigenous identities. Andrés went back to his community, thinking that his siblings had been killed in combat. When the peace agreement was signed and he returned home, his siblings also returned.

Let's say that, in the land recovery process, there was a time when we had to take up arms in defence of the territory or in defence of our leaders. Because at that time the onslaught of armed actors was hard...But from there to keep the weapons to maintain a territorial area is a very big difference. Because the indigenous movement had always argued that the defence of the territory is done in the territory, and not in other places, and the mechanism to achieve that is through peaceful struggle and the cultural part...We do not depend on

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42   Personal communication, 10 August 2016.

guns, because with guns it is very clear if you have a gun it is to kill someone or get yourself killed. So, in our context, [the guns] were not to kill, but to avoid being killed. The guerrillas have the concept of getting power through guns, but, we know it, the elders have said, we do not need power because we already have it. We are autonomous in our territories. Some people take up guns to achieve the power of the National Government; we say, we do not need to get power because we already have power, what we have to do is defend that power we have in our territories.[43]

Andrés demonstrates the process of learning through experience, similar to Juan and Carol. He, however, had joined the armed movement and learnt from it. Moreover, he highlights the importance of achieving legal recognition in relation to indigenous strategies. The legal strategy was used before by Nasa communities when the Cacique Juan Tama negotiated the possibility of paying taxes to the Spanish crown, in order to keep the indigenous territories and their autonomy. Andrés and his family participated in the process that led to the creation of the new constitution, and, therefore, he values legal achievements. After participating in a guerrilla for some time, he decided that he did not want to do this anymore. FARC-EP was probably not even an option for him.

By 1991, when Andrés returned home, the civic guard had come into being as a sporadic protection group to support meetings and activities. The civic guard was organized mainly by farmers and indigenous organizations. Andrés became part of the civic guard immediately. He helped in the GI formalization process in 2001. He became a coordinator in his region and soon a regional coordinator. His experience with armed groups and his personal learning about the consequences of armed struggle became a key component of his leadership. He draws on his own experience to explain why people should not join armed groups.

It has been difficult in my personal life and for my family, but it has been important because my own brothers, my own partner, my own sons have decided to join [the GI]. They have understood that, to really defend our lives and territories, we are all exposed to risks. So, [my experience] has served for people, parents, young people to support the process.[44]

Andrés' case shows the change from an armed to a non-violent strategy, demonstrating the indigenous Nasa organizations' process through the struggle to obtain their rights, to resistance to survive the violence, and then to exercise their rights. In his story, we see a constant component, his identity as an indigenous Nasa. In his case, the armed strategy is justified only to defend themselves and achieve legal recognition as indigenous people. Thus, he never joined any other armed group.

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43   Personal communication, 10 August 2016.
44   Personal communication, 13 January 2015.

4.5   Discussion

This study aimed to understand why some indigenous people from northern Cauca joined the GI, whereas others joined a guerrilla group like FARC-EP. From the interviews and observation of GI practices, motivations for joining the GI were identified, and from the four life stories we learned that specific motivations, like sense of purpose, belonging, and a search for identity, played a role at precise junctures in the decision to become a guard.

Clearly, becoming a GI member entails many social, psychological, and material benefits, motivating individuals to join the group. These benefits can be classified in three groups: fundamental needs, such as the need to belong, to feel valued, to be good at something, to do the right thing, to have a purpose and be somebody (Oyserman, 2015; Maslow, 1943); positive emotions related to self-esteem and sense of power and pride, which are experienced by those who are involved in effective practices to reduce injustice (Deutsch, Coleman, & Marcus, 2006); and positive emotions such as happiness, self-confidence, excitement, and adrenaline production. Finally, the GI provides practical tools for many purposes, such as managing uncertain and violent situations, access to networks, and different forms of knowledge, which all together help guards to understand and manage their specific context, their political struggle, and even to find job opportunities.

Studies have shown that the need to belong is a powerful, fundamental, and particularly persistent motivation for many human actions (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Equally, the need to have a purpose relates to the meaning in our actions; and, from social psychology, we learn that finding meaning is an extremely strong motivation to survive even in the most difficult circumstances (Frankl, 1985). People can choose various strategies to fulfil these needs, becoming part of a group and forming a family are the most observable strategies.

Consequently, it could be argued that these motivations push people to join groups in general, including armed groups. Indeed, some studies have shown that groups like FARC-EP also satisfied needs such as sense of belonging, purpose, and the feeling of doing the right thing (Ribetti, 2007). In terms of practices, the former FARC-EP and the GI had some similarities as well, like territorial control activities, meetings, and political training. Furthermore, both organizations had a related purpose: territorial control and claiming people's rights. On the surface, the GI and FARC-EP shared many features. Thus, to understand people's decision to join one group or the other, it is necessary to dig deeper.

The phenomenon of the *narcissism of minor differences* (coined by Freud, elaborated by Blok, 2001) posits that identities are developed more strongly when communities share territories and have close relationships. From this perspective, the GI and FARC represent collective identities. In general, collective identities are seen as the

primary vehicle through which basic needs, such as the need to belong and the need to be somebody, are expressed and satisfied (Deutsch et al., 2006). For the Nasa, differentiation from FARC-EP became urgent in 2001 for various reasons: first, for survival, as paramilitary groups were hunting guerrilla members; second, because after indigenous people's participation in the 1991 constitution, the Nasa had obtained legal tools for their struggle; and, third, the MAQL Peace Agreement demanded the use of new strategies. When the GI was formalized as a non-violent self-defence group in 2001(Chaves et al., forthcoming; 2019), its practices were explicitly and slightly different from any other group: self-defence without violence, political training focused on indigenous and human rights, and the use of symbols and rituals to visibly distinguish guards from others. These small but meaningful differences were shaped and reinforced through everyday discourses and practices. In short, GI formalization corresponds with a process of collective identity reconstruction, including resignification of history by using elements from the past and revitalizing old practices in new discourses and contexts (Chaves et al., forthcoming; Rappaport, 1990); differentiation between the Nasa and armed groups, and exclusion of the use of violence in indigenous Nasa organizations and strategies.

The GI, therefore, offers a collective identity based on the image of a millenarian warrior who takes care of vulnerable people and defends them without using violence (Chaves et al., 2019), whereas FARC offered a collective identity based on the Cuban revolution, using images of revolutionary heroes. Revolution and power can be important attractors for young people who are looking for their place in society and yearn for strong emotions like adrenalin rushes and excitement (see for instance: Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Henriksen & Vinci, 2007; Ribetti, 2007; UNSSC, 2015). As shown by the life stories, FARC also used incentives such as status, power, and economic rewards (see also: Beltrán, 2014; Dulce Romero & Ávila Cortés, 2019; Gutierrez Sanin, 2010). However, having contact with the rebels and seeing their practices and experiences helped some indigenous people to comprehend the struggles and contradictions of the FARC revolutionary identity.

All in all, despite the similarities in the FARC and GI identities, by emphasizing their differences and reinforcing their indigenous identity, the GI created an identity that could compete with FARC-EP. As violence forced indigenous people to take a position, once both options existed, individuals could choose. Hence, the GI provided the opportunity for individuals to take a different path that allowed them to group together, be strong, and protect themselves, while not using violence and keeping and reinforcing their indigenous identity.

The philosopher Ruth Chang (2012) explains that, when people are confronted with hard choices, choices that change people's lives, synchronization of values and needs is important. The life stories suggest that indigenous people who choose the GI might feel their values more represented by GI practices and symbols. For instance, adherence to non-violence could create a meaningful moral distinction, making the

GI easily accepted by outsiders and, at the same time, more attractive for individuals who do not want to be labelled as criminals (doing the right thing). Also, when people join the GI, they frame it as something that adds to their indigenous identity ('*It makes me feel more indigenous*'). Similarly, some individuals could prefer the GI because it preserves their way of living, whereas joining the guerrillas implies a break with their roots because the rebels have to constantly move and hide. Thus, personal values, represented in legal status, identity, and way of living, influenced individual choices.

Although life stories are considered by several authors as one among many symbolic devices involved in identity construction (Peacock & Holland, 1993), I noticed that the key informants did not focus on constructing individual personal stories to justify their individual decisions. Their stories are like conclusions based on their experiences. This has many implications. Indigenous Nasa do not consider themselves as separated from others or from context; rather, they constantly relate themselves and their decisions to their families, indigenous struggles, their collective past, or their community. They do not focus on their individual thoughts or preferences. This indicates that, for the Nasa, actions and decisions are relational and choices are based on how individuals position themselves in their community and other networks composed of people and nature. It also means that they are aware that things are not completely in their hands and, hence, they look for collective ways to deal with problems and uncertainty. This helps to elucidate why they adhere strongly to their collective identity, as something that gives sense to their individual actions and decisions. My assumption is that the Nasa and the GI collective identities work well to justify individual actions; thus, individualistic devices focused on personal narratives fall short for this case. That said, this does not mean that the Nasa renounce their agency as individuals or that they do not have a personal narrative, this research just emphasize that they subscribe to indigenous principles to make their decisions.

Studying the process towards a decision over time, we learned that coincidence also plays a role in which group is finally joined. That is, becoming a GI member is not a clear decision made at a precise juncture. Rather, key moments in people's lives are accompanied by strong emotions, and people draw conclusions on the basis of these defining moments and the attendant emotions. Decisions appear more or less as a process of gradually becoming indigenous guards and thus are not made in a linear, rational, and straight-forward manner. Such decisions, instead, reflect the idea of a tipping point, resulting from many factors and developments loading on a series of previous choices and coincidences (Vallecher et al., 2010). To give an illustration, context creates new trends in practices and behaviours, like the paramilitary incursions that led to the creation of the GI. However, context itself does not define people's decisions. Giddens argued that '*action depends upon the capability of the individual to "make a difference" to a pre-existing state of affairs or course of events*' (1984, p. 14). This research adds that individuals alone may not be able to make big social changes, but if they organize themselves like the Nasa,

they can.

My fieldwork distanced me from old dualisms in social theory such as individuals and groups, agency and structure, micro and macro level. Contrary to studies on group affiliation in conflict that either focus on structural problems and omit individual decisions from the discussion or place individuals as clear agents of their decisions (see for instance: Justino, 2009; Oppenheim et al., 2015; Rosenau et al, 2014; Ugarriza & Craig, 2013), it was found that such dual thinking falls short in elucidating Nasa practices, actions, and decisions. This study shows the interplay between individual and collective identities, micro and macro discourses, and local and national events over time.

4.6   Conclusions

Previous research has suggested that indigenous belief systems gave little attention and few roles to young and female members. As a result, young people were at risk of joining armed groups. To understand why Nasa youngsters would choose the GI, this study considered the particularities of Nasa practices. Nasa individuals are already part of something stronger and bigger than themselves, their Nasa collective identity, which encompasses relevant elements in practices, discourses, and personal stories. Indeed, GI practices provide members with meanings that become relevant at specific junctures and influence their motivations to join the group. In other words, the GI confers a strong indigenous collective identity that prevents some people from engaging in armed resistance. However, as collective identities are not deterministic, indigenous people still might join armed groups that also chime with their unsatisfied needs and personal values.

From this study, several insights into why some people decided not to join FARC-EP are obtained. Context played a role, as well as emotions and relationships, and learned experience from their surroundings or their past were also important. Further research on why indigenous people in the Cauca region joined guerrilla groups would be useful.

Finally, this study links with peacebuilding studies on identity and radicalization of young people in armed groups (Henriksen & Vinci, 2007; Ribetti, 2007; UNSSC, 2015). It is concluded that connecting to personal needs and values in relation to processes of collective identity construction is key for attracting young people. Armed groups all around the globe seem to use this insight to attract members. When trying to prevent youngsters from joining armed groups, much more attention to other opportunities for them to construct, develop, and express their identities and fulfil their needs should be given. Society should facilitate contexts in which people can flourish, one step in this direction is to recognize multicultural collective identities, instead of stigmatizing and isolating them.

Picture 5.1 Jigras, hand-woven bags with Nasa symbols for carrying coca and medicinal plants.→››

CHAPTER 5

DYNAMICS OF CONFLICT AND NASA IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

"In 1492, the natives discovered they were Indians, discovered they lived in America, discovered they were naked, discovered that the Sin existed, discovered they owed allegiance to a King and Kingdom from another world and a God from another sky, and that this God had invented the guilty and the dress, and had sent to be burnt alive who worships the Sun the Moon the Earth and the Rain that wets it."

Eduardo Galeano, Los Hijos de los Días

5.1   Introduction

This chapter aims to contextualize indigenous Nasa strategies for survival, in which processes of identity reconstruction are crucial. For that, the interactions of multiple connections are explored and traced back in an attempt to understand historical relationships and social conditions that have helped reconfigure Nasa indigenous identities over the past five centuries. According to Rappaport (1990b), Nasa history is transferred in oral tradition; some events were recorded by Western authorities in books or other written texts, but indigenous intellectuals narrated and reinterpreted these historical events and characters, constructing the historical foundations that were appropriated by Nasa community members and became part of their historical memory.

This chapter is based mainly on an extensive literature review about Nasa indigenous history (Bonilla, 1982; Bonilla et al., 1972; Castellanos, 1850; Findji, 1991; Findji & Rojas, 1985; Rappaport, 1987, 1988, 1990a, 2005, 2013; Rappaport & Dover, 1996), and it is the only chapter of this thesis that is not completely grounded on empirical data. However, conversations and observations, official indigenous communications with Colombian governments and other organizations and media news, collected over a year of ethnographic fieldwork, were used to complement the information. The result is an *ethnographically informed* (Rappaport, 1990b) identity history of the Nasa, in which different events in different periods of time are selected and assembled with a focus on collective identity construction processes and conflict management strategies.

My fieldwork led me to understand the importance of group identity construction processes in Nasa communities. Group identities are built on a shared set of historical events and discourses that work as identification points (Hall, 1990). These group identities change in light of historical events, practices integrate new knowledge and discourses are created and adapted accordingly. Group identity is also a source of power, because it creates a dynamic process of inclusion and exclusion evolving over time (Elias, 1994). Therefore, group identities are socially constructed, reconstructed, and conveyed in everyday interactions and practices. As there is no one pure indigenous identity, but multiple identities negotiated through interaction, I aim to show processes of Nasa identity construction and their consequences in local and national networks. To assert that indigenous identities are socially constructed is not to deny the historical basis of their identity; rather, analysis of indigenous identity construction allows us to understand this group of people's strategic adaptation to social changes.

The selection and interpretation of events presented here are neither more accurate nor more truthful than the Nasa oral stories that I heard during fieldwork. They just have a particular focus on identity construction and the goal of showing events at international, national, and local level, which affected and generated reactions and

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responses from Nasa people. I selected the times at which, according to my research, Nasa people deployed strategies to survive that generated changes in their identities; maybe not intentionally and consciously, but with the goal of survival.

A purely historical perspective can explain the basis, causes, and events that shape an identity construction process, but it will fail to explain the constant redefinition and reconstruction of these identities (Nagel, 1994, p. 153). This is why the focus of this chapter is on the identities that are performed or framed in historical events. Finally, this chapter serves to explain the context of my research; thus, readers are familiarized with Nasa people's struggles and how they have adapted and changed their collective identities skilfully enough to be, nowadays, key actors in the peacebuilding process in the Cauca region and in Colombia in general.

This chapter is divided into eight sections representing particular periods of time, from the time before the Spanish invaded the region until the creation of the Guardia Indígena (GI) and its expansion as a national initiative in 2009. Each historical narrative starts with the main events, the implications for the Nasa, and their strategies to confront these new situations. Finally, a conclusion is presented about the implications of this historical perspective for Nasa identity and the meaning of these findings for peacebuilding studies.

Clashes among native groups (before 1500)

Indigenous people vs. Spanish conquerors (1500-1700)

Unification of Nasa indigenous groups (1700-1800)

The new mestizo and the Nasa struggles to keep their identity (1800)

Colombian independency (1810-1880)

Under the rules of the new Colombian Government (1880-1950)

Land Reform and indigenous organizations (1950-1980)

Between legal victories and armed conflicts (1980-2000)

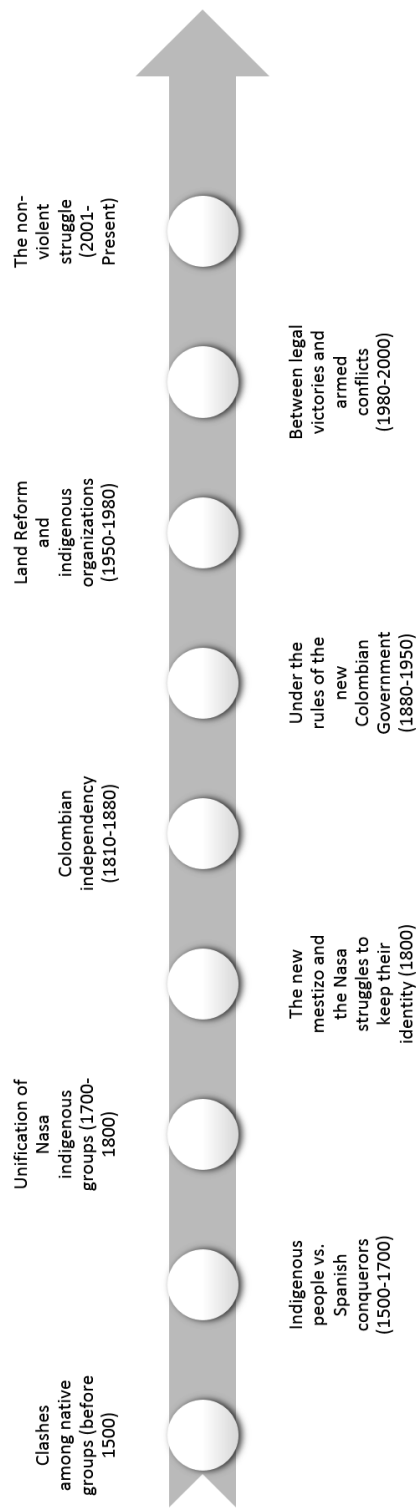The non-violent struggle (2001-Present)

Figure 5.1. Western timeline of indigenous Nasa history

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5.2 Clashes Among Native Groups (before 1500)

There is little information about the indigenous people in Cauca before the Spanish invaded the region. Most of the information is known from Spanish chronicles, from which the most cited is Juan de Castellanos (1850). Rappaport (1987b, 1988, 1990b, 2005a, 2013b; 1996) and Maria Teresa Findji (1991; 1985) have extensively reviewed archival and legal documents and Victor Daniel Bonilla (1982; 1972) collected much information from Nasa oral stories to reconstruct indigenous Nasa history. Using this previous research, I have assembled a version of Nasa history before the Spanish arrived, focused on the identities performed and framed by different sources.

5.2.1 *Before the Spanish*

Before the Spanish came, the Nasa were not a single tribe but a group of dispersed tribes located in the valleys and mountains of the Magdalena river. The chroniclers claimed that the indigenous population in this region did not have strong cacicazgos (land ruled by a cacique) and hierarchies, neither had they a dominant social class, they did not pay taxes, and they did not like to be or have slaves (Findji & Rojas, 1985; Friede, 1953; Rappaport, 1990b). Moreover, Rappaport (1990b) found that the territories that today are occupied by Nasa people were inhabited by kinsfolk organized in small cacicazgos, often at war with each other, who shared linguistic traits. According to Findji (1985) and Rappaport (1985), these groups had a very fluid political system, in which regional caciques (chiefs) never demanded tribute from followers. Indeed, caciques in the Nasa tribes just appeared during times of war to lead the battles; immediately after, each community would go back to its own local government where people were free to move across the land, relocating their political adherence to different chiefs. Therefore, the boundaries between the territory of one group and that of others were not clear either.

5.2.2 *The warriors*

The vast literature also mentions that indigenous people in the region were strong warriors (Bonilla Sandoval, 1982; Castellanos, 1850; Findji & Rojas, 1985; Friede, 1953, 2010). Probably, there were Yalcones, Guanacas, Apiramas, Timanas, Andaquíes o Piraques, and Pijaos, among others (Bonilla Sandoval, 1982; Friede, 1953). The Nasa, formerly called Paeces, were possibly located in La Plata, on the banks of the river Paez and the river Moras (see Map 5.1). Although the Spanish discerned a difference between the indigenous in the valley – less rustic – and those higher up in the mountains – more savage – apparently they were from the same group, Paeces (Findji & Rojas, 1985). There were also Tunibíos and Calocotos in the same region (Bonilla Sandoval, 1982). Likewise, there are mentions of some indigenous warriors, possibly Andaquíes (Friede, 1953), who oppressed the groups located in the towns of La Plata, Timana, and Paez (Findji & Rojas, 1985; Friede, 1953). There were clashes among these dispersed groups who inhabited the region

at that time (Findji & Rojas, 1985; Friede, 1953); one book even mentions that, in the beginning, the Nasa did not present much resistance to the Spanish, as they were too busy fighting other indigenous groups (González Cruz, 1978). They also clashed with groups from other regions. For instance, it is known that the Nasa and the Misak – formerly called Guambianos – were enemies, maybe because of territorial control as, when the Spanish arrived, both groups were establishing frontier settlements in the upper part the cordillera (Rappaport, 1990b).
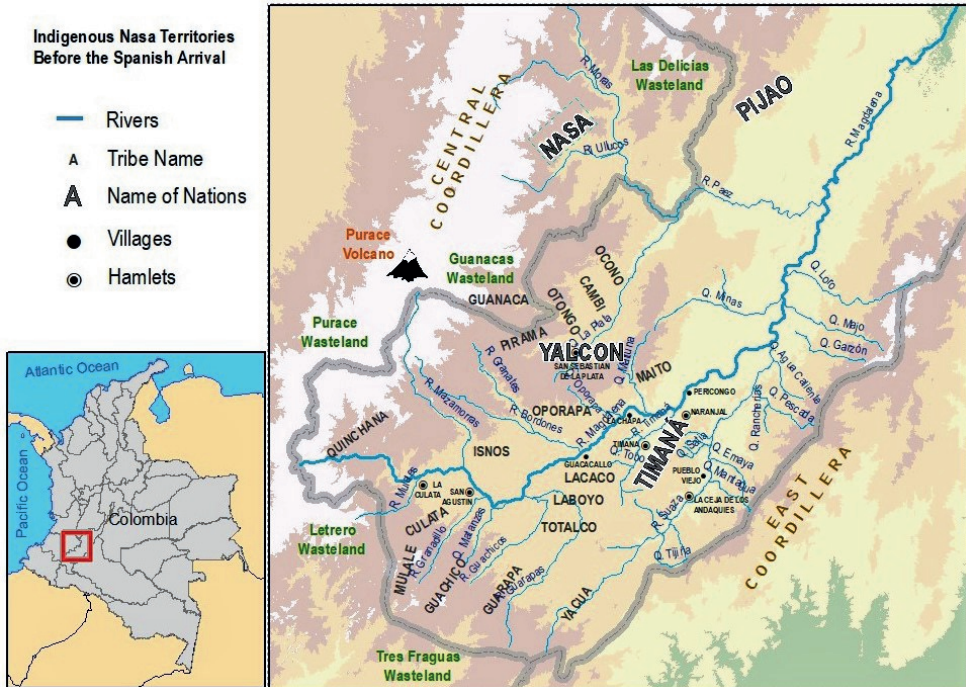
Map 5.1 Nasa territories before Spanish invasion

5.2.3   *The tribal identities*

During fieldwork, people mentioned that indigenous Misak from south Cauca and the Nasa from north Cauca had rivalries since before the Spanish arrived. Young Nasa told me stories about how, before the Spanish came, Nasa men used to 'steal' the wives of indigenous Misak, and this is one reason why they did not like each other. These stories about conflicts between Nasa and Misak circulate in daily conversations. In an interview with Victor Bonilla[1], he explained that the rivalries among indigenous communities are very old, from when the caciques were there, and this is why indigenous communities in Cauca maintain a very conflictive relationship in the midst of their cooperation.

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1   Interview between young indigenous people and Victor Bonilla about the history of the Nasa,

The Nasa have preserved some forms of decentralization of political power, keeping their organizational dynamics. As seen in Chapter 4, in Nasa communities, political power is not concentrated in one single leader or group, and this allows them to keep their autonomy. Of course, this generates some conflicts, as decisions must be discussed until consensus is reached. However, this way of organizing has survived through the centuries, and still today – in fieldwork observation – I could see that most Nasa communities take their decisions in their own community through assemblies, they do not like to be dominated, and they do not like strong hierarchies. Of course, they have adapted some aspects of their political system, as we shall see in the following sections of this chapter. However, whenever they need to confront a common 'enemy', Nasa people gather together and work and negotiate together in a more horizontal system (Chaves, 2019b). As this practice of performing political power in cycles of centralized and decentralized organization has continued over the centuries, we can assume that it is an expression of Nasa identity, most probably related with their features of indomitable and free people (Chaves et al., 2019a).

All the information leads us to the conclusion that, before the Spanish came, the Nasa did not have an explicit collective identity. They did not live in big villages, did not have strong social organizations, and their houses were dispersed in the valleys and mountains. This is not to say that they did not have group identities. Inside their communities, they surely had. Nasa, however, is a collective identity that appeared as a result of interactions and battles with the Spanish. Indeed, the name Paeces, as the Nasa were known until very recently, was given by the Spanish. In many cases, the names used for indigenous groups were not their own names, but generic and arbitrary denominations used by Spaniards and their translators to designate the indigenous groups that they found, for which they used their physical aspects or their geographical location as a reference (Friede, 1953). For instance, the name Pijao was used in the 17th century by the Spanish to refer to any indomitable indigenous group (Findji & Rojas, 1985, p. 18). Here, we see another layer of identity, as it is always constructed in interaction with others. While Nasa indigenous identity was under construction, the Spanish, as well, framed particular and new identities for these indigenous groups.

5.3   Indigenous Groups vs. Spanish Conquerors (1500-1700)

5.3.1   *The Spanish invasion*

The Spaniards arrived in the Cauca region around 1535 from Almaguer. They were exploring and conquering the country, establishing the communication roads between the Spanish cities from the centre, Santa Fé and Quito. The territory situated between the two rivers Cauca and Magdalena (see 5.2), in the central mountain range, served as a natural barrier to protect some indigenous groups from the invaders (Findji &

1 May 2014.

Rojas, 1985). Other communities from the valley were subdued by the Spaniards, and many had run away to these mountains. They were either indigenous of war, as the Spaniards called them, or refugees, and this displacement generated the first changes in the indigenous settlements, as different groups that were dispersed started to gather together for the first time. In this sense, geography influenced the interactions between 'the established', Nasa tribes, and 'the outsiders', the Spaniards.

By 1537, the city of Popayán was founded and two roads had been opened to connect Popayán to Timana and the city of Santa Fé to Tocaima, but communication between Santa Fé and Popayán was still precarious, making it a priority for Spaniards to conquer the region (see Map 5.2). By that time, these indigenous groups were already known as strong warriors, and the Spanish tried many strategies to defeat them. In the first battles, indigenous groups faced the invaders in isolation, tribes or small communities, as they were organized at that time (Findji & Rojas, 1985). In 1538 however, the natives organized a joint army of around 20,000 people among Paeces, Yalcones, and Pijaos, led by the *cacica* Gaitana and the *cacique* Pigoanza (Bonilla Sandoval, 1982). In a big battle with Sebastian de Belalcazar, these tribes defeated the Spaniards at Peñon de Tálaga and expelled them from Tierradentro, one of the main epicentres of Nasa population and cosmology (see Map 5.2). As shown in Chapter 3, this event continues to be part of indigenous historical memory today. For many Nasa people, this is the first point at which the group identifies itself, and this brings a very important image to their identity: the warrior (Chaves et al., 2019).

5.3.2   *Land frontiers, a new concept*

In 1543, the conquerors tried to establish a city, Caloto, that was supposed to work as a bridge between indigenous communities and Spanish settlements, but it also provided a place for soldiers to keep their arms and provisions and to rest during confrontations with the indigenous people. Caloto, located in what today is a neighbourhood of Silvia, was destroyed around 1563 by the natives. In 1562, the Spaniards managed to found the city of San Vicente de los Paeces in Tierradentro. This action confronted a new generation of Nasa people (Findji & Rojas, 1985, p. 19), who destroyed it nine years later in 1571. The conquerors declared war on the Nasa and summoned support from Popayán, even using indigenous slaves for the fight, but the Nasa won again (Findji & Rojas, 1985, p. 19). In 1572, the Nasa managed to destroy the roads that connected Cali with Popayán and, therefore, the two valleys could not communicate (Findji & Rojas, 1985; Friede, 1953). Another Spanish settlement, La Plata, was burned down completely in 1577, and 900 Spaniards were killed there; after that, native armies destroyed the gold mines so prized by the invaders (Friede, 1953). The roads of Tierradentro became dangerous for invaders, and the territory was declared free of "vassalage and servitude" and completely free (Castellanos, 1850 cited by Findji & Rojas, 1985, p. 19). The invaders were forced to build fortresses in order to prevent the passage of the Nasa and their allies to Popayán and undertook a campaign of extermination and repression of the 'Indians in war' (Bonilla Sandoval,

1982). A war frontier was established (see Map 5.2).

Map 5.2 Main battles and actions of the Nasa to resists Spanish conquest
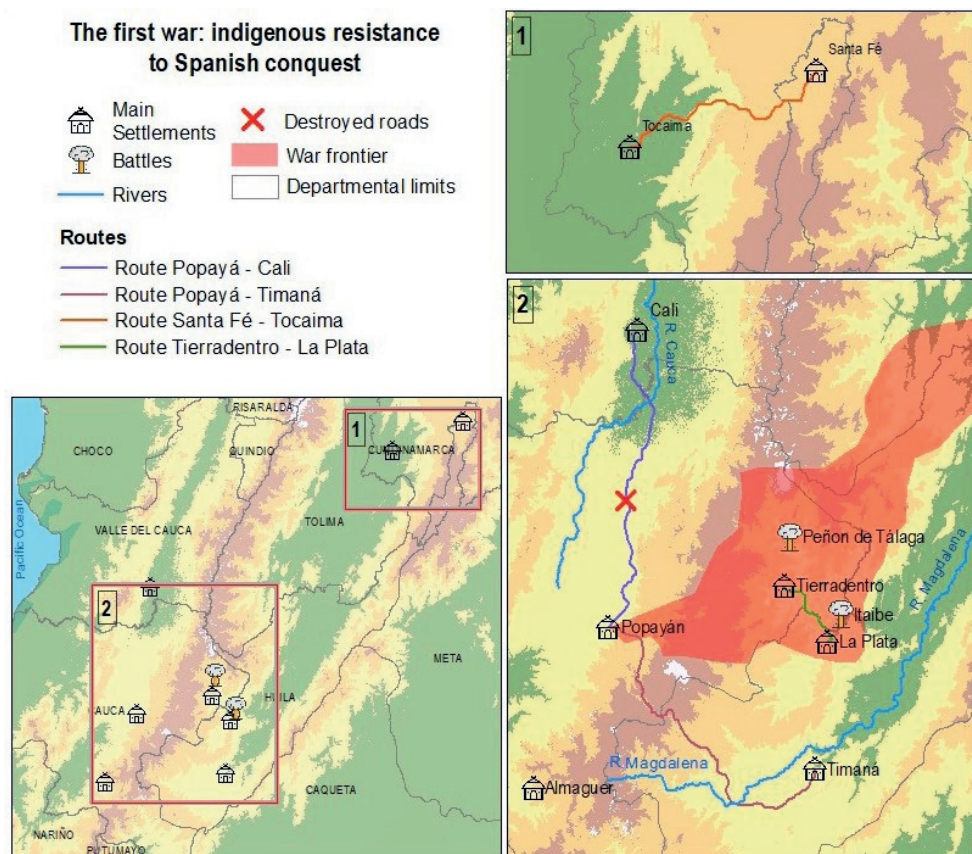
In 1582, Caloto was transferred to the Caloto Mining Seating with the name of Nueva Segovia de Caloto. In 1585, it was transferred to the Quinayó Valley, and in 1587 it was moved to the banks of the Palo River, close to Cali. The town located in the Quinayó Valley was not totally evacuated, some inhabitants mostly mestizos, mixed Spaniards and native people, remained in it. Those of Spanish blood went to inhabit the new foundation on the Palo River; thus, the city was divided into two parts called Caloto Arriba and Caloto Abajo, and a Spanish ruler was established in the latter. In a few years, Caloto Arriba was destroyed by indigenous communities, and, in 1592, they attacked Caloto Abajo without success (Bonilla Sandoval, 1982). Caloto became an example of indigenous struggles and power in the region (see Map 5.3), a struggle for a territory remembered by indigenous Nasa as their territory.
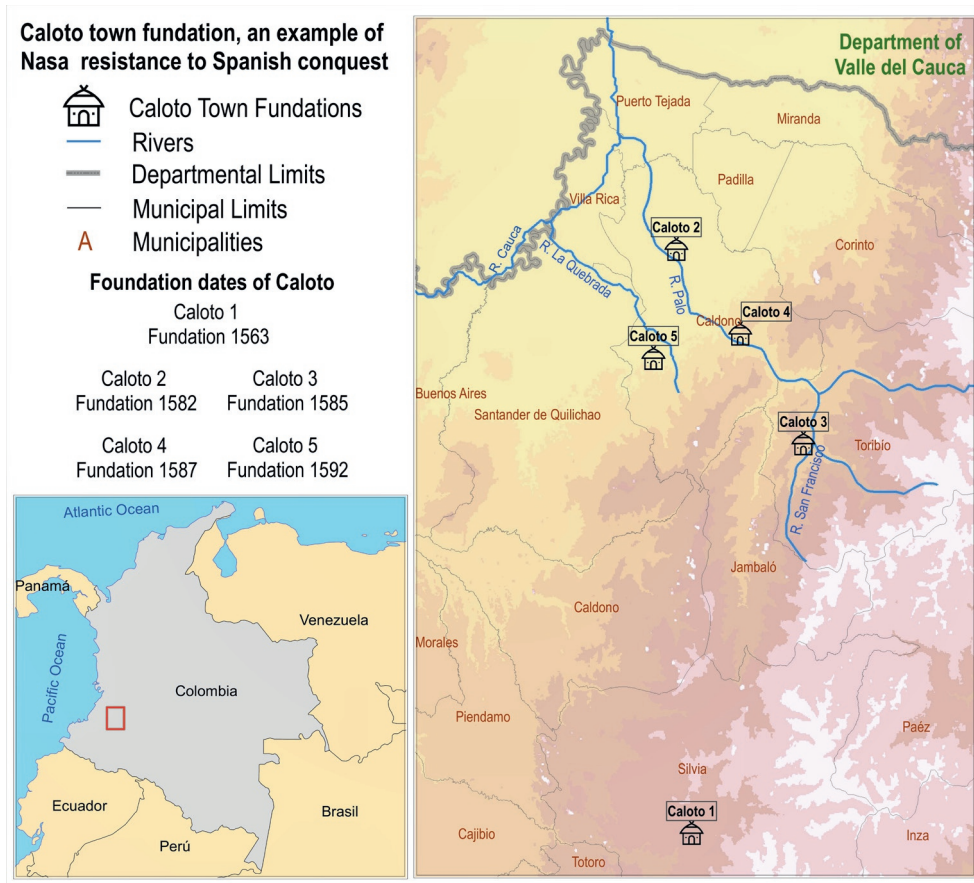
Map 5.3 Spanish foundations of Caloto

Their strategy of closing the roads and isolating themselves, as they did in 1572, can be compared with the indigenous organizations' present-day strategy of closing the Pan-American highway to force negotiations with the Colombian government. The Minga for Peace and Life, for instance, was established from 11 to 25 April 2019, during which 5 km of the Pan-Americana highway and the alternative roads were closed with debris, stones, trees, concrete blocks, and many other elements. The GI from Coconucos, Misak, Nasa, and other communities were in charge of guarding the blocked areas. The provinces of Cauca and Nariño were out of communication, compelling the government to revalue the Government Plan budget 2019–2022, from which indigenous communities had been omitted; moreover, previous governments had made promises without fulfilling them; thus, the Minga aimed to pressure the current government to keep the promises of previous presidents (El Espectador, 2019). The Minga is an example of how Nasa people have maintained a continuous strategy for survival, and it is also an expression of how deeply the territory is embedded in their identity.

Territory in Nasa Yuwe, the Nasa language, is called *kiwe*. Kiwe encompasses the following concepts: soil, terrain, individual lands, group territory, the power of a political leader, and the whole world (Rappaport, 1985, p. 31). The arrival of the Spaniards implied a reconceptualization of the territory for indigenous communities, who were not used to having explicit borders or guarding their frontiers (Findji & Rojas, 1985). Hence, with the Spanish invasion, they became aware of the broad implications of territorial defence and the importance of maintaining boundaries at all levels (Rappaport, 1985, p. 29). In this sense, their survival is intrinsically linked to their territory.

5.3.3 *The Nasa identity*

The population of the remaining communities decreased as a result of the wars and new diseases brought by the Spaniards (Friede, 1979). Thus, it is easy to imagine that even surrendering to the Spaniards did not look like an option for survival. For the Nasa, this was a 'fight or die' situation. In addition, the invaders had managed to dominate other indigenous communities, mainly near Popayán, winning over their leaders and reviving the struggles that existed among native communities prior to the conquest (Bonilla Sandoval, 1982). The Guambiano communities, today identified as Misak, are a case in point; they were active allies of the Spaniards in their wars against the Nasa (Bonilla Sandoval, 1982; Rappaport, 1990b). This is important for Nasa identity, as in many interactions they refer to these historical events to frame themselves as a strong group, very difficult to defeated in combat, and who never allied with the Spaniards. This is discussed in more depth in Chapter 2.

In 1603, Juan de Borja was sent by the Spanish Crown to 'put order' on Cauca, and a bloody war to exterminate the indigenous Nasa started in which many were killed. In 1623, the Nasa lost the war in the battle of Itaibe in the Maná Valley (see Map 5.2), and the remained indigenous people were sent to different *encomenderos*[2] and territories (Bonilla Sandoval, 1982). In 1612, the Neiva government was given charge of the indigenous population in northern Cauca, but this time the strategy they used was not military but religious (Findji & Rojas, 1985). Hence, the Jesuit and Franciscan missionaries were sent to appease the indigenous people. In 1620, the Nasa were still resisting the missionaries, but in 1634 they were finally appeased (Rappaport, 1990b, p. 89). By 1650, most of the documents mention that the region was secure and Spanish missionaries could move freely (Bonilla Sandoval, 1982; Findji, 1991; Friede, 1953). At the same time, dichotomies regarding civilized (European) and savage (native) communities had been created in many official documents around the world to support the colonization processes in America. Thus, while the Nasa were reconstructing their identity, inevitably, their identity was also reconstructed by others.

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2   An *encomendero* is the head of an *encomienda* – a legal system used by the Spanish to regulate Native Americans (see the next section on the unification of Nasa indigenous groups).

All in all, the forced displacement during the conquest, the struggles for survival, the unification of the struggle with other communities against a common enemy, the differentiation from other communities, and the delimitation of indigenous territory show a very complex process in which the current Nasa indigenous identity started to be constructed.

5.4 Unification of Nasa Indigenous Groups (1700)

5.4.1 From conquest to colonialism

For a smooth passage from conquest to colonial society, the Spanish Crown gathered the indigenous people into settlements where religious conversion and fiscal and political administration were facilitated (Fals-Borda, 1957; Findji & Rojas, 1985) and access by non-indigenous people was prohibited (González Cruz, 1978). These indigenous territories, called *resguardos*, were granted and delineated by government officials, and towns were built in strategic places with a church and a square in the centre (Fals-Borda, 1957). The process encountered resistance because many groups had already settled in scattered farmhouses or small villages; hence, most indigenous people remained in their territories but travelled to these towns whenever necessary (Fals-Borda, 1957). The resguardos were not given freely to the natives. Even though there were plots for individual exploitation, the land was destined for non-commercial purposes and could not be sold or rented to outsiders (González Cruz, 1978; Rappaport, 1985). Officially, resguardo lands were communal, with title vested in the *cabildo*, or resguardo councils. The Spanish Crown, however, had the authority to sell the land under specific conditions; every time there was an inspection, if the number of natives had decreased, a part of the resguardo was separated and sold to neighbours (Fals-Borda, 1957). Thus, in practice, the resguardo system became a form of lease or loan, whereby tenancy was endorsed for a number of generations.

The religious conversion of indigenous people was the final step in their integration into the Spanish political system. Conversion implied accepting new ways of life imposed on indigenous societies, based on the Spanish cities at that time (Quiroga Zuluaga, 2015). Natives were officially considered vassals of the Crown, with tax obligations, and, in exchange, they could keep their lands in the form of resguardos (Friede, 1979). It was a complete package.

At the end of the 17th century, the Spaniards installed the *encomienda*, a royal endowment given to conquerors in recognition of the contributions that they had made to the cause of Crown (Rappaport, 1990b). The encomiendas were considered to have a monopoly on the labour of particular groups of indigenous people, held in perpetuity by the grant holder, called *encomendero*, and his descendants. This gave its beneficiaries the right to receive tribute from community members (*encomendados*) in exchange for some obligations, like converting the subjects to Christianity and

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defending the region militarily (Rappaport, 1990b). The encomenderos privileged their particular interests: assigned territories for resguardos or moved entire indigenous groups close to their own lands to have an indigenous workforce near them (Quiroga Zuluaga, 2015). Additionally, gold and silver mines were established in the territory, making the town of Popayán the home of the gold-mining aristocracy (Hristov, 2005), and working in the mines became a new common practice for indigenous people.

To sum up, the presence of missionaries, the creation of resguardos and the encomienda, and the imposition of a new language were important strategies used by the Spaniards in the process of colonization and, indeed, in the transformation of Nasa identity. At first, the goal was to at least obtain free passage for the colonizers, but it became a Spanish project to subjugate and integrate the native people into the Spanish 'civilization' (Friede, 1979). However, indigenous people were not integrated under the same conditions as other groups. Even if the natives were declared subjects of the Crown as early as 1542, the Spanish created a pyramidal system that put indigenous people at the base, thereby implying that they were almost disposable. The encomenderos imposed excessive working conditions on indigenous people and used violence to obtain their individual purposes, and indigenous people were continuously discriminated against. In many cases, they were considered less than human and possibly without souls (Lévi-Strauss cited by Viveiros de Castro, 2014, p. 50). Hence, the colonization process was a new economic and social regime in which indigenous communities lost their lands, their freedom, and, most of them, their lives. In terms of identity, most Nasa survivors were assigned to resguardos, forced to learn Spanish, and converted to Catholicism.

5.4.2   *Nasa adaptations*

The Nasa, however, reacted and adapted to the new exploitation system to avoid the Spanish advance into their territories and deployed strategies on many fronts. Besides the military strategies described in the previous sections, using the resguardo and cabildo model implemented by the Spaniards, the Nasa negotiated their own resguardo in exchange for paying the taxes and accepting the presence of the missionaries, like any subject of the Crown. Cacique Juan Tama de la Estrella is recognized by the Nasa as the leader who organized the resguardos and negotiated with the Spaniards. He created the Pitayo resguardo in 1700 and that of Vitoncó in 1708 (Rappaport, 1990b, p. 65). Cacique Manuel de Quilo y Sicos also actively sought to implement the resguardos, as shown in the titles to the Tacueyó resguardo in 1700:

> *Until now, there has been no other owner of these lands under my dominion, and to us, the caciques, each with clear boundaries to our lands, and as we do not recognize any owners of the lands apart from Your Majesty, I approach you [in solicitation] of that which corresponds principally to me,*

and I wish to assure my successors, through sufficient titles, [that] our rights and property will not be disturbed...

I believe that only Your Majesty has the right to cede lands to white individuals, and that only without injury to the Indian tributaries, because furthermore we have the right and preference because we are dependents of, and we are legitimate Americans and we are not originally from other foreign lands...(cited by Bonilla Sandoval, 2017, p. 20)

This document provides evidence that the Nasa used the resguardo system to assure dominion over their lands, which they already considered as theirs by their pre-Spanish right (Rappaport, 1990b). In this case, they claimed their right in terms of a particular collective identity: first inhabitants. The Spanish colonial rulers were willing to recognize indigenous political autonomy as long as the beneficiaries complied with tributary arrangements, thus recognizing the supreme authority of the King (Bonilla Sandoval, 1982). The resguardo became a new place for indigenous action with a different system and with a hierarchical structure in which strong leadership was required, the caciques (Rappaport, 1985). The system offered tools for colonial caciques to defend traditional lands, to incorporate massive territories within their ranges of influence, and to consolidate their political authority, which had formerly been temporary (Rappaport, 1985).

The encomienda generated two other important effects on indigenous communities. First, land assignments became a tool for indigenous exploitation and the indigenous encomendados were the object of multiple movements, and, in some cases, they lost their links with their ancestral territories (Quiroga Zuluaga, 2015). For instance, in northern Cauca, the conquerors brought the Tama group from the jungle to inhabit the valley (Findji & Rojas, 1985). The Tama were not a single tribe, but a group of slaves from the Amazon isolated from their own ethnic communities and, apparently, they could be adopted into a new ethnic group by succeeding as warriors (Rappaport, 1990b, p. 74). Thus, the encomienda was key in generating a mix of indigenous cultures, which further grouped together in the resguardos. Second, the encomienda generated important political transformations on Nasa communities. On the one hand, it weakened indigenous political autonomy by forcing communities into tributary relationships with the Spaniards, and, on the other hand, it strengthened caciques' authority by transforming the leaders into intermediaries in the tribute chain (Rappaport, 1985). These interactions forced indigenous leaders to learn Spanish. Thus, Nasa groups, who were used to a dynamic system of organization, had to adapt to a hierarchical and rigid system. They did it well; the Nasa created matrimonial alliances through which five cacicazgos were represented in a unique leader (Rappaport, 1990b, p. 49). This transformation concluded in the middle of the 17th century with the formalization of four large resguardos in Cauca (see Map 5.4): in southern Tierradentro, the Gueyomuse family consolidated the *Togoima* resguardo; in the Moras basin, Juan Tama de la Estrella formed the *Vitonco* resguardo

and also created a broader alliance of cacicazgos by linking his own chiefdom with that of *Pitayo*, located on the western slopes of the cordillera; finally, Don Manuel de Quilo y Sicos formalized the Tacueyó cacicazgo (Rappaport, 1990b, p. 47). The active participation of indigenous authorities in the requests for resguardos became a mechanism for territorial reconstruction (Quiroga Zuluaga, 2015). In this way, a new indigenous organization system was put in place parallel to the Spanish one.
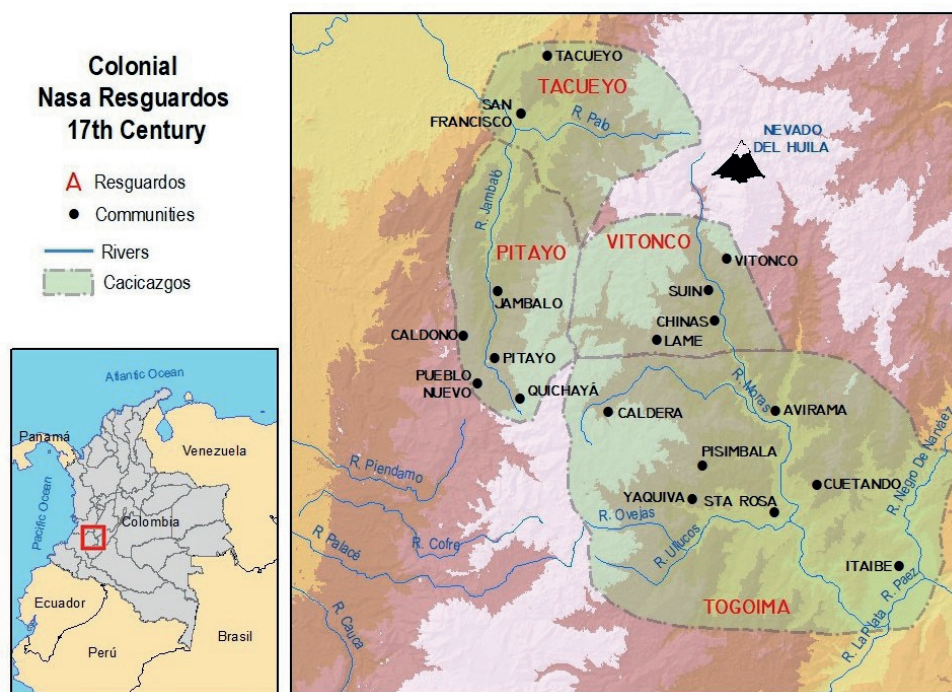
Map 5.4 Resguardos in the 17th Century

Christian missionaries played an important role in altering the Nasa vision of history and beliefs system, but they did not succeed in suppressing Nasa philosophies. Instead, the Nasa selected and adopted some features of Catholicism into their own set of beliefs and myths. According to Rappaport (1990b), Christianity placed the Nasa within the more universal context of the struggle between good and evil, linking them to universal stories of heroes and messiahs. In this way, the caciques became similar to gods with supernatural powers. Indeed, Rappaport (1990b, p. 75) suggests that probably Juan Tama was in fact of Tama origin and, to gain more respect among the Nasa, he probably took advantage of the messianic Catholic perspective and claimed a supernatural birth and death, related to the superpowers of nature and geographic places.

The newly created myths and images had a strong influence on Nasa identity. Juan Tama became a mythic-historical hereditary chief who, besides securing the resguardo titles, provided the narrative upon which the contemporary Nasa oral

tradition is based (Rappaport, 1990b). According to the mythological story, Juan Tama established the present boundaries of Tierradentro by walking the lands with shamans to teach his subjects and future generations their rights, in the most concrete manner possible, as well as to obey colonial laws (Rappaport, 1985). Nowadays, in Tierradentro, every time the cabildo draws up resguardo lands titles or adjudicates usufruct rights to individual plots, their law requires the boundaries to be traced by walking the track (Rappaport, 1985). Ultimately, Juan Tama's story, and the colonial titles that he obtained, unite several communities of indigenous people into a single historical unit (Rappaport, 1985), nowadays called the Nasa. Hence, Juan Tama's image and story is one of the cornerstones of today's Nasa identity, and it entails many characteristics: the importance of walking the territory, believing in the power of the law, the continuity of the relevance of the warrior identity, and the supernatural relation with nature and, thus, the power of nature. Juan Tama's image has helped the Nasa to be united and continue existing as a group, different from Spanish and other indigenous groups, keeping their own (adaptable) belief system, based on their own philosophy and forms of governance. In Chapters 2 and 3, different identity stories and the features that they bring to Nasa identity, particularly, to the GI identity were analysed.

5.5 The Consolidation of the Colombian Republic and the New Mestizo (1800-1880)

5.5.1 Land challenges for Spaniards

The Spaniards were frequently at war with the British Crown (1585–1604; 1625–1630; 1796–1802). Thus, money had constantly to be obtained for the armies. An easy way to raise money was through the sale of Crown land; thus, at the beginning of the 19th century, an inventory of occupied lands and the valuation of land titles became urgent (Fals-Borda, 1957). The lands whose titles could not be documented and the lands that had not been occupied or used after 1700 were sold. Visitors from the Crown were sent to accomplish these tasks, but they found that the boundaries that had been drawn so clearly between 'whites' and natives were fuzzy, both in race and in geographical distribution of the population (Fals-Borda, 1957). Thus, in many regions, it was not easy to differentiate indigenous towns from Spanish ones. In some cases, native people had been renting their lands to non-indigenous people while living on small plots themselves, and, in other cases, 'white' people were occupying indigenous lands illegally (Fals-Borda, 1957). In some areas, the solution was to split and sell part of resguardos where the number of indigenous people did not justify the amount of land assigned. This process was the beginning of the end of the resguardo system.

Colombia's fractured geography proved a challenge for the Spaniards to settle and control all the land and the people, and allowed indigenous groups and, eventually, a diaspora of subaltern groups to escape the encomienda system (Velasco, 2016).

Spanish authorities classified zones of civilization from surrounding 'bad-lands'; urban centres represented the Spanish 'civilized' zones, whereas the hinterlands inhabited by natives or mixed-race people represented the 'savage' zones (Velasco, 2016). This 'barbarian periphery' was the product of subaltern groups deliberately locating themselves at a distance from the controls and oppressions of State space (Scott, 2009). Some mestizos, for instance, used unoccupied lands to escape the dominion of colonial society (Zambrano Pantoja & Bernard, 1993). With time, these mestizos became the majority. They were accustomed to a weak government presence, and they believed in their right to access land and use its fruits and in their right to produce and consume articles of first necessity without arbitrary taxes (Zambrano Pantoja & Bernard, 1993). These could be considered the internal seeds of independence.

The Cauca region was representative of the dynamic of the time. On one hand, there was the city of Popayán in the centre, representing the Spanish power and 'civilization'; on the other hand, there was the Patía region in the south, populated by people of African descent who claimed their freedom and welcomed freed blacks, with people fleeing in and out from all latitudes from Panama to Chocó and Valle del Cauca (Zambrano Pantoja & Bernard, 1993). Finally, there were the big Nasa resguardos, mainly in the north and west. These connections between location and race categories were producing racial identities connected to specific territories (Velasco, 2016) and, thus, particular interactions among the different groups.

5.5.2   *Colombian independence and national chaos*

During the war of independence (1810–1819), most indigenous groups did not intervene, considering it a war between outsiders. The Nasa had three possibilities: support the Spaniards, join the *criollos* (Spanish descendants born in America, who led the independence campaign), or fight for their autonomy (Bonilla Sandoval, 1982). They chose to join the criollos, hoping that the proposed new government would improve the situation for the native groups.

The Republic was established with many challenges. Thus, the 19th century was a convulsed period with internal wars, nine in 30 years, in which Nasa people often participated (Findji & Rojas, 1985, p. 70). At national level, there was no territorial control, nor a common project to unify it. There were two main projects in dispute: the Conservative and the Liberal. The first had the goal of establishing one centralized power and, the second, of promoting a federal government with more authority for the regions. Regarding the indigenous situation, both considered that the cacicazgos and the resguardos had to be eliminated in order to free up indigenous lands for commercial exploitation or civilize and integrate indigenous people (Findji & Rojas, 1985; Friede, 2010). However, implementation of these changes represented a challenge for the tax system.

In the colonial period, native groups were clustered, located in specific territories, and paid their taxes together. The new Republic promoted by the criollos was constituted under liberal ideas, in the name of progress and equality and based on individual citizens. Thus, indigenous people were supposed to pay their taxes individually. During the colonial period, native people had been considered different and inferior, but that inequality, which was at the same time discrimination, implied at least the recognition of their existence and their differences (Findji & Rojas, 1985). In the new regime, equality implied the suppression of the differences and, as a consequence, the idea of indigenous groups had to be eliminated. In terms of identities, before, there were the 'civilized' and the 'savages', but, in the new Republic, everyone should be 'civilized'. A homogenous group of individual citizens, free and mestizos, was the ideal identity for the Republic.

The concept of citizen is closely related to private property. To have access to rights, individuals should have property (Findji & Rojas, 1985); there was no place for collective lands. The liquidation of the resguardos was almost completed in 1820, with a Republican decree that ordered repartition of communal property among individual members and gave a deadline of five year to distribute resguardo lands (Friede, 2010, p. 127); without resguardos and caciques, indigenous people stopped paying their taxes and many left the resguardos in search of freedom. This was not convenient for the government.

Lacking mechanisms to collect individual tributes from indigenous people, the new rulers were forced to recognize some resguardos. First, in Law 90 of 1859 in the Sovereign State of Cauca,[3] the instruction was that, in each parcel of land with indigenous inhabitants, a cabildo should be elected for a period of one year (Findji & Rojas, 1985, p. 69). This regulation was ratified in Law 89 of 1890 of the Colombian Republic, and it became the law that, until the 1991 Constitution, defined resguardo organization and its principles as channels for the assimilation of indigenous people into the dominant society (Rappaport, 2004). The new resguardos were framed as small parcels of land with an elected council or cabildo. But a parcel, for indigenous people, was equivalent to a community. Hence, this new system divided the resguardos into communities with their own councils, just the opposite of what Juan Tama sought when he requested the resguardos.

Furthermore, the spatial segregation during the Spanish rule had produced a political system where the criollos and light-skinned mestizos lived in the urban 'civilized' territories, moderate highlands, or valleys, whereas indigenous people, runaway slaves, or rebel peasants settled in 'uncivilized' territories: hot, heavily forested lowlands (Velasco, 2016). Thus, new identities were reconstructed in the territory, but the new independent Colombia did not consider this singularity as part

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3   In the process of creating the Republic, for a short period, the Cauca region was considered a State.

of the political system. Indeed, these racial, territorial, diverse identities, which are performed in many places in modern Colombia, were discriminated against, and this is considered to be one of the factors contributing to the violence and conflicts in contemporary Colombia.

5.5.3 *Nasa organizations between cabildos and caciques*

During the war of independence, Nasa communities developed different dynamics. On the western slopes of the cordillera, where Jambaló, Toribío, and Pitayó are located, the cabildos were strong. As these communities had lived closer to white settlements, they were repeatedly invaded by landgrabbers and had to share borders with large and well-established haciendas; living under continuous attacks, these communities were forced to empower themselves and appropriate the very limited political authority that the Republican legislators conferred on their cabildos (Rappaport, 1990b, p. 88). Meanwhile, in the south, Tierradentro lands remained distant, unreachable, and less attractive. The territory was just starting to be colonized by externals; thus, the communities there were not forced to develop political bodies for self-defence until the end of the century (Rappaport, 1990b, p. 88). In terms of identity, as the communities in the western slopes interacted continuously with externals, their Nasa identity became strongly connected with resistance and survival, whereas, in Tierradentro, the strongest features of Nasa identity related to the cosmological perspective, reflected in rituals and traditional practices.

The caciques were not recognized by the Republic's laws. Nonetheless, they still had practical and political power among indigenous communities. They used their power to grant permission for mining exploration in their territories and enrolled people in political parties, but, in this period, they mainly recruited people for the civil wars. Thus, caciques became caudillos, or military leaders. According to Bonilla (1982), Nasa people participated in the civil wars under the command of their own caciques, among whom the caciques Guayamuse and Agustín Calambás stood out. The latter, great-grandson of Juan Tama, intervened triumphantly with 1000 Nasa in the battle of the Palo River in 1815, but he was taken prisoner and shot by the Spaniards in 1816.

In 1854, the Guainás family appears in Nasa history, mainly as military leaders (Findji & Rojas, 1985, p. 72). The Guainás were from Tiearradentro, Lame, and Calderas, but they also had influence in Toribío and Tacueyó. The military organization based on caciques prevailed over the organization around the cabildos. For instance, during the 1000 days war, October 1899 to November 1902, between the Liberal Party and Conservative Party, Nasa military leaders appeared to support one side or the other, sometimes confronting each other.

According to Findji and Rojas (1985, p. 72), the Guainás fought for the Conservative Party, whereas other Nasa sided with the Liberals. This example serves to remind us

that Nasa unification was a process of putting together different autonomous groups, related through their caciques. In this sense, their Nasa identity was not enough to unify them in the chaos, as their local loyalties were stronger. These researchers concluded that the warrior strength that Nasa people used to survived during the colonial period was used by different actors in the creation of the Colombian Republic and it severely weakened their organizations, because some indigenous groups became part of other groups, mainly in the military hierarchies (Findji & Rojas, 1985, p. 73). However, Nasa soldiers were considered undisciplined and difficult to manage (Rappaport, 1990b, p. 91); thus, the image of indigenous savage warriors who defeated the Spaniards continued circulating and, with it, the necessity of civilizing the Nasa continued to be important for the new governments.

The military alliances, however, played a key role in keeping some resguardos. For instance, in the civil war of 1859–1862, Nasa armies supported the Conservatives and, in recognition of this, lands were ceded to the resguardos of Pitayó and Jambaló (Rappaport, 1990b, p. 92). Meanwhile, some resguardos survived into the 19th and 20th centuries in a debilitated condition, and cabildos became representative bodies that served as intermediaries between resguardo members and the local representatives of the Colombian government (Rappaport, 1985). In this way, the essence and functions of indigenous political authorities were deeply transformed.

To sum up, Nasa identity during the 19th century prevailed but weakened, their territories became again disputed, and many individuals joined political parties. Likewise, the small communities with their own cabildos increased, as well as the number of unorganized indigenous individuals. Many Nasa, however, struggled to maintain their differences when they joined the wars under the command of their own caciques. As was the case in pre-Columbian times and the colonial era, the image of the cacique served to show a unified political leadership, but this was opposed in practice with the decentralized character of 19th century Nasa organizations represented in the cabildos (Rappaport, 1990b). Moreover, the caciques were caudillos, with conflicting party allegiances, who commanded military units but independently of one another and sometimes fighting for their own interests (Rappaport, 1990b). The dynamics of Nasa organizations demonstrated in this section suggests that, in times of change, a tense process of consolidation and fragmentation of the Nasa communities was activated. This process shows the complexity and resilience of Nasa organizations and identity. They adapted again to the new system and national legislation. In this period, the warrior identity was their stronger feature, but it helped to divide them instead of unify them. Moreover, the political defence of the territory by means of titles and laws continued, establishing claims recognized as legal by non-indigenous authorities.

Finally, it is possible that the changes in this period led to a reconceptualization of indigenous beliefs, a confrontation of old and new concepts, mainly related to territory with the idea of private property. A reconceptualization is different from

acculturation. It implies a process of integrating new and old concepts. Thus, the territory did not lose the meaning that it had, as a space of interaction with the spirits, part of the network of humans and nature, and full of symbolic and powerful objects, but it acquired a new value, that of property. More importantly, the land became the vehicle whereby to maintain themselves, their practices, their traditions, and beliefs and, therefore, their identity as Nasa.

5.6   Under the Rules of the New Colombian Government (1880-1950)

5.6.1   Land rights in the Republic

The crystallization of the nation-state project was achieved in the Constitution of 1886, embedded in the logic of homogenization, through the legal elimination of differences over the concept of citizenship (CECOIN, 2008). In its project, the government promoted the creation of a rural middle class by distributing public lands or *baldíos*. However, for most of the century, there was no limit on the amount of land owned by individual grants. Thus, instead of creating a middle class, it promoted the formation of *latifundios*[4] (Rappaport, 1990b). In 1882, a limit of 5000 hectares was set and, in 1912, this was reduced to 2500 hectares. At this point, however, production relations followed a familiar pattern throughout Latin America: landlords rented a plot of land to smallholder tenants in exchange of a stipulated number of days of compulsory labour service.

The mechanisms used by new landlords were diverse. They availed themselves of lands already developed by small homesteaders, linked to population centres and markets and, thus, suitable for the production of large-scale export products (LeGrand cited by Rappaport, 1990b, p. 94). Small homesteaders were unable to follow the complex process of obtaining titles for their lands due to illiteracy and lack of funds with which to pay, whereas landlords had influence over local authorities (notaries), monopolized water resources to starve out small settlers, produced fraudulent bills of sale for lands already developed, and even forced homesteaders to sign tenancy contracts or usurped their lands by force (LeGrand cited by Rappaport, 1990b, p. 94). For the few resguardos that survived, in 1904, the Caucan elites imposed further restrictions, fencing in their plots, prohibiting cultivation in the mountains, and modernizing the haciendas (Benavides-Vanegas, 2012). In many cases, landowners seized the indigenous land, but they needed manpower and the only manpower available was that of the indigenous themselves; thus, landlords gave small parcels of land to indigenous families to make their homes there and grow subsistence crops (Vasco Uribe, 2008). This system was called *terraje*, and it consisted of an abusive labour institution dating back to 1721, but implemented strongly in the 19th century. As indigenous *terrajeros* did not have any income, they were forced to pay by working for the hacienda owner (Velasco, 2011). As a result, farmers and indigenous

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4   Large haciendas.

who had formerly enjoyed usufruct rights to communal lands were converted into a rural labour force, immersed in the terraje system. This implied a big change in their identity: from warrior to farmer, but a farmer without land. As noted by Rappaport (1985, p. 32), the farmer identity has coexisted in Nasa identities for a long time because their main daily activities related to agriculture. However, the terrajero was a farmer stripped of his lands.

When commercial agricultural produce (coffee, sugarcane, and tobacco) in Cauca grew in importance, many landlords dispossessed tenants with usufruct rights to land and replaced them with day labourers paid only a cash wage (Hristov, 2005). In the meantime, as the Cauca region lacked infrastructure to attract extensive foreign migrations, local politicians and regional elites promoted white immigrations from the Antioquia region in an effort to 'improve' the racial conformation of Cauca, which was at that time mainly indigenous (Hristov, 2005, p. 94). White settlements took place regardless of the fact that there was already a lack of fertile land in Cauca (Hristov, 2005, p. 94). These changes increased the competition for land in the region.

All in all, the main threat to indigenous lands were the baldío claims with the expansion of extractive industries – such as quinine – in the Nasa area, pushing communities to revalidate existing colonial resguardo titles or to get new ones based on information on boundaries conveyed orally from generation to generation (Rappaport, 1990b, p. 95). Lastly, as the caciques represented the unification of the indigenous groups and as they were considered a threat to the government, in 1920, the governor of Cauca decreed that the indigenous rulers could not be re-elected, clarifying that re-election for consecutive periods generated cacicazgos (Findji & Rojas, 1985, p. 69).

Between 1930 and 1940, Jambaló and San Jose were local centres for the Colombian Communist Party. Indigenous people interpreted this ideology in a way that related to their struggles, as an excluded and exploited group (for detail research see Rappaport, 1985). However, the government recognized Nasa territory as a centre of indigenist political activity and considered it subversive. From 1948 to the 1950s, Colombia was beset by a civil war known as La Violencia (The Violence). Military police used the chaos of the moment to burn Nasa villages, disperse indigenous populations, and murder entire cabildos (Rappaport, 1985). Rappaport (1985, p. 38) explains that the Nasa response was to visit the mythical lake in which Juan Tama is believed to have been born and ask their mythical cacique for his assistance, as he had promised to guide them when he left. By coincidence, shortly after the Nasa appealed to their cacique, on 7 August 1956, the Third Brigade of the Colombian Army, based in the city of Cali, was destroyed in a huge explosion (Rappaport, 1985, p. 38). Many Nasa people believed that the explosion was Juan Tama's response to the damage caused by the military police. Therefore, this coincidence helped to reunite the Nasa from Tierradentro after the profound disintegration of their community structure caused by the civil wars. As a result of all these events, most of the resguardos in Cauca were reduced to very small plots. Indigenous Nasa were reduced to small groups,

most of them without land to work or working for others, and without a strong common identity around which to organize. However, the practices related to rituals, beliefs, traditions, agriculture, use of medicinal plants, and all sorts of knowledge continued to be performed among these separate groups. Thus, the collective identity was there, but maybe not explicitly. This is still visible in today's practices, which are analysed in Chapters 3 and 4 through the lens of GI practices.

5.6.2 Manuel Quintin Lame

Manuel Quintin Lame was born and raised in El Borbollón, part of the Polindara hacienda, and was a terrajero from a very young age. During his youth, he was enlisted by force in the 1000 days war, and this experience allowed him to travel and know the world outside the hacienda. In Popayán, General Carlos Albán made him his protegé and took him to Panama with his troops. Quintin Lame was there for seven months, and it is quite possible that there he became aware of the guerrilla struggles of Victoriano Lorenzo, an indigenous Guaymí whose actions were key to the victory of the Liberal armies over the Conservatives in Panama (Vasco Uribe, 2008). Upon his return, Quintin became acquainted with lawyers from Popayán and studied law. He understood that Law 89 of 1890, which divided the resguardos into communities with their own councils, also held the seed of indigenous autonomy claims. The law delimited indigenous lands, recognized cabildos as representative authorities, and established that resguardos could not be divided, embargoed, or extinguished without court approval. If a community spoke an indigenous language, kept indigenous traditions, or recognized itself as indigenous, but had its lands confiscated, then an illicit act had been committed (Velasco, 2011). Lame set himself the goal of getting indigenous resguardos back. He visited archives in search of the titles of the resguardos and elaborated and sent hundreds of memorials, demands, and requests. He found the titles of some resguardos, and recognitions of the validity of these titles made by Colombian law after independence were also found. With them, it was emphasized that the lands of the resguardos could not be lost for any reason, neither by sale nor by purchase nor by attachment nor by mortgage (Vasco Uribe, 2008). However, according to Vasco Uribe (2008), Lame became aware that, in Colombia, the legal path did not constitute a solution to indigenous people's problems, and he changed direction. First, he decided to focus his struggle on ending the terraje system, and, later, he promoted the independence of indigenous people and territories.
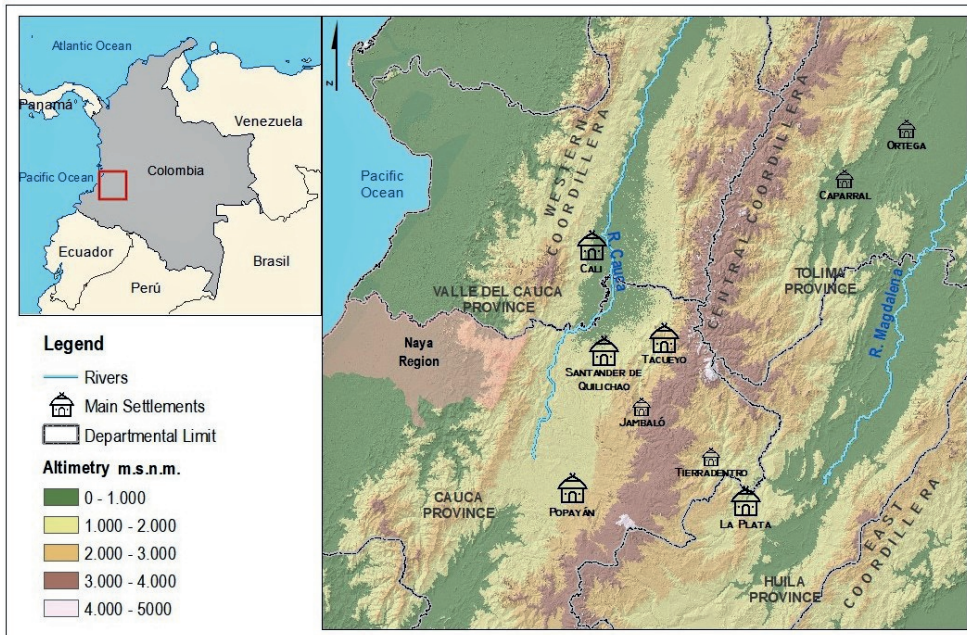
Map 5.5 Topography and main settlements

It is said that Lame travelled the entire region, from house to house, meeting and convincing people, and he formed a movement called the Quintinada (1910–1920), a sort of indigenous guerrilla. Rappaport (1990b, p. 105) summarizes the Quintinada's demands as follows: (1) defence of the resguardo against attempts to divide it; (2) consolidation of the cabildo as a centre of indigenous political authority and organization; (3) reclamation of lands usurped by white landowners and rejection of titles not based on royal decrees; (4) refusal by tenants to pay rent; and (5) reaffirmation of indigenous cultural values and rejection of racial and cultural discrimination. In 1914, Lame tried to make the Republic of *Indígenas*, formed by Cauca, Tolima, Huila, and Valle, and, because of this, he was arrested. During his life, Lame was arrested more than a hundred times. The first result of his struggles was the restitution of the Ortega and the Chaparral resguardo in 1938 (see Map 5.5), which were officially recognized in 1948. Lame developed a way of thinking that touched indigenous identity in Colombia deeply. In 1939, he finished *Pensamientos del Indio que se educó dentro de las selvas colombianas*, his best-known work and a sort of manifesto for the indigenous movement. The book is the reaffirmation of the indigenous Nasa identity, describing its relationship with nature and main features (Romero-Loaiza, 2006). For Lame, it was important that his thoughts were put in writing, as he considered that illiteracy was one of the causes that kept the indigenous dominated (Rappaport, 2005b). He used archival information, oral history, and religious beliefs in his argumentation and concluded that indigenous people had land rights because they had occupied and worked the land from time immemorial, and, therefore, they did not have to pay for land, pay rent for the plots on which they

lived, much less work the rest of the land for people who were not legitimate owners (Rappaport, 2005b). White people, he said, are not from here, but came to take the land by force in the war of conquest. From these ideas, he developed two very clear concepts: invasion and usurpation. He claimed that white people invaded and usurped indigenous lands, and, thus, white people did not have legitimate titles to guarantee their possession (Vasco Uribe, 2008). These ideas revitalized indigenous identity, which was disarticulated by that time.

The landowners realized that Law 89, which was intended to control the indigenous people, was responsible for their mobilization, and they called for a reform of the law. According to the Colombian government, indigenous people lacked the skills to rule themselves and therefore needed external control (Benavides-Vanegas, 2012). Lame argued that ancestral rights were above the laws of the Republic; he rejected the law treating indigenous people like children and called the law a bourgeois tool used by white landowners to dispossess indigenous people of their lands (Benavides-Vanegas, 2012). Furthermore, he appealed to the concept of equality and asked why the law did not require white people to divide their own lands. He proposed the modification of Colombian legislation to integrate indigenous people with equal rights, but without losing their specific cultural differences (Gómez Cardona, 2012b). Lame's ideas, strategies, and discourses were adopted and transferred orally by indigenous groups in the south of Colombia (Rappaport, 2005b). He laid the roots for the modern indigenous movement, its actions, and its struggle platform. He was widely criticized at the time, but he became part of a tradition of resistance and historical interpretation that the Nasa passed down through the generations (Rappaport, 1990b). Lame continued his fight using the law until his death in 1967.

5.6.3 *Implication for Nasa identity*

In this section, the main events, laws, and reactions related to the consolidation of the Republic and the implications of this process for the Nasa are shown. The Nasa's situation did not improve with the Republic. Indigenous communities were socially and economically marginalized by new elites. The stigmatizations and dichotomies continued in discourses and practices. This stigmatization had effects that lasted until very recently. For instance, many Nasa stopped talking in Nasa Yuwe, as they were punished when they spoke their language in front of the landlords. This meant a huge loss for their identity. Moreover, many Nasa felt ashamed of their indigenous roots, making their identity a private issue not discussed with outsiders. Likewise, after The Violence, several indigenous people left their lands and moved to different territories, forgetting about their origins and integrating in the hegemonic societies. Nevertheless, the Nasa's agency to survive also become perceptible in this section. We could frame it as situated agency, which, from a practice-focused perspective, 'decentres' the source of agency from individual-autonomous actors towards social practices and recognizes that actors' ideas, actions, and identities, on one hand, and traditions, rules, and discourses, on the other, continuously co-shape each other (Arts

et al., 2012; Bevir & Rhodes, 2012; Giddens, 1984). In this sense, some Nasa people reacted to the changes in their environment but used their own roots and past as a source of knowledge – for instance, when they visited the Juan Tama lake. According to Rappaport (1985, p. 41), for the Nasa, social and conceptual boundaries are elastic and open to reinterpretation, and this has allowed them to create new communities, new centres of action, and transform foreign concepts and appropriate them, as they did with the ideas of the Communist Party. Regarding identity, we can assume that the practices worked to make a moral continuity that contained the seeds of their indigenous identity, and, when the opportunity came, these practices made easier the reconstruction and revitalization of a Nasa collective identity. Moreover, with these, a feature of Nasa identity became visible – flexibility.

Interestingly, the complexity of social changes is visible in this section through the example of Law 89 and its unintended consequences for indigenous communities and for Republicans. This law divided the resguardos, but, instead of leading to their destruction, it reinforced their decentralized features. Remarkably, another unintended consequence relates to the instructions of Law 90 of 1859, which restricted the duration of the elected cabildos. The application of this law has persisted to the present day among Nasa communities. Now, however, they argue that they prefer to have elections every year because it allows political power to be decentralized, as one leader can easily be killed but, when political power is distributed, their enemies cannot kill them all. Thus, in most of the resguardos, cabildos are elected each year in a general assembly. This idea of decentralized power appears regularly in Nasa history. Apparently, there is a constant tension between decentralized and centralized forms of organization in Nasa strategies. This topic is discussed further at the end of this chapter and in Chapter 3. The unintended consequences also apply to the Nasa's military participation in the wars. Previously, it helped to unify them and show them as powerful, but, finally, it led to their incorporation in the broader society, erasing their indigenous identity. Here, we see aspects of their multi-layered identity that become more relevant at specific points – such as the military layer – but, when a feature become too relevant, there is a risk of it deleting other layers.

5.7   Land Reform and Indigenous Organizations (1950-1990)

5.7.1   *Political changes and land reform*

After La Violencia (1948–1950), ruling elites feared that the disarticulation of the political system could ultimately lead to widespread rebellion (Galvis, 2009). Thus, the two political parties, Conservative and Liberal, made a peace pact – the *Frente Nacional* (National Front) – which included shared control of state institutions and alternating power for 16 years (1958–1974). Agrarian reform was also considered necessary to calm people down. Therefore, the government promulgated Law 135 of 1961 for agrarian reform. The Colombian Institute for Agrarian Reform, INCORA, was created. INCORA was an autonomous and decentralized institute

in charge of finding solutions to land problems through the allocation and purchase of land. The Frente National is considered by many researchers as the beginning of the armed conflict in Colombia and one of the sources for the creation of guerrilla movements, including the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC-EP) and Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN): first, because the National Front was considered as a pact between elites that excluded poor rural people, and, second, because at that time, the Cuban Revolution was starting to inspire middle-class youngsters to join leftist social movements in Colombia and adopt a military strategy (CHCV, 2015; CNAI, 2007; Gonzalez, 2004; Gray, 2008; Peñaranda, 2015).

During the mandate of the conservative Guillermo León Valencia (1962–1966), land reform did not make much progress. This government understood The Violence as a simple problem and allocated resources for solutions focused on infrastructure, ignoring the redistributive property of the law (Peñaranda, 2015). Only after the government of Carlos Lleras Restrepo (1966–1970), from the Liberal Party, came to power was the reform fully implemented. This was achieved mainly through two actions: the acceleration of land acquisitions, together with an emphasis on the allocation of land for peasants, and the promotion of peasant organizations through the creation of the National Association of Peasant Users, ANUC (Zamosc, 2006). Lleras Restrepo's reform was an attempt to balance the interests of peasants and landowners, and this required a strong peasant organization. After three years, ANUC came to have more than one million members represented in 496 municipal associations with legal status. It also included indigenous people. Its actions addressed three main aspects: the struggle for land, the defence of farmer colonists, and the protection of smallholders (Zamosc, 2006). Lleras Restrepo personally inaugurated ANUC's first departmental association in February 1969. It is considered that his speech stimulated radical forms of action among ANUC members. He told an audience of 2000 – mainly landless peasants – that the government had gone half way and that it was now up to the farmers to bridge the gap: *"I do not believe that violence solves everything, but we need a rapid change equivalent to a revolution"*, he concluded (Zamosc, 2006, p. 67). In November 1970, the State's security and intelligence services leaked to the press some reports about presumed *"Communist conspiracies related to the rural invasions"*, accusing ANUC and some INCORA members of working with the Communist Party; thus, positions began to polarize in relation to the land struggle (Zamosc, 2006, p. 70). As a result, ANUC broke with the government and elected a new leadership, and landlords started to take measures on their own, and more harshly repressive policies emerged. In February 1971, the first of several land occupations took place, and, by the end of the year, more than 16,000 families had participated in 316 occupations in 13 provinces. It was estimated that 300 haciendas, corresponding to about 150,000 hectares had been affected (Zamosc, 2006, p. 73). The government treated these acts not as political actions but as planned and organized rebellion led by Communist guerrillas and, therefore, subject to criminal prosecution (Benavides-Vanegas, 2012, p. 67). INCORA continued to be an intermediary to manage the cases and prevented the government's abuses.

President Pastrana (1970–1974) did not share Lleras Restrepo's enthusiasm for peasant organizations; on the contrary, landowners had a strong influence in the Conservative Party (Zamosc, 2006, p. 69). Pastrana made a deal with large landowners in what was called the Chicoral Pact of 1972 and actively reversed the agrarian reform (Velasco, 2016, p. 11). After that, the government froze the ANUC budget, dismissed the peasant officials, and imprisoned and persecuted the leaders. Invasions – which were previously negotiated – were severely repressed by rural police, and landowners were free to organize armed groups on their own account (Zamosc, 2006, p. 100). All these changes, plus the contradictions within ANUC and the voracity of leftist organizations, would split the association a few years later. These events are considered key to understanding the configurations, interactions, and relations that have fuelled the conflict with the guerrillas in Colombia and to understanding the role of indigenous organizations in that process.

One of the numerous breakpoints inside ANUC was precisely the integration of indigenous demands, as these were in conflict with the demands of the peasant population (Peñaranda, 2015). Among indigenous people, Manuel Quintin Lame's influence and ideas were spreading, and they saw ANUC as the opportunity to take their lands back. However, their claims related strongly to their identity as first inhabitants and less to ANUC claims of class struggle. The land reform did not success in decreasing land problems that fuelled violence. Indeed, by the end of the Frente Nacional, the country was more polarized and radicalized, not between Conservatives and Liberals but between political elites, social movements – including the Communist Party and indigenous groups – and the armed leftist guerrillas.

5.7.2   *The Cauca region*

The expansion of the sugar industry produced notable socioeconomic structural changes, mainly in six Cauca municipalities: Santander, Caloto, Corinto, Padilla, Miranda, and Puerto Tejada. According to Peñaranda (CMH, 2012, p. 20), the boom in the sugar industry involved the expulsion of the rural population from these municipalities, mostly Afro-American and indigenous, and this was a decisive factor in social conflicts, particularly in the northern part of Cauca. Moreover, the implementation of the agrarian reform had stimulated the expulsion of many terrajeros from the haciendas, as landlords feared a claim on these properties (Peñaranda, 2015, p. 140). It is not surprising, therefore, that the first land recuperation process in Cauca started in the sugar plantations in the north, in the municipalities of Corinto, Tejada, Miranda, and Santander de Quilichao (Zamosc, 2006, p. 48). INCORA was the vehicle through which the debates on agrarian reform, the advances in peasant mobilization in the north of the country, and the ANUC claims were disseminated in the Cauca region in the mid-1960s. Hence, soon after the creation of ANUC, indigenous people formalized their own organization and attempted to reclaim usurped lands, in conjunction with ANUC peasants and in collaboration with politically progressive INCORA employees (CMH, 2012, p. 33). It was easy for

indigenous people to identify with ANUC, as they were also farmers.

By the 1970s, leftist armed groups had settled in the east of the province, and in confrontations with the official army, the indigenous population was caught in the crossfire. Meanwhile, the propagation of outlaws and guerrillas in the north had markedly increased the level of insecurity, crimes such as robbery, and new forms of criminality such as kidnapping (Peñaranda, 2015, p. 141). Thus, northern Cauca had already begun to be one of the centres of armed conflict. Indigenous people were again at a crossroads, as the context required them to take a position. Many joined the guerrilla FARC-EP, which had a strong presence in the region, others joined the guerrilla M-19, and most of them stayed in Cauca, creating their own organization and starting a land struggle using radical methods, such as occupying hacienda lands. At this point, in terms of identity, it is clear why the guerrillas appealed to the warrior layer of Nasa identity.

5.7.3   CRIC creation

The Cauca Regional Indigenous Council (CRIC) was constituted on 24 February 1971, during the Indigenous Assembly held in the Resguardo de Toribío, with representatives of the resguardos of Toribío, Tacueyó, San Francisco, Jambaló, Guambía, Totoró, and Pitayó, as well as peasant leaders grouped in the Agrarian Social Front FRESAGRO, part of the ANUC (CMH, 2012). Inspired by the philosophies of Manuel Quintin Lame and Juan Tama, the CRIC aimed to unify the cabildos of Cauca (Rappaport, 2007a). As a process, the CRIC was the result of indigenous people's long search for organizational forms coherent with their identity, but it was also the result of the impact of the multiple changes and opportunities around indigenous people, mainly the agrarian modernization of the 1960s – which altered the structures of property in the region – and ANUC's creation, as seen previously.

The CRIC was in an ambiguous situation. ANUC sought to capture the indigenous groups, whereas the CRIC hoped to maintain the link with the peasant movement but without losing its autonomy (Caviedes, 2002). This could be seen as a conflict of identities. Indigenous people in Cauca, including the Nasa, the Misak, and the Coconucos had a similar situation of farmers and shared some practices, but they were different in the way they understood the world, and this affected their land-use purposes and their relation with nature. Moreover, indigenous people belonged to some sort of religion or had mixed beliefs from many sources. ANUC members were influenced by leftist parties and ideology and did not share or respect indigenous beliefs, generating the conflicts that would separate both organizations.

The role of *collaborators* was crucial in the consolidations of CRIC ideas and strategies. Indigenous collaborators were linked to INCORA as promoters. They were characterized as not participating in any political party and had a flexibility that leftist militants did not have; this allowed them to put their intellectual and political

resources at the service of the indigenous groups, using the local reality as a basic input for the construction of an indigenous political proposal (Peñaranda, 2015, p. 149). Likewise, they recognized the different nuances of the State and, as they were linked to INCORA, their work had an institutional coverage that was maintained until the early 1980s (Peñaranda, 2015, p. 149). Collaborators are often mentioned in the literature related to the CRIC and had a big influence on the indigenous movement (Bonilla et al., 1972; Caviedes, 2002; Rappaport, 2005a, 2013a). In terms of identity, the collaborators represent a characteristic of the Nasa that was visible during fieldwork: they are open, flexible about listening, and implement new ideas as long as they consider that these ideas respect Nasa history and identity. Furthermore, the creation of the CRIC served a similar purpose as the caciques: it unified indigenous struggles, history, and identity in the Cauca region.

5.7.4 *Land recovery strategies*

Once the CRIC was created, active campaigns to recover resguardo lands were organized. In most cases, if the legal strategy did not work, the resguardo concept was used to recover lands directly by moving and appropriating plots in the haciendas. Rappaport (1985) had the opportunity to study the Nasa concept of territoriality during the 1980s through the lens of practices. She described the activities undertaken by the Nasa in Jambaló and Tierradentro for land recovery processes. Recuperated lands were singled out and scheduled for collective cultivation. Each household was obliged to donate the labour of one of its members to communal activities, and land recuperation was considered one of these activities. After the cultivation process, the plots were distributed to individual families, and their usufruct rights were recognized by the cabildos in the communal resguardo structure (Rappaport, 1985, p. 39). Thus, the most concrete form of claiming land was by cultivating it, and the most tangible means of retaining ownership was by harvesting its fruits (Rappaport, 1985, p. 34). Given the collective principle of the resguardo system, all household-based land use was for collective benefit. In general, recovered lands, as much as resguardo lands, were maintained and defended through agricultural activities, legal cabildo procedures, and rituals. As Rappaport (1985, p. 32) noted, to be a Nasa is to be a farmer, non-agriculturalists are criticized, because in their perspective the only true work is farming and a good Nasa is a farmer who pursues other work together with agricultural labour. During fieldwork, resguardo members often disapproved of indigenous political leaders or ACIN workers because they did not work the land. Furthermore, during the 1970s and 1980s, the farmer identity was strongly mobilized among indigenous communities, as land reform opened the door for farmers' claims.

The CRIC platform clearly echoes the objectives advocated by Quintín Lame: recovering resguardo lands; resguardo extension; strengthening the cabildos; no payment of terraje; make the laws known and demand their fair application; recovery of indigenous customs, traditions, and history; training educators to teach according to their needs and in their respective languages (CRIC, 1981). In this way,

the Quintinada goals became a clear bridge between the philosophies of Juan Tama and Manuel de Quilo y Sicos and the current indigenous movement. Nowadays, the CRIC represents about 250,000 indigenous people in a network of indigenous organizations that promote different alternatives to development.

The land reform favoured a reversion to an indigenous-conscious interpretation of the past, allowing the reconstruction of their identity and tradition of struggle, which was completely fragmented at that point (CMH, 2012). Manuel Quintin Lame and the Quintinadas had planted the seeds of a new indigenous movement, and the context had also allowed their unification in the CRIC. Peñaranda (CMH, 2012, p. 20) recognized the combination of three elements for the creation and consolidation of the CRIC and the indigenous movement in its current form: a dynamic mobilization in defence of land at national level; the constant indigenous struggle for autonomy, in rejection of governmental and insurgent groups' intrusion, which both had used violence against community leaders; and a successful process of configuration of independent political organizations that knew how to take advantage of the political transformations. In addition, as we saw, the literature recognizes the influence of external collaborators.

After the CRIC's creation, between 1970 and 1979, at least 49 land recovery processes were undertaken in Cauca (Zamosc, 2006, p. 75). In reaction to the land recovery process, authorities brutally evicted the groups, there were collective arrests and tortures, and some indigenous leaders were assassinated by the *pájaros*, as Conservative executioners were called (Zamosc, 2006, p. 111). The war intensified in Cauca in the 1980s, and confrontations between guerrillas were frequent, even by mistake (Peñaranda, 2015; Tattay & Peña, 2013). In February 1982, the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC) was created, arguing that the first phase consisted in land recovery and that the second focused on recognition of indigenous rights. By then, FARC-EP presented the main threat to indigenous leaders who did not follow their instructions, and many young Nasa were recruited into the ranks of different guerrilla groups (CMH 2012; Pécaut 2003; Peñaranda 2015). Thus, there was a very tense and distrustful relationship between indigenous communities and the guerrillas.

As a result, self-defence groups were organized sporadically, leading to formalization, in 1984, of the Armed Movement Quintin Lame – MAQL (Tattay and Peña 2013; CMH 2012; Peñaranda 2015). The MAQL was organized with support and training from other guerrillas such as the M-19, and sometimes they even acted together. The MAQL was strongly criticized by many indigenous groups, which did not support the armed struggle or trusted the other guerrillas (Peñaranda, 2015, p. 280). Lastly, the MAQL concentrated its activities on controlling the indigenous zones, stopping the expansion of the paramilitary groups, and supporting indigenous actions for land recovery (Peñaranda, 2015, p. 270). Thus, their activities were focused on the region and self-defence (Tattay & Peña, 2013), whereas guerrillas like the ELN, FARC, and

M-19 were strengthening their strategies in many regions, including Cauca, with the goal of becoming national movements and seizing power from the government.

By 1990, in the middle of the most violent presidential election in national history as four candidates were assassinated, the MAQL, M-19, and other guerrillas signed a peace agreement with the Colombian government. The agreement resulted in the new Constitution, which recognized indigenous rights and territories. This event represents the beginning of a new phase and new adaptations for the Nasa and the indigenous social movement. In terms of identity, in this section we have seen different layers of Nasa identity, the legal identity, the farmer identity, and, finally, the warrior identity again, represented in the MALQ.

5.8   Between Legal Victories and Armed Conflicts (1990-2001)

5.8.1   The legal path and armed groups

Colombia, Bolivia, and Ecuador included indigenous rights in their constitutions, subscribing to international instruments like the International Labour Organization's Convention 169 and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Since then, indigenous groups have had the possibility of making their claims in a language of rights. However, winning constitutional rights did not translate into winning their land struggles (Benavides-Vanegas, 2012). Although the Colombian Constitution was signed in July 1991, by December that same year, 20 indigenous Nasa, including five women and four children, were murdered while they occupied the Hacienda El Nilo as part of a land recuperation process. This event is remembered as the Nilo massacre. In 1998, the government acknowledged the responsibility of State actors in the massacre because, previously, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights had ruled that the Colombian State should return almost 16,000 hectares of land as part of the reparation to victims of the massacre (Murillo, 2009). This strongly affected the trust relations between indigenous groups from Cauca and the government. That same year, Jesús Piñacué, an indigenous leader from Cauca, was elected as the first indigenous senator in the Republic's history.

During the 1990s, the indigenous groups from Cauca stepped down, in a process that some researchers call the bureaucratization of the indigenous movement (Rappaport & Dover, 1996). However, in 1994, ACIN was created by leaders of northern Cauca, and many other organizations appeared. According to Caviedes (2010), the 1990s also represent the resurgence of indigenous identity, mainly in communities that had stopped recognizing themselves as such, as a result of the advantages given to indigenous communities. In general, the Constitution was assumed to be a victory for indigenous people and the end of political struggles. However, many conflicts endured between indigenous populations and the Colombian government, as the abundant natural resources attract different actors and interests, and each actor uses legal and illegal methods to claim the rights to manage these resources (Hristov,

2005). Therefore, indigenous people had to rediscover old forms of resistance once the myth of rights proved to be just that and political violence continued (Benavides-Vanegas, 2012). Violence spread throughout the nation as a result of the war between drug cartels. This was visible in the continued assassination of political leaders from the Unión Patriótica – UP, representatives of the demobilized guerrilla M-19, and the multiple massacres in many regions. Furthermore, armed groups such as FARC-EP, ELN, and new paramilitary armies became stronger, using money from drug trafficking. All these events influenced Nasa identity, and the legal status of indigenous claims produced a new characteristic of their modern identity: a strong differentiation and total separation from armed groups.

5.8.2   *FARC influence in Cauca*[5]

FARC-EP members had strengthened their influence in the territory since the 1990s, mainly because they had entered the drug business, and some farmers, including indigenous farmers, were cultivating coca and marihuana. At that juncture, some community members had close relations with insurgents, and some indigenous authorities had even made deals with and supported the guerrillas. The FARC was recruiting indigenous people to its ranks, its troops crossed the roads of the resguardos without any major problems, and communities interacted with them on daily basis. Indigenous organizations, however, had decided that indigenous territories should be respected by guerrillas, and drug-related activities were officially forbidden. Thus, at the end of 1999, the community dismissed the governor of the Canoas cabildo and expelled him from the community for having received money and having links with drug traffickers. This was intended to be an example to others.

A year later, paramilitary incursions started in Cauca. According to different reports from the Corporación Nuevo Arco Iris (CNAI, 2007b, 2007c, 2012) that focused on understanding the paramilitary phenomenon, the first paramilitary organization in Cauca was the peasant self-defence group in Ortega in 1963. After that, in the 1980s, security groups paid by drug traffickers from Valle del Cauca entered Cauca. By the end of the 1990s, these paramilitary groups self-organized in the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia – AUC.[6] At this point, some landlords had already made their fortune in the drugs trade and were sponsoring the AUC (Guáqueta, 2003, p. 77), which offered peasants protection and defended farmers and landlords from the guerrillas.

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5   Members of ACIN's Casa del Pensamiento initiated an investigation into massacres in Northern Cauca with the aim of recovering Nasa historical memory related to the armed conflict. Eventually, they produced a report that was published in an institutional magazine *Señas* (Casa del Pensamiento, 2015). All the data provided in this section originate from the team work of the *Escuela de Tejedores y Tejedoras de Canoas* (Casa del Pensamiento, 2015). I participated in some of their activities and discussed their findings with some team members, and then I made the analysis presented in this section.
6   Auto-defensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC), the biggest paramilitary organization in Colombia, which demobilized in 2006 under the government of Alvaro Uribe.

In Cauca, the AUC was sponsored by businessmen from Valle and Cauca, according to Jorge Éver Veloza alias HH, commander of the Calima Block. HH affirmed that the AUC arrived at the express request of some families and businessmen from Cauca and Valle del Cauca, because the guerrillas were attacking with great force and had to be stopped (CNAI, 2007b). Thus, when these paramilitary armies entered Cauca between 2000 and 2003, they aimed to take control of some territories managed by the guerrillas, FARC and ELN. Civil communities, such as indigenous communities living in the region, were caught in the middle.

On 20 December 2000, in the village of San Pedro, Canoas resguardo, eight indigenous people were killed during the day and in public places. In February 2001, around one hundred paramilitaries entered the village called Vilachi. This incursion led to a confrontation between guerrilla and paramilitary troops from early morning to midday. On April 2001, the biggest paramilitary massacre occurred. Around 500 men from the Calima Block attacked communities from the upper Naya region. This incursion lasted for three days and left between 50 and 100 people dead and 2000 residents displaced (Velasco, 2011). These were not confrontations with the guerrillas or the army, communities were slaughtered. HH confessed that the massacre was an exemplary punishment for the kidnapping of 186 churchgoers by the ELN in 1999; apparently, the captives were kept in the Naya region (CNAI, 2007b). According to indigenous Nasa, the Naya massacre proved that the official army had abandoned the communities.

These violent events had many consequences. Within indigenous communities, families that collaborated with, or had members who belonged to, the guerrillas were stigmatized; outside, indigenous communities were seen as guerrilla supporters. "*At that time, we were even scared of wearing rubber boots. In the city [Santander de Quilichao], people will call us guerrillas and, in the village, the guerrillas will call us paramilitary*", affirmed a leader from Tacueyó.[7] This testimony is key to understanding the difficult position of the Nasa and how a process of differentiation from armed groups started to emerge. It is reasonable to affirm that the escalation of violence in the year 2000 was the trigger that led to the reconstruction of Nasa identity and the creation of the GI, as we shall see in the following sections.

Indigenous communities were not willing to leave the territory, nor did they want to participate in the war. They decided to take a strong neutral position and find a way to protect themselves and to make clear that they rejected violence in their territories. It became necessary for them to look for strategies to survive without running away. Thus, paramilitary incursions forced the communities to reorganized in a way that would differentiate them clearly from the insurgents. In this sense, the indigenous rights and territories recognized in the 1991 Constitution had the unintended consequence of making the indigenous communities a target for armed

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7   Personal communication, 22 Feb. 2015.

groups, who fought for territorial control. Faced with new dangers and enemies, indigenous communities ended up strengthening their organizations.

5.9   The Non-Violent Struggle (2001-2019)

5.9.1   GI formalization

In July 2000, communities from Jambaló organized a group of people to dismantle cocaine labs in their territories (El Tiempo, 2000). This strategy was followed by the communities of Toribío, Tacueyó, and San Francisco, and it is considered as the first action of the GI. During fieldwork, people explained that the GI was formalized as a permanent strategy to defend indigenous communities from paramilitary attacks. They heard rumours about paramilitary armies moving in the region. Thus, many cabildos started to look for strategies for self-protection. Likewise, after the first massacre in 2000, they decided to formalize a permanent guard in each resguardo. During fieldwork, it was clear that, around March 2001, each indigenous ACIN council organized a group of people in each community to become permanent guards. In a formal ceremony in the village of Tacueyó, under resolution 003 of 28 May 2001, the GI was formalized (ACIN, 2004). This task was voluntary, without elections or salary. Any indigenous person who wants to become a guard can do so. Then, for three months, these volunteers receive training from indigenous leaders about indigenous rights and political history and, with the help of international collaborators, these guards are qualified on human rights and strategies to handle dangerous situations.

Between 2003 and 2004, many indigenous communities in northern Cauca created Emergency and Resistance Plans. These plans determined what people should do before, during, and after armed conflicts. The plans were designed in large community assemblies, and incorporated notions of international humanitarian law. The strategies included: 1) reinforce the cultivation of the *tul* or home garden as food reservoirs, also aiming to counterbalance the cultivation of coca and poppy plans and 2) define shelter sites, in which people should stay in the event of danger. The indigenous guards were in charge of leading these activities during emergencies.

In interviews and documents, the formalization of the non-violent GI gives the impression of a strategic and conscious decision by indigenous organizations to manage the violence around them. A key informant explained: "*We had reviewed our history and concluded that it was a mistake when we took up guns,*[8] *and indigenous authorities and communities decided we do not want more guns because guns are synonymous with death and we are defenders of life*"[9], argued the *Tejido Defensa de la Vida* coordinator. Here, the GI identity is framed by establishing a moral principle:

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8   This is a reference to the MAQL.
9   Personal interview, 31 Jan. 2015.

'*we are defenders of life.*' This framing process functions for drawing boundaries between the Nasa and other groups that use guns, reinforcing the idea of using non-violence to confront external adversaries, but it also functions as boundary work with their own past and their own previous violent strategies. Moreover, there is an inherent idea that violence brings more violence, as guns equal death.

The formalization of the GI is closely related to indigenous Nasa principles:

> *We needed to establish our form of protection as indigenous peoples [The Indigenous Guard]. Based on four principles: unity, because if we are disorganized we cannot resist, unity is equal to organization; land, because it is all we have and the land is part of us, and it also has rights; culture, because our culture makes us different from others, makes us feel the need to continue our own way of living as indigenous peoples... And finally, with these three principles, we have autonomy, and we are building autonomy. Autonomy is the reason for the persecution by both the government and the guerrillas... Autonomy is living happy and free in our land*, argued the GI coordinator from ACIN.

In this quotation, the informant explains the principles of the indigenous communities and organizations. These four principles are a key aspect of any initiative created by Nasa communities. Unity refers to the way they act as a group; land refers to the place in which they act, it is also important as a source of income, but, more importantly, as part of their identity as first inhabitants; culture is about their beliefs and traditional practices; and autonomy concerns their capacity to govern themselves and their territories under their own criteria.

The GI represents an effort to reinforce indigenous rules and principles in the communities. The paramilitary incursions forced communities to became stricter about their own behaviour in relation to armed actors and the drug business. Indigenous organizations could not control the behaviour of all individuals in the communities, but the paramilitary incursions pushed people to choose between their collective principles as indigenous people and their other possible personal interests. In this case, enough people were convinced to follow the principles of the indigenous communities and the GI expanded.

They also needed the GI strategy to be explicit and visible enough to show the difference between indigenous people that supported the guerrillas and those that supported the indigenous organizations. To be clearly visible and recognizable, guards started to use symbols such as the *bastón* (stick), a source of symbolic power made out of different trees and decorated with red and green, the CRIC colours. Moreover, with time, guards started to wear different coloured vests representing different communities and, during fieldwork, one could see that many had complex hairstyles that made them look more aggressive. By 2004, there were indigenous

guards in almost all of the 135 indigenous cabildos in Cauca Province and, in recognition of their work, they won the National Peace Price that same year.[10]

On 17 January 2007 in Toribío, indigenous authorities in a general assembly decided to change the name of the GI to *Kiwe Thegnas*, which in the Nasa language – Nasa Yuwe – means earth beings.[11] The Kiwe Thegnas reaches a different level, a spiritual leader and protector of nature, indigenous traditions, and territories. This layer of identity brings together the political and the spiritual world. At the same time, the Kiwe Thegnas links them to their beliefs and, therefore, gives continuity to their Nasa identity. Likewise, the Kiwe Thegnas connects the GI with the international discourse of noble savages or ecological natives (Ulloa, 2003), which links indigenous people and beliefs with international ecological and social movements. According to Ulloa (2003), indigenous groups are in a constant process of building new identities, which she calls project identities, and are based on ethnic traditions and connect to global and national discourses about the environment, cultural diversity, alternative developments, and broader collective identities. This new name and using their own traditional language are clear examples of reconstructing the GI identity strategically and, therefore, have political implications. For instance, one of their main achievements is the pluralist perspective of the national Constitution. Moreover, the power of identity can be seen in how, slowly, indigenous identity is perceived differently. They have passed from being the villains – the savage – to being heroes, defenders of life and nature and an example for others (Archila & Pardo, 2001:5).

In spite of the best efforts of communities from northern Cauca, the de-escalation of conflicts has been interspersed with short periods of tense calm and long periods of escalation. According to Hristov (2005), the militarization and repression that has accompanied policies imposed by the government have undermined recognition in practice of indigenous territory and cultural rights. However, ACIN communities have taken a conscious decision to stay in their territories because their identity, culture, community, and survival are inextricably linked to land.

5.9.2   *National Indigenous Guard*

In 2009, FARC members killed a group of indigenous members of the Awa tribe in the province of Nariño, in south Colombia. In the absence of an official contingent from the government, indigenous Nasa organized a commission of guards to recover the bodies and help the Awa communities (El Tiempo, 2009; Global Voices, 2009). After this action, ONIC implemented the strategy of the Guard at national level. *"This is*

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10   The Prize was awarded by the United Nations, some nationally recognized media, and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung in Colombia, Fescol.
11   The way Nasa people frame the history of the GI and the role of the framing process is discussed further in Chapter 3.

not a conventional security force, because [the guard] will be prepared for fieldwork, but also for the politic arena", affirmed the senior advisor of ONIC at that time (El Tiempo, 2009). In this sentence, the indigenous leader frames the GI approach as a combination of two strategies: the military and the political. The military strategy responds to a practical need to organize themselves to manage dangerous situations. The political responds to the need to position themselves as neutral in the conflict between the government and the FARC and therefore distance themselves from the guerrillas. To implement the national GI, many indigenous Nasa have travelled to different regions of Colombia to share their experiences. In 2017, the national coordinator of the Guard was an indigenous Nasa from Huellas Caloto. According to ONIC, by 2016, there were around 45,000 guards in the country, and their intention is to play a key role in the post-conflict period (Monsalve Gaviria, 2017). As Castells explains (2010, p. 4), indigenous groups as collective identities have a political space to propose and confront the official system and even to transform it.

In this section, I have described and analysed the emergence of the GI. I have shown the process of identity construction and reconstruction, as a strategy of the Nasa to survive and retain their territories. By formalizing the GI, Nasa communities locally reorganized themselves and managed to adapt to the changing and dynamic context by using and reconstructing their Nasa identity. This is remarkably strategic and effective, as the initiative has become a national phenomenon. The GI may be seen as the most visible expression of the efforts of indigenous communities to control indigenous territories, securing their autonomy and contributing to everyday peacebuilding. It shows that collective identities can be a powerful and useful strategy for a sustainable peace.

5.10   Conclusions

Collective identities are constructed through the interactions of multiple social actors, events, and practices pushing and holding these identities. In the case of ethnic identities, the process is longer and based on old historical roots. To understand how the Nasa have constructed and reconstructed their identity leading to the creation of the GI, I have taken a historical perspective, taking into account power relationships, knowledge, the way people frame themselves and others in official discourses and daily practices, the role of legal frames, and their intended and unintended consequences.

According to Rappaport (1990b), indigenous leaders or *intellectuals*, are a key part of Nasa organization because these intellectuals – such as Juan Tama and Quintin Lame – have helped to interpret traditions and implement innovation in a process of re-appropriation of patterns acquired from written sources and in response to regional, national, and even international pressures (1990b, p. 188). In this chapter, I argued that Nasa organizations, and thus innovations and identity reconstruction, are the result both of key actors' reinterpretation of the past and of a continuous

application of constant patterns of practices arising from the collectivity. The most visible example is the dynamics of power centralization and decentralization.

The key to understanding the construction of Nasa identity, organizations, and territory is to acknowledge their inherent flexibility and capacity for adaptation. They identify a wide range of possible strategies to survive, taking inspiration from their history, and choose a particular form of territorial defence in the context of the situation in which it must be applicable (Rappaport, 1985). The way in which the Nasa understand the past – as a spiral – helps them to reinterpret and re-signify history and its application as a source of knowledge. Moreover, the Nasa use their history as a source of information to implement innovations in their strategies and in the reconstruction of their identity. Finally, these collective identities are not performed without a reason: the strategies deployed by the Nasa over time were necessary for their survival.

Picture 6.1 Roadside checkpoint from the Guards in northern Cauca. →››

CHAPTER 6
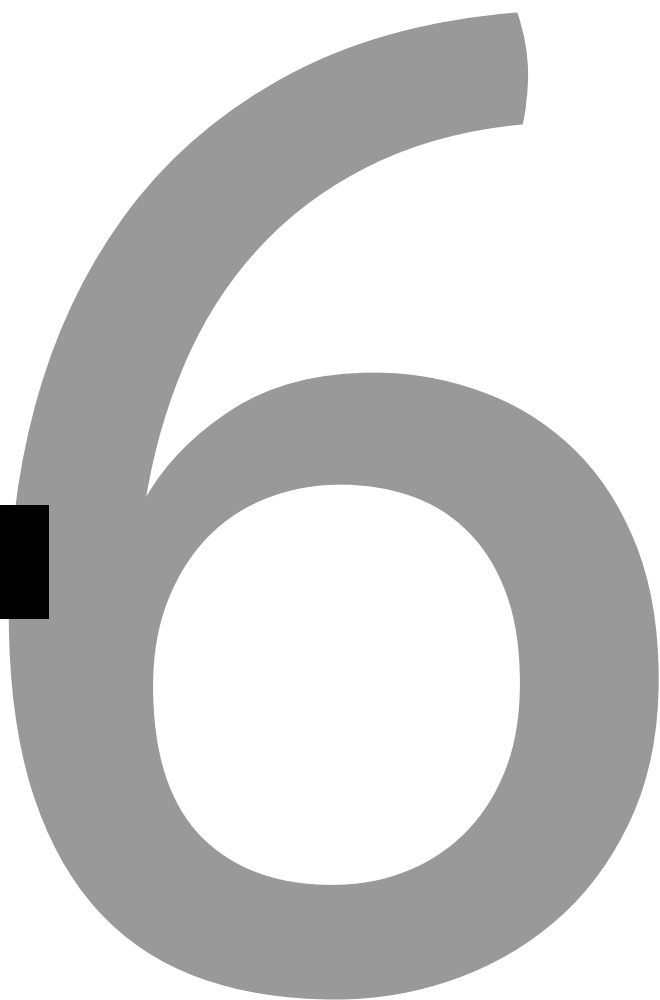
GENERAL CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

6.1   Introduction

This research started out with the aim of understanding how the Nasa indigenous guard developed and maintained non-violent strategies to survive in the violent conflicts in the Colombian context. In this chapter, the main scientific findings of the thesis are presented by systematically answering the main research question and sub-questions. This is followed by a discussion about what this research adds to existing debates on identity, peacebuilding, and conflict studies. Finally, the findings are reflected upon in terms of the methodological and practical implications.

6.2   Conclusion

The main research question of the thesis was: *how do indigenous guards organize themselves to survive in an extremely violent environment and what is the role of processes of identity construction in their everyday contexts?* To answer this question, the empirical chapters have provided us with several insights by answering the sub-questions presented in the following sections. After that, the main research question is answered.

6.2.1   *Sub-conclusion 1: The framing of GI identity is embedded in historical memory*

Chapter 2 demonstrated that the Nasa strategically frame their identity by means of four identification stories: 1) millenarian warriors; 2) defenders of the land; 3) the armed movement, MAQL; 4) non-violent human rights defenders. These identification stories contribute particular elements to the guards' collective identity in specific situations. These stories help to strategically reconstruct Nasa identity, according to specific contexts, taking elements from the warrior like bravery and courage, while rejecting others such as the use of violence. Such processes of collective identity construction – based on historical memory – guide Nasa conflict-related actions in an innovative and non-violent way. These actions can thus be seen as practices of everyday peacebuilding that can contribute to moving society towards conflict transformation.

6.2.2   *Sub-conclusion 2: Self-organization mechanisms allow the Nasa to take non-violent action in a violent context*

Chapter 3 showed how the Guardia Indígena (GI) uses non-violence in practice when confronted with violent situations and how these actions contribute to peacebuilding. I analysed the events that occurred from 5 to 9 November 2014. On 5 November, two GI members were shot dead by FARC members. The GI responded by capturing the seven guerrillas responsible for the crime without using guns and without using physical violence. Subsequently, a trial was held on 9 November and the rebels were sentenced to imprisonment. I showed that the GI uses various

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self-organization mechanisms to enact non-violence in practice. These mechanisms include constructing and applying specific social norms and values that allow for the mobilization of hundreds of people in a very short time. This requires the development of a common goal and a flexible mix of centralized and decentralized ways of organizing. By combining and activating these mechanisms at carefully chosen moments, indigenous people succeed in organizing themselves as a collective movement that is powerful enough to confront armed groups without using violence.

6.2.3 Sub-conclusion 3: Choosing non-violence over violence hinges on a tipping point in people's lives

Chapter 4 indicates why some indigenous people from Northern Cauca joined the GI, whereas others joined guerrilla groups like FARC-EP. I identified the GI practices and motivations that could affect individuals' choice. I showed that the GI provides many social, psychological, and material benefits, motivating individuals to join the group. The benefits include fulfilling fundamental needs, positive emotions, and practical tools for various purposes. These benefits, however, could potentially also be provided by other groups, including armed groups. To go deeper into individual motivations, four life stories were analysed, revealing that coincidences played an important role in a person's choice of which group to finally join. In some cases, having contact with rebels and seeing their practices and experiences led some indigenous people to conclude that the FARC identity was highly incongruous and demanding, and thus it was not attractive for them. In other cases, individual values and needs, legal status, and way of living influenced individual choices. So, indigenous individuals' decision to join the GI or FARC-EP hinges on a tipping point resulting from many factors and developments that in turn result from a series of previous choices and coincidences.

6.2.4 Sub-conclusion 4: The Nasa's non-violent identity and principles must be understood in a historical context

Chapter 5 showed how the Nasa have adapted and changed their collective identities to survive over time and how these processes of identity reconstruction have contributed to their current non-violent principles and strategies for peacebuilding. I show that, throughout time, the warrior identity played a key role in the Nasa's survival as an indigenous group. In addition, the Nasa's inherent flexibility and adaptive capacity played an important role in their survival. Their respect for the law – thereby showing respect for existing, dominant institutions – is another key feature of their strategies. Over time, they have acquired a wide range of possible survival strategies, taking inspiration from their history and traditional practices. This helps them to choose particular forms of territorial defence in the situation in which it has to be applied. The strategies are associated with particular identities, of which the first inhabitants, the warrior, and the ecological native are important examples. The way in which the Nasa understand the past – as a spiral – helps them

to re-interpret and re-signify their history and their identity. This study shows that the Nasa's adaptations and reconstructions of their identity across time have been essential for their survival.

6.2.5 *Conclusion: Non-violent strategies to survive in an extremely violent environment can be conceived of as everyday forms of peacebuilding*

I conclude that the Nasa have learnt to manage conflicts in non-violent ways by means of:

1) collectively framing their identity as non-violent warriors, moving towards non-violent practices and reconstructing their identity from warriors to non-violent warriors;
2) self-organization and collective action to confront armed groups when needed;
3) becoming an attractor that motivates people to join them; and
4) being and remaining embedded in their own historical analysis, interpretations, and related responses to the local context.

The Nasa are active agents of change, acknowledging that change most of the time means facing resistance. They reject the idea of being victims of the system and continuously embrace the idea of their own agency, in terms of what they can actually do. These strategies represent a framework used by them to claim their territorial control and contribute to everyday peacebuilding in such a way that they are part of – and not dominated by – Colombian society. Nasa communities are thus producing and transforming systems of governance that do not respond to national dynamics. By performing their everyday practices of resistance and of peacebuilding, they invite us to go beyond normative thinking in peacebuilding, providing new approaches to transformation in Northern Cauca, Colombia, and potentially beyond.

6.3 Discussion of Crosscutting Themes

In this section, I reflect on the contributions of this thesis to theory, practice, and methodology. First, I discuss what this thesis successively contributes to identity theory, peacebuilding studies, and conflict management theory. Then, I discuss the practical implication of the analysis for conflict and peacebuilding in Colombia. Last, but not least, I reflect on the methodological implications of the analysis.

6.3.1 *Implications for theory*

Implications for identity studies

As pointed out by various researchers, the GI is part of the organizational process of indigenous communities in the region (Rudqvist & Anrup, 2013; Sandoval, 2008;

Wilches-Chaux, 2005). This implies that its strategies, practices, and activities did not necessarily appear with the formalization of the GI in 2001; rather, GI roots go as far back as the Nasa roots go. Through this research, we learnt that the GI has many layers and complex concepts related to it, of which non-violence is the newest. I now discuss three main concepts of GI identity that emerged from this research: collective identity construction, the principle of non-violence, and the role of historical consciousness.

Collective identity construction

From the identity construction perspective, we could say that the GI is an identity inside the Nasa identity. The Nasa, instead of simply creating a new activity or a new group, reconstruct their identity by choosing particular events and practices from their past in a particular context (see Table 6.1). Therefore, the way the GI is conceived by the Nasa is already strategic and has implications, as the GI should maintain coherence with the overall Nasa identity. However, it also brings the possibility for changes and adaptation.

Table 6.1 Nasa identity and GI identity

Nasa identity	GI identity
First inhabitants	This is the oldest and initial identification point for both.
Invincible warriors	This identification point is prominent in the GI.
Respectful of the laws	GI follows *cabildo*[a] and community rules.
Farmers	While individuals are in the GI, other people help them with their farm activities. This is less prominent.
Nasa universe and cultural practices	The *kiwe thegna*[b] emphasizes this feature. The spirits of the land are part of a linked network of human and non-human actors of which the Nasa are part, and the GI is in charge of protecting this network. Thus, it has a particular role in the Nasa belief system.
Non-violent	New for Nasa people. Non-violence is meant to be a prominent principle in GI activities but is still in the process of being adopted as an identification point.

Note: Bold italics indicate the identities that are salient for the GI; a: indigenous council; b: The Nasa identity that embraces non-violence.

As Castells (2010) explains, cultural, religious, and national identities are important because these are sources of meaning for people. This is confirmed in Chapter 4, which deals with the whys and wherefores of people joining the GI. Furthermore, when located in broader contexts, the Nasa struggle is classified as identity politics, which emphasizes the political struggle for the survival of the group. In this thesis, I have shown how the Nasa collective identity is constructed and moulded by both the Nasa and external people, reconstructed when contexts require it, and mobilized against centres of power that put it at risk, including external adversaries and the Colombian government.

The GI identity represents a particular part of Nasa identity – the warrior, nowadays the non-violent warrior. This identity is, however, flexible enough to allow individuals

to shape it for their own, for instance with personalized customs and stick (*bastón*) decoration. Even more, guards are taught not to follow orders, but to understand their roots, their common goals and principles, which they call community mandates, and make decisions accordingly. Thus, guards have a sense of belonging to the group without necessarily becoming alienated: the GI allows a balanced mix of individual autonomy and belonging. This is very different from an army structure, where soldiers are uniformed and part of a strong hierarchy that forces them to follow orders.

In terms of collective identity studies, this thesis contributes by showing the fluidity of collective identities, even identities with roots as old as the Nasa. Fluidity, adaptation, and reconstruction do not deny the ancestral roots of an identity but show how these identities persist in spite of contexts that challenge their existence. The Nasa case teaches us about the importance of balancing knowledge from the past with present challenges. This feature allows the Nasa to understand that collective identities are not performed without reason; clearly, in particular events a salient identity or a layer of the identity is performed. This is why there is no contradiction for them between the warrior and the non-violent guards. For the Nasa, coherence is not about dichotomies or sides to choose; rather, they have a relational ontology in which coherence derives from connections, continuity, and relations (Blaser & de la Cadena, 2018; Escobar, 2017; Viveiros de Castro, 2014). Like many non-Western societies, the Nasa have a different sensitivity in perceptions about, and action on, the world surrounding them; in their view, context is always in flux, never the same from one moment to the next (For other cases see for instance: De La Cadena, 2015; Ingold, 2011; Pauwelussen, 2017; Viveiros de Castro, 2014). Accordingly, the Nasa perform and frame their identity in terms of continuity and fluidity with their own past and in relation to the current context.

<u>The principle of non-violence</u>
The Nasa claim that the GI represents a non-violent initiative because its members are unarmed. From my observations, most of the time, their non-violent actions are a direct substitute for armed actions and imply deliberate restraint from expected violence in a context of conflict (Chaves et al., forthcoming; Dudouet, 2008). Even though the GI code does not permit the use of firearms, that does not mean that violence is excluded completely. Under extreme circumstances, and as a response to violent attacks against them and their organizations, guards may respond with limited violence, like stone-throwing and pushing. Therefore, their actions can be classified as pragmatic non-violence (Eddy, 2014).

In terms of identity, several studies have given priority to the non-violence in Nasa actions and argued that it is a principle of indigenous organizations from Cauca (Martínez Bernal, 2016; Sandoval, 2008). The data collected during this research, however, do not support that claim directly. As shown in Chapters 2 and 5, Nasa deployment of non-violent strategies corresponds to a large process that involves

practical and symbolic reflections and decisions by the group. Moreover, Chapter 4, which analyses the cases of indigenous Nasa who became guards but were very close to joining FARC, shows the challenges and difficulties of adopting a non-violent identity. Hence, in this thesis, I claim that non-violence is a strategy intended to become a principle and part of GI identity as a lesson learnt from past experiences. This is shown in Chapter 2, in which non-violence appears as an adaptation of the GI identity to the new context after the guerrilla MAQL signed the peace accords with the Colombian government. More recently, when paramilitaries arrived in 2001, the Nasa realized that these groups had more resources and were more prepared for violent confrontations than indigenous communities; thus, a violent response would lead to more casualties.

Hereafter, it is accurate to claim that non-violence is a strategy framed as a principle by the Nasa; for instance, guards stated that the use of violence would transform indigenous people into murderers, and, if they had to die, they would prefer to do so defending life rather than destroying it. I propose, though, that implementing non-violence may be a challenge for the Nasa because of their warrior identity, which has been part of their identity since before the Spanish arrived, a strategy that has proved to be very useful for their survival and of which they feel very proud, as shown in every chapter of the thesis. At the same time, it is thanks to the warrior identity that they take risks and use strategies that are strong enough to confront armed actors, as shown in Chapter 3.

To sum up, the guards are in a process of becoming non-violent warriors, which means keeping some features of the warrior such as bravery, but rejecting others such as violence. In that process, non-violence is framed as, and it is meant to be, a principle; however, the challenge is to make it part of their identity. In interviews and conversations, the warrior identity was often and enthusiastically mentioned, with examples and stories, whereas the *kiwe thegna*, the identity that embraces non-violence as a feature, was mentioned by leaders but not so often by regular guards. Thus, I assume that regular guards still struggle to identify completely with the non-violence principle, perhaps because the non-violent feature is not linked directly to past events. That said, it is important to mention that the non-violent feature of GI identity becomes salient when guards talk about armed groups. This shows that 1) collective identities are constructed in interactions (Hall, 1990) and 2) identity construction is also about drawing clear boundaries between groups and creating images of the ideal behaviour of group members. Thus, Nasa non-violence is a feature that creates a boundary between them and guerrillas, paramilitaries, and the official army.

Regarding the contribution of this thesis to studies on the relation between non-violence and identities, first, there is the idea that people need a coherent identity or a coherent personal story that justifies their actions (Schwartz et al., 2011). The Nasa have shown that coherence is not as important in their identities as continuity and

fluidity are.

Finally, in relation to non-violent groups, the results of this study exemplify the importance of identity in contexts of violent conflicts. Thus, the process of identification in the struggle for justice and political inclusion could make a difference between joining an armed group or not, using violence or not, and, in that process, non-violent identification points are crucial. This is very relevant in current debates about White nationalism, polarization, non-state armed groups, and identity politics (Castells, 2010; Fukuyama, 2018; Henriksen & Vinci, 2007; Schmeidl & Karokhail, 2009) and equally important for the Colombian post-conflict setting, where new interactions are appearing among groups that have decided to exchange a violent for a non-violent strategy of resistance.

The role of historical consciousness
By framing their identity in terms of past events, the Nasa make their identity flexible. Several principles, values, and norms help guards to act in dangerous situations, as shown in Chapter 3, but the Nasa emphasize historical events to describe the GI, as shown in Chapter 2. The framing of past events did not follow a complete narrative; rather, it is organized in episodes. According to Rappaport (1990b, p. 9), Nasa historical consciousness has its internal logic, illustrated in time-worn patterns. This exposes the plasticity of history for the Nasa. The same plasticity is used for their identity, which allows flexibility and ambiguity. Thus, in differing circumstances, they could make other events more or less relevant, adapt features of the GI identity, or make some features more salient than others. In addition, Nasa historical patterns are regenerated periodically to confront new political regimes (Rappaport, 1990b, p. 9). Hence, to understand the internal logic of Nasa adaptations, including identity reconstruction, we must also learn the history of Colombia, including the transformation of political and legal systems and the hegemonic framing of historical events. This is demonstrated in Chapter 5 of the thesis.

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For the Nasa, their past, present, and future are connected to achieve political goals in the present (Rappaport, 1990b). Hence, Nasa historical framing of events implies a historical consciousness about the power of history and its practical uses. Knowledge of the past is useful for land disputes, political agreements, and arguments over inheritance (Rappaport, 1990b, p. 11). This thesis illustrates that it is also essential for strengthening collective identity, which is a type of skill that the Nasa have developed for coping with change. Nasa historical consciousness is maybe the main source for identity reconstruction. Moreover, by adapting their identity with non-violent principles framed as a lesson learnt from past experiences, their historical consciousness becomes a cultural resource that is used as a collective foundation for peacebuilding. These findings connect with former studies that emphasize the use of memory for peacebuilding (Bender Shetler, 2010). Equally, these findings illustrate the importance of everyday conversations and discourses when strategies are being created to mobilize historical memory for peacebuilding. It links with notions of

everyday peacebuilding, everyday diplomacy, and practices in local realities that can move society towards conflict transformation (Mac Ginty, 2008, 2014; Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013), going beyond the normative studies that focus on the right and the wrong practices at local level (Hirblinger & Simons, 2015).

In terms of collective identity studies, this thesis contributes by showing that the framing process of socio-genesis events is an important power resource for constructing a non-violent collective identity and reconstructing a historical memory for peacebuilding.

Finally, to close this section on identity construction, it can be concluded that GI identity makes some Nasa identity features more salient, namely, the bravery of millenarian warriors and the conciliatory guardian of nature and indigenous rights. It is a fluid identity instead of coherent, and it is socio-genic in the sense that historical roots are constantly revitalized in new contexts.

Implications for peacebuilding studies

Current discussions worldwide emphasize how the globalized economic system not only fails to benefit most of the poor, but also deprives many people of their own values, and, therefore, of their identities (Castells, 2010; Escobar, 1995; Fukuyama, 2018). People around the globe have been requested to adopt one single way of living and experiencing the world based on Western 'civilization', and people who fail to meet the standards demanded by the system are often submitted to discrimination and abuse, and thus marginalized and even humiliated (Castells, 2010, p. XXI). The Western view has been crystallized in national narratives like in Colombia; however, this view has been contested in many ways. Radical groups, nationalist groups, extremists, and non-state armed groups around the globe have appeared in response, and therefore collective identities have been associated with violence and radicalization (Deutsch et al., 2006; Fearon et al., 2007; Fearon & Laitin, 2000, 2003; Kalyvas, 2003). There have been other contestations, mainly represented in what is commonly called the new social movements (Castells, 2010; Escobar, 1992b). There is also a new concern about how identity politics has turned to the right, leading to polarization and White nationalism (Fukuyama, 2018). In the literature, the Nasa struggle has been located as a form of contestation that is more similar to a social movement than to a rebellious group, because the Nasa embody a trajectory that claims indigenous rights using legal strategies. However, the GI challenges again a dichotomous view. The GI is neither a pacifist social movement nor a rebellious group: it is a combination of the diplomatic and military strategies attached to an identity that promotes the principle of non-violence. This is its strong contribution to peacebuilding in Colombia; it invites people to confront an unjust system, but with respect for human and non-human life as a moral principle in each of its actions.

A complexity perspective on conflict management

The complexity or dynamic approach is an emerging framework for conflict studies (Burnes, 2005; Coleman et al., 2007; Gray et al., 2015; Hendrick, 2009), and the findings of this thesis support the relevance of a complexity perspective on conflicts. The complexity approach offers a range of tools for analysing and understanding the implications of Nasa actions in broader contexts.

First, understanding self-organization processes helps to bridge the 'micro-to-macro problem', this is, the relationship between the intrinsic elements of social systems (people) and the social orders resulting from their interaction, like organizations, institutions, or economies (Goldspink & Kay, 2003, 2004). A self-organization approach, as used in Chapter 3 of this thesis, shows that, when self-organization occurs, order starts to appear (Burnes, 2005, p. 77). This implies that processes of self-organization serve as transitions. Moreover, this thesis shows that the Nasa invite us to leave aside dichotomies of order and chaos. Nasa organization, for instance, proposes a form of governance that is flexible and stable at the same time, a type of organization that has been designated as at the edge of chaos (Schneider & Somers, 2006). This means that it should be flexible enough to allow processes of self-organization to occur when needed and stable enough to maintain intrinsic order. In the Nasa case, this comes from their ancestral roots. This versatility may derive from their organization based on their historical consciousness and interpretations, rather than from specialized roles and knowledge.

Second, Coleman et al. (2007) use the concept of attractor as a particular form of self-organization of multiple elements in conflict systems. In their view, "*attractors channel mental and behavioural experience into a narrow range of coherent either positive or negative states*" (Coleman et al., 2007, p. 1458). They focus their analysis on how elements in a conflict are attracted to preserve a narrow range of thoughts, feelings, and actions despite the introduction of new ideas and actions. However, attractors can also be seen as "*a state or a reliable pattern of changes (e.g. periodic oscillations toward which a dynamical system evolves over time and to which the system returns after it has changed)*" (Coleman et al., 2007, p. 1459). From this perspective, sustainable peace is defined as a state of a system in which the probability of using violence to solve problems is so low that it does not enter into any group strategy, whereas the probability of using cooperation and dialogue to promote social justice is so high that it governs social organization and interactions (Boulding, 1978). In that line of thinking, a way to promote sustainable peace is to promote the emergence of strong, stable attractors for constructive, peaceful interactions between different groups. This thesis shows that, when the Nasa formalized the GI, an unintended consequence was that they created a new attractor. As shown in Chapter 4, the GI identity offers an alternative primarily for young indigenous people eager to have agency in a very violent and complex context. The GI is also easy enough to be understood and implemented by communities in similar

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conditions of vulnerability. It has, not surprisingly, been replicated in many regions of Colombia; nowadays, indigenous leaders claim that there are around 10,000 guards in the country. Accordingly, the GI is generating a new attractor that represents an identity with non-violent principles and hence a factor of conflict de-escalation that contributes to peacebuilding in Colombia.

Third, a complexity perspective helps us to understand how relatively minor events, actions, and decisions can occasionally have far-reaching consequences, whereas significant events may not have any anticipated effects (van Woerkum et al., 2011; Burnes 2005). It is understood that social changes frequently result from continuous processes of interactions of many developments that reinforce one another towards a tipping point, rather than arising from a single cause (Aarts, 2015). Moreover, changes and evolution occur because of the interactions driven by differentiation and integration of diverse elements that give rise to new and different structures (Elias, 2000). Individuals' decisions and actions can give rise to complex macro structures, which in turn influence individuals' behaviours (Goldspink & Kay, 2003). Society is made up of constant accumulations of heterogeneous and flexible elements that form, temporarily, a type of order or assemblage (Latour, 1996; Van Woerkum et al., 2011; Escobar, 2010). From a complexity perspective, it is recognized that the unpredictable clash of numerous events creates changes that affect local situations, but, also, local actions can affect macro developments (Burnes, 2005; Coleman et al., 2007; Morgan, 1997). Thus, complexity points to the unpredictability and uncertainty of changes and calls for adaptability as a key characteristic of any social organization.

Cultural and ecological studies have indeed shown the adaptability of many indigenous communities and their capacity to manage complex situations (Escobar, 2008; Rappaport, 1987a, 1990b, 2005a; Reichel-Dolmatoff, 1976, 1982). Anthropologist Reichel-Dolmatoff says of adaptive behaviour: "*By adaptive I mean anything that increases the probability of survival of the individual or the group...*" (Reichel-Dolmatoff, 1976, p. 308). For Reichel-Dolmatoff, indigenous people's practices and beliefs represent a set of principles that allow a system of social and economic rules that have a highly adaptive value. From this point of view, indigenous Nasa organize themselves to respond to their environment in such a way as to allow them to survive even in the face of very violent adversaries. Moreover, they have managed to become an attractor that promotes individuals' mental and behavioural experience in such a way as to adopt a state of non-violent actions in the violent Colombian environment. In simple words, changes occur when enough individuals follow the same patterns (Elias, 2000), and the GI has become a channel for non-violent actions in many regions of Colombia. Thus, a complexity perspective inspires us to realize that, in high-intensity conflict settings, there exist possibilities of change from organized groups, built on strong identities using non-violent strategies, which become attractors of enough people, generating change from the condition of violent conflicts into more productive forms of interactions.

6.3.2   *Implication for practice: towards everyday conflict management and everyday peacebuilding in Colombia*

In this section, I highlight some insights from this research on conflict management and peacebuilding in Colombia. Many attempts have been made to eliminate the internal conflict in Colombia: in the last 30 years, three peace agreements have been signed with different armed actors, including the peace agreement with FARC-EP in 2016. In 1991, a new constitution, which recognized Colombia as a multicultural and multi-ethnic country, was created, and several laws – such as the Victims and Land Restitution Law of 2011 and the Peace Agreement of 2016 – tried to reverse the dispossession of lands and the internal displacement that war has generated. Nonetheless, the internal conflict is evolving, transforming, and continuing.

The official narrative in Colombia says that the violence and the forced displacements in rural areas have been caused by illegal armed actors fighting for territorial control for drug-related activities. However, several studies show that the Colombian conflict has several layers of complexity and that some governmental policies and practices have fuelled the conflict (Findji & Rojas, 1985; Gonzalez, 2004; Grajales, 2011, 2013; Gray, 2008; Maher, 2014, 2015; Pfeiffer, 2015; Rettberg, 2015; Zamosc, 2006). In this sense, some layers of the conflict can be linked to the concept of State and processes of State formation based on the Western idea of civilization (J. C. Scott, 2000). Escobar (1995) explains that the civilized world became the model to create States and it was associated with the ideas of progress and development, a type of evolution for which all societies should aim. As shown in Chapter 5, the creation of the Colombian state was deeply imbued with discourses of civilization and development. These concepts, however, were imported and almost imposed on the diverse Colombian population (Escobar, 1995). The Colombian nation, therefore, was translated as the simplification of complexity and was conceived as a uniform, controlled society, with one identity – national – over 'the other identities', highlighting similarities among members and undervaluing or hiding their differences. It was a process of building inclusion and exclusion and categorizing people and land that ignored the collective identities that had been built by local communities in the territories.

From this perspective, the Nasa represent 'non-civilized' societies – or subalterns – and their capacity to resist the hegemonic and strong powers of cultural domination. Hence, for them, peace implies a serious struggle with Colombia's hegemonic system. Nasa strategies, of course, would not appear if the context did not push them, and this is where Nasa situated agency emerges. It is the local, tacit knowledge and practices that eventually fail to fit in the homogenizing project of the State (J. C. Scott, 2000). In that sense, this thesis shows how the identity of the non-violent GI is a form of resistance that questions the political and social regime. That is, the Nasa are in conflict with the current Colombian system, but this conflict is necessary and important for peacebuilding. This idea forces us again to retreat from dichotomies, in

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this case between conflict and peace. First, conflict is not always destructive, it can be constructive, or more exactly, transformative (Rodriguez et al., 2015; Simmel, 1955). Accordingly, the Nasa perform their identity for constructive conflicts; this occurs in their internal organizations, as we saw in Chapters 3 and 4, and in their interactions with external systems of governance such as the Colombian State, as shown in Chapter 5.

In conclusion, the non-violent principle represents a challenge for armed groups but also for the Colombian State, and therefore the formalization of the GI supports a step forward by the Nasa towards peacebuilding, in recognition of their right to exist and participate while being different. The Nasa propose opening up the State concept and building bridges between the various forms of knowing and ways of being in the world. The Colombian government has recognized indigenous rights at some points in history but not permanently, and therefore the Nasa have to stay alert and create innovative strategies to survive. Moreover, even if they do not trust the government (or any other actors in a different context), they follow and respect the legal system in which they are immersed.

6.3.3   Implications for research methodology

In this section, I reflect on my research methodology and I discuss three insights from it, namely: 1) gaining access to the field, 2) controlled equivocation, and 3) emotions and fieldwork safety.

Gaining access to the field

Ethnography implies collecting robust data over extended periods of time, using various methods such as sustained observation (with varying degrees of participation), often at various locations within the research site, extended and repeated conversations, interviews, and documents read and analysed (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006). Gaining access to the field is a matter of creating, fostering, and nurturing human relationships over time (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006). It took me three months to be accepted as a researcher in ACIN (Association of Indigenous Councils from Northern Cauca) and at least three more months to start moving freely in the organization and getting invitations to different kinds of events. Violent-conflict settings make relationships very fragile and the question of trust is always at stake. Gradually, several interviewees with whom I shared many experiences became my friends. Some of them became key informants, people who know a lot about their culture and were generous enough to share their knowledge with me. As in any ethnography, I did not choose them, we choose each other over time.

In my case, this process also implied adjusting myself to a highly dynamic environment, with many events occurring each day at different locations. Soon, I

found myself with dilemmas about which event I should assist and which I could skip. My selection criterion was based on the shadowing technique but, instead of following a person, I followed processes related with particular events. For instance, I participated in meetings about a specific situation, monitored that situation, and continued going to the meetings on that particular topic. When this was not possible, I made sure to talk to people who participated and collected their perceptions about it. Furthermore, my research questions helped me to focus on the GI's creation and organization and why people choose to be part of it.

The issue of access and trust helped me to be alert to the information that I was getting. Observation was a matter not just of data collection, but also of understanding the unsaid issues that were occurring around me. Distancing myself and talking with different people also helped me. Finally, it was a challenge for me personally, as initially I tried to control my research and, very soon, I came to understand that I should just follow the flow of the events and collect as much information as possible every time I got the opportunity.

Controlled equivocation

Once I had access, there was the challenge of dealing with cultural differences. Thus, this study implies a translation of indigenous practical and discursive concepts (Viveiros De Castro, 2004) into scientific terms that can be discussed in current debates on peacebuilding studies. This is what Viveiros de Castro (2004) called a *controlled equivocation*. Thus, I started from my own perspective to analyse indigenous discourses and practices and constantly 'compared' my ideas with indigenous concepts, to find different meanings and to understand perspectives from both sides. In other words, every time I used a foreign concept to analyse indigenous practices, I was alert to possible misunderstandings and equivocations, but, because I was aware of it, it was a controlled equivocation.

Key informants helped me in many ways in this translation process. I discussed my research goals and analytic categories with them, and I presented my research proposal to some leaders who gave me advice on which situations I should not miss and what people I should interview. Indeed, after four months of fieldwork, ACIN members assigned an indigenous guard to join me and guide me. The Nasa are very open about their organization and pitfalls, but they are more reserved about their belief system. This implies that I could collect robust data on Nasa organization, practices, and discursive strategies, but I participated less in rituals. Still, I interviewed several *The Walas* or Nasa shamans, obtained a few books written by Nasa researchers about their belief system, and had several discussions with my key informants about this topic.

Another important challenge concerned my research results. I decided to do this research to contribute to the visualization of the situated agency of the Nasa in

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the violent context of Colombia. My fieldwork experience made me aware of the importance of understanding the complexity of the case and of not falling into the trap of creating stereotypes. Stereotyping is very dangerous, resulting from quick judgments and polarization. Thus, during every phase of this research, I tried to embrace the complexity of Nasa people's lives, organization, stories, and practices, which feed their identities individually and collectively. I hope that I have managed to do this at least to a certain degree.

Emotions and fieldwork safety

As time passed, the issue of my safety became an important challenge. The constant uncertainty of everyday events affected me in many ways. I was confronted with strong emotions and feelings such as fear, sadness, and anger associated with the events experienced during the fieldwork, and I started to look for strategies to protect myself physically and emotionally. At first, it was unclear whom I could trust, and relationships looked fragile. Thus, it took time to build trust. Events happened very fast, and every day a new situation had to be handled. Likewise, my plans had to be adjusted several times. Initially, I thought that my feelings would bias me, but with time I realized that my fieldwork experience was similar to the daily experience of the indigenous people. Hence, my fieldwork experience gave me tools to understand the particularities of conflict settings.

I used my personal skills to deal with the dangers that I encountered. These dangers were directly related to the hazards with which guards are confronted every day. I tried to assess the risks of specific activities, but the highly dynamic and uncertain setting was difficult to measure from a standard rational perspective. Thus, I started to use my intuition to make difficult decisions. I made a list of activities in which I should participate and took courage to attend, skipped others activities when I needed to rest, asked for advice and extra information from indigenous leaders and guards, and, finally, I decided to travel every now and then to my family home in Cali to reflect and distance myself from the intense fieldwork experience. All these measures were taken consciously, but not without difficulty and dilemmas, because I wanted to be in the field as much as possible and be as brave as the indigenous people among whom I was conducting the fieldwork.

In 1990, the American Anthropological Association (AAA) issued a special report titled *Surviving Fieldwork* based on a large survey, which offered an extensive discussion of common dangers in the field (Howell, 1990), and Sluka (1990) discussed the dangers faced by anthropologists while in the field. More recently, Paterson et al. (1999) have suggested a protocol of possible strategies for researchers in dangerous settings, and Fujii (2010) has analysed the challenges of conducting interviews in settings rent by large-scale violence. Although I had read some of this literature before, it did not make sense to me until I was there, feeling that I needed to collect data even if I was scared most of the time. I was lucky enough to have found

good people around me and, in many cases, key informants who gave me courage when I was scared and shared their concerns and fears with me. I decided to mention this in this thesis, because I think that my experience and feelings related to the research help me to understand how is to be part of the community, how it is to live in their reality. Hence, the constant feeling of unsafeness helped me to understand why issues such as identity, traditional medicine, rituals, and history are so relevant for Nasa people today. Those issues provide sense making onto which people can hold in a context that makes no sense. Thus, my experience helped me to translate between our different worlds. I cannot say that my translation is perfectly accurate, but I have learnt that not everything is cognitive and rational and some things cannot be put into words. It is my belief that my fieldwork experience with all its challenges gave me relevant tools to make a relevant controlled equivocation and translation of Nasa experience.

6.4   Final Reflection

Concerning peacebuilding, one of the greatest challenges faced by democratic societies is that of including claims of distinct group identities and cultural norms in a single state governed by a constitution that reflects and supports the identities and norms of all its citizens (Cott, 2000). As Marisol de la Cadena (2010) has explained, indigenous politics claim a pluriversal politics, a new configuration that connects different worlds with the possibility of becoming legitimate adversaries. Pluriversal politics adds a conflict dimension as it allows for conflicting views about that multiplicity to be discussed in argumentative forums (De La Cadena, 2010). Therefore, the GI represents a strategy to resist violence, but also to resist worldviews and lifestyles imposed by outsiders. The Nasa indigenous identity is like a big umbrella of performative identities articulated in different contexts. There is not one permanent or pure indigenous identity, but old identities that are reconstructed and performed in new contexts and with new features. Moreover, the indigenous identity, like any other, is a choice. In identity politics terms, collective identities (including identities based on ethnicity) influence people to engage in action, and then the action can be cooperation, conflict, violent conflict, or mobilization. In the Nasa case, identity is used for constructive and transformative conflict, towards peacebuilding. Taking Scott's (1985) concept of resistance, whereby any act of resistance by a sub-ordinary group is aimed at mitigating the imposition of a dominant group or at advancing the sub-group's own demands, I conclude that Nasa identity is a tool for resistance and sometimes their only non-violent tool to survive.

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Picture 6.2 Natural reserve of Munchique los Tigres, Resguardo Munchique los Tigres. →››

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Picture 6.3 Guards from northern region training in La María Piendamó, Cauca. →››

SUMMARIES

Summary

The northern part of Cauca Province in Colombia is recognized for its large population of indigenous people, but is also known as a region afflicted by high intensities of conflict and violence. Guerrillas, paramilitary armies and criminal bands are engaged in extortion, kidnapping, taxation, and drug cultivation and trafficking as their main financial resources. They compete for the international narcotics trade business, in which northern Cauca is a strategic point. Moreover, the official army had also been accused of persecuting and stigmatizing indigenous leaders and joining forces with paramilitaries to confront illegal groups.

Since many territories are officially managed by indigenous people, different actors consider them as obstacles to their interests leading to a high number of casualties among the indigenous population. Instead of responding with violence to protect themselves, the indigenous Nasa in the Cauca developed various non-violent strategies to survive in this violent context. This research aims to advance in understanding how indigenous members of the Nasa community developed non-violent strategies to survive in the violent conflicts of Colombian context. For that, I focused on the Guardia Indígena-GI, indigenous guard, from northern Cauca. An interdisciplinary and interpretative approach was used and data were collected by means of ethnographic methods, working at the Association of Indigenous Councils of Northern Cauca (ACIN) for over a year.

First of all, the results show how Nasa people consider themselves as 'peaceful' people because of their non-violent approach, but warriors because of their history. They strategically framed their identity through four identification stories: 1) Millenarian warriors; 2) Defenders of the Land; 3) The armed movement, MAQL; 4) Non-violent human right defenders. By doing so, they drew on their historical memory and reconstructed their collective identity moving towards a non-violent warrior.

Second, this research shows how Nasa people succeeded to self-organise in a non-violent way to confront armed groups when needed. The thesis illustrates practices and principles that Nasa used to mobilise hundreds of people in a very short time, which allowed them to track down, surround and capture armed rebels in indigenous territory. The combination of social norms and values which derives in social cohesion, common goals and power fluidity allowed them to act together and empower themselves against armed actors without using violence.

Third, this study reveals why some indigenous people from northern Cauca joined the GI, whereas others joined guerrilla groups like FARC-EP. From life stories we understood that personal values and needs, legal status, individual identity and a way of living, influenced individual choices. Coincidence also played a role. Therefore,

indigenous individual decision to join the Indigenous Guard or the FARC-EP corresponded to a tipping point resulting from many factors and developments pilling up on a series of previous choices and coincidences. Hence, the GI has become an attractor for young indigenous people eager to have agency in a very violent and complex context.

Fourth, by analysing Nasa adaptations to new regimes of power through time, this thesis exposes some patterns in Nasa identity which have helped them to survive and evolve into the non-violent warriors that they are today. Colombian state was created deeply inserted in discourses of civilization and development imported and almost imposed on the diverse Colombian population. The Nasa represent the "non-civilized" societies - also called the subalterns - and their capacity to resist the hegemonic and strong powers of cultural domination.

This thesis concludes that the Nasa community have learned to manage the conflict in non-violent ways in their struggles by means of 1) first, collectively framing their identity as non-violent warriors and, then, moving towards non-violent practices, which leads to reconstructing their identity from warriors to non-violent warriors; 2) self-organisation and collective action for confronting armed groups when needed; 3) becoming an attractor that motivates people to join them and 4) being and remaining embedded in their own historical analysis, interpretations, and responses to the local context and adapting themselves when needed. Nasa people are active agents of change, they reject the idea of being victims of the system and continuously embrace the idea of agency, in terms of what can they do and then they do it. These strategies represent a framework used by Nasa people to claim their territorial control and contribute to everyday peacebuilding in a way that they resist the domination by Colombian society. Nasa communities are thus producing and transforming systems of governance that do not respond to national dynamics and by doing this they are inviting us to go beyond normative thinking in peacebuilding, showing us the Nasa's everyday practices of resistance and thus providing new potentials for conflict transformation in Northern Cauca, Colombia and potentially beyond.

Resumen

La zona norte del departamento del Cauca en Colombia es reconocida por su gran población indígena, pero también es conocida como una región afectada intensamente por conflictos violentos. Diferentes actores como guerrillas, ejércitos paramilitares y bandas criminales se dedican a la extorsión, el secuestro, los impuestos ilegales y el cultivo y tráfico de drogas como sus principales recursos financieros. Estos grupos compiten por el negocio del comercio internacional de narcóticos, en el cual el norte del Cauca es un punto estratégico. Además, el ejército nacional también ha sido acusado de perseguir y estigmatizar a los líderes indígenas y unir fuerzas con paramilitares para enfrentar a grupos ilegales.

Dado que muchos territorios son administrados oficialmente por pueblos indígenas, los diferentes actores mencionados anteriormente los consideran como obstáculos a sus intereses, lo que conduce a una gran cantidad de víctimas entre la población indígena. Sin embargo, en lugar de responder con violencia para protegerse, los indígenas Nasa en el Cauca desarrollaron varias estrategias no violentas para sobrevivir en este contexto violento. Esta investigación tiene como objetivo avanzar en la comprensión de cómo los miembros de la comunidad Nasa desarrollaron estas estrategias no violentas. Para eso, esta investigación se enfoca en la Guardia Indígena-GI del norte del Cauca. Para el desarrollo de este estudio se utilizó un enfoque interpretativo y los datos se recopilaron mediante métodos etnográficos, trabajando en la Asociación de Cabildos Indígenas del Norte del Cauca (ACIN) durante más de un año.

En primer lugar, los resultados muestran cómo los indígenas Nasa se consideran personas pacíficas debido a su enfoque no violento, pero al mismo tiempo guerreros por su memoria historia. En el capítulo dos vemos como los Nasa enmarcan estratégicamente su identidad a través de cuatro historias de identificación: 1) Guerreros milenarios; 2) Defensores de la tierra; 3) El movimiento armado, MAQL; 4) Defensores no violentos de los derechos humanos. Al hacerlo, recurrieron a su memoria histórica y reconstruyeron su identidad colectiva moviéndose hacia una identidad de guerreros no violentos.

En segundo lugar, esta investigación muestra cómo los indígenas Nasa logran auto-organizarse de una manera no violenta para enfrentar a grupos armados cuando es necesario. La tesis ilustra prácticas y principios que los Nasa utilizan para movilizar a cientos de personas en muy poco tiempo, lo que les permite rastrear, rodear y capturar rebeldes armados en territorio indígena. La combinación de normas y valores sociales que se derivan de la cohesión social, los objetivos comunes y la fluidez del poder les permite actuar juntos y fortalecerse contra los actores armados sin usar la violencia.

Tercero, este estudio revela por qué algunos indígenas del norte del Cauca se unieron a la Guardia Indígena mientras que otros se unieron a grupos guerrilleros como las FARC-EP. Basados en cuatro historias de vida entendimos que los valores y necesidades personales, el estatus legal, la identidad individual y sus formas de vida influyeron en las elecciones individuales. La coincidencia también jugó un papel. Por lo tanto, la decisión de los individuos indígenas de unirse a la Guardia Indígena o las FARC-EP corresponde a un punto de inflexión resultante de muchos factores y desarrollos acumulados en una serie de elecciones y coincidencias previas. De esta manera, la guardia se ha convertido en un atractor para los jóvenes indígenas que desean tener agencia en un contexto muy violento y complejo, con lo cual los grupos armados tienen menos posibilidades de reclutar indígenas Nasa.

Cuarto, al analizar las adaptaciones de los indígenas Nasa a los nuevos regímenes de poder a través del tiempo, esta tesis expone algunos patrones en su identidad que los han ayudado a sobrevivir y evolucionar hacia los guerreros no violentos que son hoy en día. La república de Colombia fue creada insertada profundamente en discursos de civilización y desarrollo importados y casi impuestos a la diversa población colombiana. Los Nasa representan las sociedades "no civilizadas", también llamadas subalternos, y su capacidad para resistir a los poderes hegemónicos y fuentes de dominación cultural.

Esta tesis concluye que la comunidad Nasa ha aprendido a manejar el conflicto de manera no violenta en sus luchas por medio de 1) primero, enmarcar colectivamente su identidad como guerreros no violentos y, luego, avanzar hacia prácticas no violentas, lo que conduce a reconstruir su identidad de guerreros a guerreros no violentos; 2) auto-organización y acción colectiva para enfrentar grupos armados cuando sea necesario; 3) convertirse en un atractivo que motive a las personas a unirse a ellos y 4) estar y permanecer integrados en su propio análisis histórico, interpretaciones y respuestas al contexto local y adaptarse cuando sea necesario. Los Nasa son agentes activos de cambio, rechazan la idea de ser víctimas del sistema y adoptan continuamente la idea de agencia, en términos de que lo que pueden hacer lo hacen. Estas estrategias representan un marco utilizado por los Nasa para reclamar su control territorial y contribuir a la consolidación de la paz cotidiana de una manera que resista el dominio de la sociedad hegemónica colombiana. De esta manera, los Nasa están produciendo y transformando sistemas de gobierno que no responden a las dinámicas nacionales y, al hacerlo, nos están invitando a ir más allá del pensamiento normativo en la construcción de paz, mostrándonos las prácticas cotidianas de resistencia y, por lo tanto, proporcionando nuevos potenciales para la transformación de conflictos en Norte del Cauca, Colombia y potencialmente más allá.

CURRICULUM VITAE

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Professional Profile
I am an expert on Communication Science and Social Organizations. I am interested in the role of communication for social change, peacebuilding and political governance.

I have solid knowledge of complexity theories for social change; processes of collective identity construction; framing analysis and the role of stories, historical memory and non-violent strategies for social transformation.

Work Experience
Lecturer at Universidad del Valle 2018-2019
Courses
- Conflict management for water management
- Water governance
- Research seminar
- Media for education

Communication & Project Manager 2005 – 2010
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Education
PhD on Social Sciences 2013-2019. Strategic Communication Group. Wageningen University and Research Centre.

MSc Applied Communication Science 2010- 2012. Minor on Forest and Nature Conservation. Wageningen University and Research Centre.

BSc Social Communication & Journalism Universidad del Valle – Colombia. 1999 – 2005

Scientific Publications
- **Chaves P.** García M. (2009). Knowledge Management at the Community Level in Colombia in *Capacity Development for Improved Water Management*. UNW-DPC/ UNESCO-IHE. Available at: http://www.gwp.org/globalassets/ global/toolbox/references/capacity- development-for-improved-water- management-unesco-iheunw-dpc-2009. pdf
- **Chaves, P.** Aarts, N. Bommel S. (2019) *Reconstructing Collective Identity for Peacebuilding: The Indigenous Guard in Northern Cauca, Colombia*. Journal: Latin American Cultural Studies. London, UK. Doi/full/10.1080/13569325.2019.1574 728
- **Chaves, P.** Aarts, N. Bommel S. (2020, accepted) *Self-organization for everyday peacebuilding: The Guardia Indígena from Northern Cauca, Colombia.* Journal: Security Dialogue. PRIO, Oslo, Norway.

Conferences & Seminars
- Workshop-Seminar on Documentation Process, Tegucigalpa – Honduras. Speaker and Process Facilitator, May 2008
- International Seminar: Water & Sanitation Knowledge Management, Delft – Netherlands. Speaker. November 2008
- Interpretative Policy Analysis, Wageningen – Netherlands. Speaker. July 2014

- ECPR General Conference – Oslo, 2017. Speaker, article *Social Movements and Memory*.
- ¿La Paz es Ahora? Examining the question of peace and violence in Colombia. Newcastle University, 2017 Speaker, article *Self-organization for everyday peacebuilding.*

Video Production
Sonoviso: Peri-urban areas in Colombia. Written and Directed by Paola Chaves - 2008
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M4s587IUi_w

Documentary: Personal notes, El Rey. Written and Directed by Paola Chaves and Andrés Laguna 2003 -2006

Documentary: Pacific Generation. Written and Directed by Paola Chaves - 2004
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kB1cWrWjCho

Awards and recognitions
Francisco Jose de Caldas Grant to pursue a PhD. Selected through a national competition awarded by the Francisco José Caldas Institute for the Development of Science and Technology (COLCIENCIAS) from Colombia.

Netherlands Fellowship Programmes (NFP) to develop Master Studies in Applied Communication Science.

Nancy Paola Chaves Pérez
Wageningen School of Social Sciences (WASS)
Completed Training and Supervision Plan

Name of the learning activity	Department/Institute	Year	Credits
A) Project related competences			
Management of Change: inter-human processes and communication, COM32806	WUR	2013	6
Critical perspectives on social theory	WASS	2013	2.5
Writing the PhD proposal	WUR	2013	6
B) General research related competences			
WASS Introduction Course	WASS	2013	1
Interpretive methods and methodologies	WASS	2013	4
How to conduct practice-based studies in social and organizational research	Warwick Institute, Venice, Italy	2013	2
Issues in Political, Policy and Organizational Ethnography	Eighth ECPR Summer School, Ljubjana, Slovenia	2013	2
'Identity Stories as non-violent Strategies for Conflict Management: The Indigenous Guard in Northern Cauca, Colombia'.	11th ECPR Conference, Oslo, Norway	2017	1
'Self-organization for everyday peacebuilding: The Guardia Indígena from Northern Cauca, Colombia'	7th Conference of Ecohealth, Cali, Colombia	2018	1
C) Career related competences/personal development			
Techniques for Writing and Presenting a Scientific Paper	WGS	2013	1.2
WASS Council Member	WASS	2015- 2016	2
'Constructing identities from warriors to human right protectors: The Indigenous Guard in north Cauca - Colombia'	WASS PhD day	2016	1
Career Perspectives	WGS	2016	1.6
Total			**31.3**

*One credit according to ECTS is on average equivalent to 28 hours of study load