Pedagogies of Solidarity in the Midst of War: The Inter-cultural University of the Peoples in South West Colombia

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Nomadesc & the Intercultural University of the Peoples (UIP).

Patrick Kane & NOMADESC

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Foreword

This co-produced piece of research was only possible because of the amazing work, commitment and contribution of some of the most incredible committed organic intellectuals, in particular Berenice Celeita, director and founding member of Nomadesc, and Olga Araujo, coordinator of networks, and longstanding Nomadesc team member. Others who played important roles in the process include Carlos Gonzalez, Victor Hugo Ospina, Yuliana Velez, Ivan Vargas, David Erazo and Alejandra Mosquera. The old saying goes that a week is a long time in politics. In the intense, unpredictable world of human rights in Colombia, a week can seem an eternity. Hence it would be impossible to do justice in one document to more than two decades of history and struggle. However, it is hoped that in some small way, this case study serves to strengthen the struggles of the inspirational social movements which inspired it, as well as those of others around the world.

Preface

This case study is part of a broader project, funded by the UK's Economic & Social Research Council, under grant number ES/R00403X/1: '*Social Movement Learning and Knowledge Production in the Struggle for Peace with Social Justice: Case Studies from Four Conflict-Affected Contexts'.* This preface will provide a generic overview of the broader research rationale, theory, methodology and aims of this project.

Research Rationale

In an era of increasing global inequality, conflict and rising authoritarianism (Streeck, 2016; Piketty, 2014, Scarhill, 2013, Rogers, 2016) social movements often represent a first line of defence for some of the most marginalized communities on the planet, seeking to defend and extend the conditions for a basic and dignified human existence. That is to say, 'social movements matter' (Cox, 2018; SC, IDS and UNESCO, 2016; McAdam et al, 1999). Yet in the developing world, they often operate, organise and advocate in conditions of state repression, threats and insecurity, conditions which can serve to undermine movement cohesion, solidarity and effectiveness (Earl, 2013). This is particularly the case in countries affected by or emerging out of armed conflicts.

This research seeks to explore the learning and knowledge production processes of four very different organisations that are part of broader social movements, located in four distinct countries and continents, as they advocate for peace with social justice in contexts of violent conflict and/or its aftermath. These institutions, who are core partners in the proposed research, are NOMADESC, a grassroots NGO based in Colombia; The Housing Assembly, a grassroots organisation from South Africa; The HDK (Peoples' Democratic Congress), an umbrella organisation that brings together different social movements in Turkey; and the Madhesh Foundation, Nepal, an organisation that works with and for the excluded Madhes community of the Terai, the Southern plains of Nepal. Each organisation, in different ways, advocates with and for marginalized communities seeking to defend and extend their basic rights to education, health, housing, life, dignity and equal treatment before the law. Each organisation, to different degrees, has also been victim of state repression, violence against it members and activists, and sustained surveillance and persecution.

The research combines detailed case studies of the learning and knowledge production processes of each social movement institution, and incorporates within that a dynamic process of inter-movement learning and knowledge exchange, facilitated through a series of workshops and field visits to each of the country contexts, with the objective of building collective knowledge and inter-movement solidarity.

The overarching aim of the study is to identify and critically analyse the strategic knowledge and learning processes of the four social movement organisations operating in conflict affected contexts. This was done through a co-produced process of intra- and inter-movement reflection on these strategic knowledges and learning processes with a view to improving their effectiveness and supporting the promotion of more equitable and sustainable peacebuilding processes.

The specific objectives are:

- Critically examine the learning and knowledge production processes of four social movements in conflict affected contexts
- Strengthen the respective social movements' learning and knowledge production processes, their reflexivity and strategic development
- Promote South-South and North-South dialogue and relationships to promote improved practice and international solidarity
- Enhance national and global understanding of social movement learning and the role of social movements in promoting sustainable peacebuilding
- Co-produce four detailed social movement case studies and a critical comparative synthesis, extracted from the case studies.

These objectives will be achieved through empirically grounded, co-produced case studies of each respective social movement organisation, combined with inter-movement engagement, drawing on popular education techniques and ethnographic research methods to answer the following research questions:

> RQ1) *How do social movements, located in complex conflict affected situations learn and produce knowledge, and how does this process of learning and knowledge production assist in the development of strategy to achieve the demands of their constituencies?*
>
> RQ 2) *What knowledge have the social movements developed and what have they learned?*
>
> RQ 3) *What have been the effects of these social movements on the promotion and realization of peace with social justice within their country context?*
>
> RQ 4) *What can we extract from the four case studies about learning and knowledge production within social movements in complex, conflict-affected contexts that can assist in assessing the possibilities for strengthening civil society movements' role in building peace with social justice?*

Theory

For the purpose of this research, we draw on the work of Paul Routledge, who defines social movements as:

> "organisations of varying size that share a collective identity and solidarity, are engaged in forms of conflict in opposition to an adversary (such as a government or corporation), and attempt to challenge or transform particular elements within a social system (such as governments, laws, policies, cultural codes and so on)"(Routledge, 2018:4).

Our particular definition, emphasises the geographical nature of social movements, which sees them as:

> "networks of people, resources and connections. Most operate at the intersection of a series of overlapping scales – from more local municipalities, through regions to the nation state and, increasingly, international forums. These different politics of scale – and their associated networks of activity – provide movements with a range of opportunities and constraints (ibid,6).

As a body of work, social movement research emerged from North America and Europe in the 1950s, with the functionalist 'resource mobilisation theory' (RMT) becoming a dominant strand that focused on social movement organization, resources, and opportunities (Tilly, 1985; Tarrow, 1999; McAdam, 1982). Resource mobilization theorists have been criticised for their overtly structural approach and a tendency to extract the struggles of social movements from the broader analysis of the socio-economic context (Choudry, 2015; Scandrett, 2012). They also tended to arrive at levels of abstraction and generalisation which inevitably produced reductive, simplified theory. 'New Social Movement' (NSM) theory emerged from Europe to challenge RMT (see Buechler, 2013; Touraine, 1981; Melucci, 1980) and the inadequacy of orthodox structural approaches, both Functionalist and Marxist, to account for social movements which began to emerge from 1968 onwards as significant subjects of struggle, but which could not easily be slotted into the traditional class analyses of these theories, e.g. the peace movement and the women's movement. NSM theorists tend to have a concern for questions around why new social actors emerge, and take into account cultural factors such as the construction of collective identities and lifestyles. Some strands seek to analyse motivation, experience and communication networks of individual activists involved in social movements (Melucci, 1980). Such theories can be useful in helping us to grasp the internal dynamics and heterogeneous characteristics of social movements. In development studies, the political and economic struggles of social movements have increasingly been linked to battles over knowledge, coloniality and modernity, with alternative ways of knowing, being and producing at the heart of debates (c.f Escobar, 2004). Finally, there are important literatures on the way social movements in the contemporary era of globalization, use space and operate across borders to strengthen their claim-making (Kriesi et al, 2016, Routledge, 2018).

One general criticism, which has been made of much social movement theory, is that they often lack relevance for the movements themselves and '*often have little of substance to say about the struggles of the day*' (Cox and Nilsen, 2014:p17). Flacks (2004) surveying the ever-growing field of social movement scholarship asked '*What is all this analysis for? In what way does the validation, elaboration, and refinement of concepts provide useable knowledge for those seeking social change*?' (ibid, p138). From Flacks' critical starting point, a small but significant body of literature has emerged over the past decade which seeks to radically turn the mainstream trend on its head, challenging the detachment of the scholar from the movement by prioritising the aim of making research relevant and accountable to social movements themselves (Bevington and Dixon, 2005; Novelli, 2006, 2010,2004; Choudry, 2015; Cox & Nilsen, 2014; McNally, 2013). Flacks, Bevington and Dixon call for a new wave of 'movement-relevant theory' that is useful to those involved in struggles for social change (2005). This type of research represents an opportunity to increase both the academic utility and credibility of social movement research and its support for social impact. In relation to this, the study of social movement organising and learning processes has been identified as one particularly relevant area for social movement analysis, which seeks to be movement-relevant (Zibechi, 2007; Santos, 2006; Della Porta and Pavan, 2017).

Moving slightly away from social movements to issues of conflict, in much of the literature on peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding there is a recognition that the voices of civil society, and the social movements that emerge from them, are often insufficiently included in determining the nature of peace agreements and post-conflict development policies (Pugh et al, 2016; Richmond & Mitchell, 2011). Too often, national political elites, armed movements, and international actors fail sufficiently to take into account the demands of civil society actors and social movements for access to basic rights and basic goods – demands and grievances that underpin many conflicts - favouring agreements that prioritize security, democratic elections and the promotion of markets (Paris, 2004). These peace agreements often result in what Galtung (1976) has famously termed 'negative peace', characterised by the cessation of armed violence without addressing the underlying drivers of conflict that underpinned the violence. Instead Galtung argued for 'positive peace', which seeks to end both violence and the underlying causes of that violence. At the heart of the drivers of conflict in many contexts is inequality, in its multiple economic, political, cultural dimensions (Cramer, 2005; Stewart, 2005; 2010): unequal access to resources, land, food, housing, education, healthcare, and unequal treatment before the law and/or the political system, particularly for different cultural and ethnic communities. As a result, for many social movements in conflict affected contexts, the struggle for peace cannot be separated from the struggle for social justice – with many drawing on the discourse

of ‘peace with social justice’ as the rallying call. For many analysts, failure to build ‘positive peace’ lies at the heart of why many peace agreements fail and relapse into violence. Strengthening social movements and the organisations that they form, and seeking to pressurise states to redress inequalities, is therefore a crucial peacebuilding measure. How these organisations develop strategies, develop their members and build capacity, extend contacts and solidarities with other movements, and their effects on national policy in these conflict contexts is central to the concern of our research, yet has often been overlooked by research on security, conflict and peacebuilding (Richmond, 2016).

Linked to the role, nature and importance of social movements is also the role of knowledge within these movements. Social movement knowledge production and learning have been key to the historical evolution of social scientific thought. Central to this argument is both a critique of top down knowledge, which presumes that academics theorise and social movements produce empirical evidence and receive theory, to a much more grounded understanding that social movements at the point of praxis build knowledge from below that can move social scientific thought forward and change the world. Laurence Cox (2018), Aziz Choudry (2015), Shukaitis & Graeber (2007) argue that those at the coal face – suffering the harshest contradictions of contemporary neoliberal capitalist development - have privileged knowledge about the nature of the system under which we all reside.

Similarly, it is when academics engage with social movements that provides the most fruitful potential for breakthroughs in social science. Critical theory owes its roots to intellectuals’ engagement with social movements – not just Marxism, but feminism, poststructuralism, postcolonialism etc. However, since the 1980s onwards critical theory, particularly in the USA and Western Europe, has become distanced from grassroots struggles and has developed in very particular directions. This has made it less relevant and powerful – and also distorted its focus (Shukaitis & Graeber 2007).

Part of the argument – and position - we are developing here, also feeds into the broader debate around the ‘decolonization’ of knowledge – the subaltern knowledge of social movements-in its worker, indigenous, feminist, black and anti-racist forms has been silenced/undermined/hidden through processes of both imperialism and elitism – that have prioritized Northern knowledge over Southern knowledge; University Knowledge over Social Movement knowledge, Elite academic over Movement Intellectual, Middle class knowledge over working class and peasant knowledge; Traditional Intellectuals over Organic Intellectuals. This is not a plea for the abandoning of Universities, but for reconnecting and reinvigorating them, alongside a recognition and vindication of alternative modes of knowing and thinking, to produce what Boaventura de Sousa Santos called an ‘ecology of knowledges’ and a challenge to the process of ‘epistemicide’ that is impoverishing our capacity to see, think and move beyond our contemporary, highly unequal and brutal world.

Knowledge, therefore, takes on a particular importance in the pursuit of social transformation and social justice. The importance of education and knowledge production in the contemporary era has not been lost on those engaged in processes of hegemonic globalisation, and it is common to hear corporations talking of themselves as 'learning organisations', ' knowledge institutions' and discussing the 'learning society', the 'information society' , 'the knowledge economy' and recognising the need to set up structures able to change and adapt to new circumstances, be that fast capitalism, lean production, flexible accumulation, which reflect the need for more mobile structures and a workforce skilled to adapt to a fast changing environment (Ranson, 1994; Jarvis, 2001). In this context it appears logical to ask how social movements are taking seriously the necessity to rethink strategies through processes of research, investigation and learning. In social movement studies there has been little focus on knowledge and education processes. However, more recently, from both the margins of the field (Cox,2018; Choudry, 2015; Novelli & Ferus Comelo, 2007) and from the centre (Della Porta & Pavan, 2017) there is an increased recognition that knowledge in social movements really matters:

In their effort to pursue or resist social and political changes, these actors do not limit themselves to protesting in the streets or the squares. Rather, they form collective spaces of knowledge production wherein collaboration and participation lead to the "rethinking [of] democracy; the generation of expertise and new paradigms of being, as well as different modes of analyses of relevant political and social conjunctures" (Casas-Cortes et al., 2008, p. 20, cited in Della Porta, A & Pavan, E (2017)

Della Porta & Pavani (2017:300) call for the study of 'repertoires of knowledge practices'. Which they define:

> " as the set of practices that foster the coordination of disconnected, local, and highly personal experiences and rationalities within a shared cognitive system able to provide movements and their supporters with a common orientation for making claims and acting collectively to produce social, political, and cultural changes"

Gramsci's 'philosophy of praxis' (Marxism) was accompanied by his interest in a 'pedagogy of praxis' (Pizzolato and Holst, 2017) which saw the construction of both hegemony and counter-hegemony as fundamentally pedagogical. Gramsci (1971), noted a distinction between 'common sense' (which reflected hegemonic knowledge) and 'good sense' (that knowledge emerging from the peoples own analysis derived from the everyday), and his work had a strong focus on workers education.

So what types of knowledge do social movements produce? As Chesters notes:

> "social movements have long been bearers of knowledge about forms of oppression and injustice, expressing political claims, identifying social and economic grievances and bringing new or neglected issues to public prominence "(Chesters, 2012, p. 153).

As Casas-Cortes et al. (2008:42-3), note, this knowledge is often:

> "embedded in and embodied through lived, place-based experiences, [able to] offer different kinds of answers than more abstract knowledge [...] situated and embodied, rather than supposedly neutral and distant".

Classically, we can see that social movement knowledge production has operated at three levels. Firstly, all movements seek to provide a structural critique: *how can we understand the oppression we are suffering?* This might be thematic – why are people being pushed off their land? To more macro-societal, such as a critique of capitalism/feudalism etc. Secondly, and emergent from the first, they develop a strategic critique – how can we challenge the oppression we are facing? This is both in terms of modes of resistance (strikes, protests, occupations etc) and institutional forms (the centralized party, the umbrella organization, popular front/united front, the trade union etc). Thirdly, movements develop an alternative vision: What is our alternative vision to the problem? This might be thematic – solutions to social housing, or societal: the vision of a new society - communism/socialism etc. In summary, what the above is suggesting is that social movement knowledges produce knowledge on the nature of the system, the strategies and tactics to overthrow it, and defend the space once taken, and finally develop visions of what it might be replaced with: Critique, Resistance, Alternatives. According to Cox (2018) because academic/top down knowledge has become separated from the movements it has been less able to address Resistance & Alternatives, and therefore focussed largely on Critique. However, to paraphrase Marx, the task is not just to understand the world, but to change it. In order to do that – we need to reunite the trilogy of Critique, Resistance, Alternatives in order to build real viable alternative solutions to the highly unequal and brutal world that we live in.

As Gramsci notes every 'revolution has been preceded by an intense labour of criticism'(Gramsci, 1977, p.12). Within this process, Gramsci talked of the important role of 'organic intellectuals', committed to an alternative counter-hegemonic project and able to articulate, strategise and transmit this to broader publics (Gramsci, 1986, pp.3-24). While Gramsci often portrayed this function rather mechanistically and unidirectional, another influential Marxist educator, Paolo Freire, would later provide a far more dialectical conceptualisation of this process. According to Freire (2000), true education is not a monological but a dialogical process between teachers and learners: leaders cannot merely tell activists what to do. If this occurs, then even a victory is a hollow achievement. Nor can

education ever be understood as 'neutral', but instead a process riven with differences in power and placed at the service of competing political projects. Popular education is seen as one of the vehicles through which the process of challenging unequal structures can be achieved (Kane, 2001). It has, at its centre, a fundamental commitment to social change in the interests of oppressed and marginalised classes. Furthermore, there is a direct relationship between this type of education and the institutions and organisations, such as trade unions and social movements, that have historically emerged to defend the interests of the poor and the marginalised – movements that this education seeks explicitly to strengthen (Jara, 1989 cited in Kane, 2001, p.9). This organic relationship means that the 'organisation' becomes the 'school' in which popular education takes place, and their "struggles and actions, their forms of organisation, their 'culture', in the broadest sense, constitute the starting point of popular education and its field of enquiry" (Kane, 2001, p.13).

In that sense, 'popular education' needs to be seen as not only involving formal educational events in social movements, but as part of much bigger processes which, though appearing 'informal' and 'arbitrary,' are very deliberate. In this definition, both the 'popular education' events that take place, and the actual practice of 'strategy development' and 'protest actions' can be seen as examples of popular education, whereby the 'school' (the social movement) learns. The first occurs whereby people consciously engage in educational practices (schooling), and the second whereby people are learning through social action. Foley (1999) suggests that a broad conception of education and learning should include *formal education* (taking place in educational institutions), *incidental learning* (taking place as we live, work and engage in social action), *informal education* (where people teach and learn from each other in workplaces, families, communities, social movements) and *non-formal education* (structured systematic teaching and learning in a range of social settings). There is also a need to think through the relationship between individual learning processes and movement learning processes – which represent the transfer or fusion of individual experiences into the collective or institutional learning. We also have to ask questions about the temporality of learning – short, medium, long term processes and the way different forms of learning interact.

If we are to explore these educational processes, then we need to extend our gaze beyond formal training courses for activists and develop an analytical framework that is 'open' and which allows for the rich diversity of ways that social movements (their organisations, activists and supporters) engage in learning. In studying these different types of education and learning, Foley (1999, p.10) suggests this needs to be firmly grounded in an analysis of the political economy, ideology and discourse of the focus of study. Recent work has built on these foundations to theorise how processes of neoliberalism and globalization have affected social movement learning and praxis, and the way movements are

learning to operate transnationally to achieve their objectives (see Novelli and Ferus-Comelo, 2010). Similarly, Choudry's (2015) work on *'Learning Activism: the intellectual life of contemporary social movements'*, provides both a vindication of the importance of social movements as sites of knowledge production, and an insider's view of the complex ways that education, knowledge and strategy development are built in and through social movement struggles. More recently, Choudry & Vally (2017) have deepened the historical aspects of this, to evidence the importance of learning from the history of previous struggles, through archive work, to inform the battles of today.

Methodology

In the multiplicity of approaches which have emerged within popular education, there has long been an interest in research strategies which are able to somehow capture the collective learning and knowledge production processes that take place within social movements (Torres Carrillo, 1999; 2010). This has meant an overlap between popular education and participatory research, since participatory research methods and strategies have been developed to be implemented in popular education contexts (ibid). The most prominent example here is the work of the Colombian sociologist Orlando Fals Borda, whose technique of "participatory action research" (PAR) has been enormously influential and is recognised as one of the most commonly used research techniques in popular education, especially in Latin America (ibid, Fals Borda, 1979, 1987, 2008).

During the 1990s, a participatory popular education research method known as the 'systematisation of experiences' gained prominence within the field of Latin American popular education. Based on the recognition that unique, valuable knowledge can be produced through popular education processes, the systematisation of experiences is a collective process which seeks to deepen understanding and improve practice through collective reflection and analysis of experience (Jara, 1997, 2015; Kane, 2012; Torres Carrillo, 2010, Ruiz Muñoz, 2004). Systematisation:

> 'enables organisations and educators to learn from each other's experiences, successes, problems and failures; it helps educators analyse and evaluate their own work; it is part of the educative process itself, in which encouraging people to interpret developments helps them reach new levels of understanding' (Kane, 2012:p78).

There exist a range of different systematisation methodologies, however it can be understood as an intentional, collective process of knowledge production which tries to '*recover and interpret the meanings that manifest themselves in social practices, with the purpose of strengthening them'* (Torres Carrillo, 2010: p196). The following passage from Chilean popular educator Oscar Jara demonstrate the relevance of systematisation for the study of social movements:

> ... the new scenario of this end of the (20th)century has raised questions over the practices and theoretical conceptions of Latin American social movements and social sciences. We are faced with new questions and challenges. It is a privileged historical moment full of creation, but the answers to the new questions will not arise from any other place but from accumulated historical experience. Unfortunately we have not yet accumulated the necessary learning contained in these (social movement) experiences. Systematisation, as a rigorous learning exercise and critical interpretation of lived processes, remains a pending task and today more than ever can decisively contribute to the re-creation of the social movement practices and to renew theoretical production within social sciences , based on the daily experience of the peoples of Latin America, in particular those committed to processes of popular education and organisation (Jara, 1994).

The systematization of experiences means a critical interpretation of an experience (process or event), beginning with its reconstruction and ordering, in order to discover the logic of the process, the factors that have influenced it, how they are related to each other, and why things happened as they did (Jara 2015, Torres 2004). To reconstruct, to order or organise, in order to understand and interpret what happened and to then be able to draw lessons from that experience and transform practice (Jara, 2004). It is an investigative process that seeks to allow the experience to speak for itself, through all the voices of those who have been part of the experience (or at least a representative section) (Jara, 2004).According to Jara, one of the purposes of systematisation is to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and ideas, for example between different social and pedagogical processes, because it allows the protagonists of a process to communicate their process effectively.

Jara argues that:

> 'it is not the same to exchange stories about experiences, as to exchange systematized products of experiences; because many times in the exchanges of experiences we waste the opportunity to have exchanges of substance and we limit ourselves to exchanging stories in which each person or organization tells what they do and everybody says: "oh, yes, very interesting ..." and the others reply: "Well, that was your experience ... Now, mine ..." and it does not get beyond this (Jara, 2004)

In line with this, our approach builds in ample space for critical, collective reflection and engagement in order to create spaces where the protagonists of the movement can engage in dialogue and exchange.

Phase One

The initial stage of the systematisation involves a process that seeks to 'reconstruct' the lived experience of the movement, using any and every means of data available, and in line with the thematic threads identified for the process. This involved individual interviews with key informants, archive and documentary analysis, newspaper articles, photos, videos, and much more. This phase required a process of organising and classifying information, which facilitated a descriptive account of the evolution of the movement in question, based upon multiple sources. This is the foundational phase, and involved forming some initial analysis in identifying emergent themes and points of interest, which were later fed into the subsequent phase of the process. This stage is carried out in a collective manner, and has the participation of many people who have been protagonists in the process to guide and support the research process.

Phase Two

This is the key moment of the systematisation process, which seeks to 'discover the logic of what happened in the course of the experience' (Taberes Fernandes et al, 2002, p26). Based on the initial framing of the systematisation process, this phase involves a collective process of reflection and analysis by those people who have lived the experience. The point here is not to arrive at a single, unified viewpoint, but to access the multiple voices in order to arrive at a deeper understanding of the lived experience. This necessitates engaging with a broader cross-section of constituencies, then stage 1, with multiple workshops and focus groups with leaders, activists, supporters. These participatory space allow for a rich engagement between the researchers and the participants to develop research findings, check them with participants and refine and develop ideas.

Phase Three

The Systematisation processes will lead to the production of a final written report, but will also involve a number of other creative end products such as videos, leaflets and theatre productions. One important consideration is the issue of the communication of the knowledge produced in the process is not only how is it going to be made available, but also to whom and in what languages and media? And, why these audiences and not others? It is also the case that some of the knowledge produced will be for internal use only, not to be shared with broader audiences. These are important questions, and decisions which are being taken collectively as the research has progressed.

Phase Four

In this phase, with the case studies produced, we then move into a dialogical process of attempting to explore whether the synthesis of the four case studies, might produce more than its component parts. What collective insights can we draw from the cases on the nature of social movement

knowledge production and learning in the contemporary era? The outcomes will emerge out of a one week retreat by the core research team to explore, debate and discuss key emergent ideas from the research that will underpin the final synthesis document.

PROCESS

To clarify, there are two parallel, but interlinked processes taking place across the two-and-a-half-year research period**.** Firstly, there is *National Data Collection Process*: This 'systematisation' process has take place in the respective country of each of the social movements. This included multiple focus groups, in-depth interviews with key movement activists, review of movement documentation, in order to develop detailed narratives of their experiences and processes of movement organisation and develop the social movement case studies. Secondly, there are a series of *Inter-Movement Meetings and Engagement*. These research team meetings are being held across the cycle of the project – and in the countries involved in the project. These meetings provide a moment for the researchers to engage in a public event targeted at social movements and academic researchers in each of the respective countries, and an opportunity for the visitors to learn more about the particular history and struggles of social movements in the host country. Throughout the research period, research teams have been able to engage regularly and to share experiences, challenges and insights.

Conclusions

We hope that you enjoy these studies, that they are thought provoking and useful, and that they help to move the discussion forward. On behalf of the research team we can attest to the extremely inspiring and transformative process that we have been through during this project. We wish to thank all the amazing activists and leaders from the respective movements that we have had the privilege to engage with for sharing their thoughts, their passions and their stories: their struggles have become our struggles in rich, unpredictable and inspiring ways.

Mario Novelli,

Professor in the Political Economy of Education,

University of Sussex

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Introduction

Despite being one of the most dangerous places in the world to be an activist, Colombia is a country with a long and vibrant history of protest and organising in pursuit of social change. Trade unions, rural indigenous, black and peasant communities, students, urban dwellers, women, LGTBQ and many more sectors of society have formed social movements which have led important struggles in defence and pursuit of dignity and autonomy. As the cradle of the country's indigenous and black movement, as well as a historical stronghold of the trade union movement, the southwest region of Colombia has historically provided more than its fair share of emblematic struggles, right up to the present day. Despite, or perhaps because of this civic vitality, the region's social movements have also been targeted for violence and repression, and the Colombian armed conflict has presented a permanent threat to activists and their struggles.

Around the world, at the beginning of the third decade of the twentieth century, the outlook for forces struggling for social and ecological justice would appear to be grim, with the rise of right wing authoritarian populism, the dawdling global response to imminent climate disaster, and the apparent decline of left-wing forces around the world. Such struggles are taking place across the globe, led by social movements which come from a variety of standpoints and perspectives - yet unity and collaboration between movements and across territories and borders remains fragmented. At a time when the survival of the human race would appear to depend upon such unity and collaboration of such forces at local, national and international level, it is vital to engage with and seek to understand social movement efforts which seek to generate such unity and collaboration between social movements.

This in-depth case study from southwest Colombia aims to provide a rare, hopeful example of such an initiative, by sharing the learning and knowledge which have emerged from a social movement popular education intervention which over the course of two decades has sought to bring together activists from diverse movements and territories across southwest Colombia in order to empower them to deal with the violent context, but also to strengthen and interweave their struggles. Our case study provides a rare insight into the learning and knowledge processes of social movements operating in the conflict-affected, repressive context of southwest Colombia.

The organisation behind the pedagogical-organisational strategy which constitutes the focus of this document is a small, radical human rights NGO based in southwestern Colombia, the Association for Research and Social Action Nomadesc (hereafter Nomadesc). Over the course of more than two

decades, Nomadesc has developed a multi-level, radical approach to its work with communities and social movements in defence of human rights. The pedagogical initiative in question initially began in response to a large-scale offensive of right wing paramilitaries against social movements in southwest Colombia at the turn of the century, and around which a broad range of actions, processes and projects developed, always in relation to two central pillars of Nomadesc's work: research and social action.

Nomadesc's pedagogical-organisational strategy began in 1999, initially as an ad-hoc series of human rights workshops for trade unions in the Valle del Cauca region, which at the time were primary targets for paramilitary violence due to the militancy and effectiveness of the region's workers' movement. Leading on from these initial workshops, in 2001 a Human Rights Diploma programme was developed in coordination with trade unions and social movements, in response to the continued paramilitary expansion and violence against communities and social movements. These Diploma courses ran until 2010, when NOMADESC, and the social movements involved, decided to develop a proposal for a social movement-based and led popular university, which is currently manifested as the *Intercultural University of the Peoples* (Universidad Intercultural de los Pueblos, henceforth UIP), an alternative educational process that challenges Western notions of the university and brings together 37 diverse movements and grassroots social organisations in the Valle del Cauca, Cauca, Nariño, Huila, Chocó and the Coffee region of the South West of Colombia.

Throughout its history, this pedagogical-organisational strategy has taken place alongside, and been engaged with, some of Colombia's most emblematic social struggles. The trade unions and social movements involved in the pedagogical process have led historic struggles of national and international significance, such as the 36-day occupation of the headquarters of EMCALI[1], the regional public utilities provider, by SINTRAEMCALI trade union in 2001 in opposition to planned privatisation (Cf. Novelli, 2006, 2010); the Social and Communitarian Minga led by the indigenous movement of Cauca which brought together social movements from across the country in 2008 to oppose the governments Militarised and Neoliberal Economic policies ; or the 22-day civic strike in the predominantly black city of Buenaventura in 2017 to demand dignity, rights, respect and investment in Colombia's major port city on the Pacific Coast (Kane and Celeita, 2018). In all of these struggles, NOMADESC supported the movements, providing human rights support and accompaniment, alongside the pedagogical workshops and activities.

[1] https://zcomm.org/znetarticle/victory-celebrations-end-historic-occupation-of-cam-tower-by-mario-novelli/

It is in this context, characterised by vibrant, militant social movement organising and high levels of repression and violence from state and paramilitary groups, that NOMADESC's pedagogical strategy has sought to strengthen social movements by connecting struggles and networks, providing tools and information for the defence of human rights, and developing an intercultural knowledge dialogue between the diverse social movements which converge within the pedagogical process.

This case study was co-produced by Nomadesc and employs an innovative participative research methodology with an expanded and transformative axiological framework. Drawing upon the systematisation of experiences popular education participative research strategy, as well as ethnographic methods, from the very beginning our research process was collectively designed and implemented.

Chapter 1 presents the research methodology, whilst chapter 2 goes on to set out the socio-economic and political context in order to lay the basis for a deeper, embedded understanding of the case study. Chapter 3 presents an in-depth discussion of the history of the pedagogical process, foregrounding the voices of the protagonists in order to track its evolution and the dialectical relationship which it has had with the changing conjunctures of the region. Chapter 4 seeks to further unpack the question of how Nomadesc and the social movements it works with learn and produce knowledge, outlining the different ways in which the cultural, political and organisational diversity of the social movements is converted into a movement resource, and the knowledge construction and learning processes involved. Chapter 5 takes the reader on a journey through the epistemological approach and content of the pedagogical process, which are rooted in notions of epistemological justice and the horizontal, collective construction of knowledge. Chapter 6 addresses the political economy and geographical dimensions Nomadesc's work with communities and social movements on the frontlines of the Colombian armed conflict. Chapter 7 explores the situated learning which has emerged from the experiences of Nomadesc and the social movements it works with in their organising in southwest Colombia, to explore how the context shapes and affects their organising processes, and what learning has emerged. Chapter 8 draws upon a mini-case study in order to present a discussion of the impacts of the pedagogical process upon individuals, collectives and social struggles. Chapter 9 presents the overall research conclusions in order to directly address the research questions.

1. Methodology chapter

As set out above, this study is part of a broader ESRC-funded , collaborative social movement research project which seeks to engage with, understand and document social movement learning processes and content in four very different cases. This section builds upon the overview of the research methodology and objectives of the overall project set out in the Preface section by presenting a summary of how the project was implemented in the Colombia case study. Given the expanded ethical framework of the research process, placing reciprocity and solidarity as foundational principles of the research process, it was agreed from the outset that each country team would have a reasonable amount of flexibility in terms of the framing, scope and design of the research. This approach sought to ensure that the research process, and the knowledge produced, would be of use to the struggles of the social movements and organisations involved, as well as to the academic side of the project.

The Colombia research team was led by Patrick Kane, a UK-based researcher who spent from January 2018- December 2018 engaged in fieldwork in Colombia, working along with members of the Nomadesc to design and implement the systemisation of experiences process. Two of Nomadesc's leading members, who have been anonymised in the document in line with the project's ethical framework, were also part of the research coordination team, and support was received at different points of the data collection process by social work students from the local university carrying out their work experience with Nomadesc. A Cali-based Colombian researcher, David Erazo, was also involved in the design and implementation of the systematisation process. In keeping with the co-production ethos of the project, members of the Nomadesc team were involved in the design of every phase of the research design and implementation, to the extent that this was possible within the constraints of the extremely busy schedule of a human rights organisation in southwest Colombia.

The Colombia research team did not seek to implement a 'pure' systematisation process or to take a dogmatic methodological approach, but rather sought to draw upon central principles of the systematisation of experiences methodology in a pragmatic way in order to come up with a collaborative research process which was genuinely accountable to the social movement co-producer (Nomadesc), in line with project's extended ethical framework, and which at the same time was practically feasible in this complex, intense context. The process also drew upon the 'engaged ethnography' approach set out by Mathers and Novelli (2007).

We sought to create a methodological route which functioned as a critical-reflective process of organising the 'experience' (in this case, the Nomadesc pedagogical process) in order to arrive at a deeper understanding, and to create new knowledge and learning processes in the process. The

design aimed to create a research process which allowed for collective reflection amongst the individual and collective subjects – the activists and social movements- who have created the history of the pedagogical process in question. The collective reflection sought to understand the knowledge and learning processes associated with the initiative; the history of the process; the logics which underpin it; and the meanings, actors and dynamics which have emerged. Key here is that rather than an objective, externally imposed academic process of interpreting and analysing, the process seeks to draw upon and prioritise the interpretations of the subjects themselves, providing the possibility of enriching and developing these perspectives through the interaction and interconnection with the experiences of others.

We aimed to develop a process which facilitated grassroots, participatory knowledge construction, which was flexible enough to engage with the perspectives, desires and experiences of those who have participated directly in the processes, and understand what was important from their perspectives. Given that this academic project explicitly seeks to engage with the knowledge and learning of activists within social struggles, this created no contradiction or tension with the overall framing of the process (although perhaps made for a more demanding writing process!). Within the writing, we have sought to foreground as much as possible the voices of the protagonists of the process, in order for their own interpretations to be brought to the fore. This is in line with the call of Boaventura de Sousa Santos for the researcher to act as a 'translator' for subjects of social struggle (1999).

For the Colombia case study, discussions were held with the Nomadesc team around how we would adapt the research project's four overriding research questions in order to ensure that they could be engaged in a way relevant to the dynamics and context of Nomadesc and the social movements it works with, but also that they could respond to their specific desires and needs. As set out in the preface, the transversal research questions for the four country case studies were framed in the following terms:

1) How do social movements, located in complex conflict affected situations, learn and produce knowledge, and how does this process of learning and knowledge production assist in the development of strategy to achieve the demands of their constituencies?

RQ 2) What knowledge have the movements developed and what have they learned in relation to key thematic areas?

RQ 3) What have been the effects of these movements on the promotion and realisation of peace with social justice within their country context?

RQ 4) What can we extract from the four case studies about learning and knowledge production within social movements in complex, conflict-affected contexts that can assist in assessing the possibilities for strengthening civil society movements' role in building peace with social justice?

For Nomadesc, the question was how to interpret and implement these questions with regards to their own work. Firstly, there was a clarity that despite the broad thrust of the questions, for Nomadesc the primary focus of the systematisation process should be the organisation's almost two decades of pedagogical work. This was not to exclude learning and knowledge processes arising from other aspects of the organisation's work (which would be impossible given the organisation's interconnected, comprehensive way of working), but rather a recognition that given the large chronological framing of the process, it was simply unfeasible to carry out a systematisation of the entirety of the organisation's work over the past two decades. There was consensus within the organisation that the process of systematising the pedagogical process was a long overdue exercise, and that an opportunity to collectively reconstruct the historical, collective memory of the process and to collectively reflect upon the learning and knowledge which had been constructed along the way, was something which would be beneficial to the organisation and the Intercultural University of the Peoples. As a rare example of a long-term, organic, intercultural popular education initiative rooted within the struggles of social movements and moulded through activists' experiences, there was also a consensus that important lessons could be drawn from the experience which may be useful to activists and academics elsewhere.

Working with members of the Nomadesc team, we collectively produced the following objective which would guide our systematisation of experiences process:

General Objective:

> *To reach a deeper understanding of the pedagogical process that is now called Intercultural University of the Peoples (historical, epistemological, philosophical, territorial construction and conceptual evolution, and the contextual aspects that influenced and helped to structure the evolution of the process) to strengthen the current UIP process and consolidate the UIP as a national and international educational reference point for alternative pedagogy.*

We then developed a set of **specific objectives**, which for the purposes of the systematisation process would serve as our *transversal axes*, guiding the process of data collection and subsequent analysis:

- *Uncover/Recover the historical memory of the process, based on the experiences of its protagonists during the past 18 years (2000-2018)*

- *Analyse the evolution of the process and its relationship with national and international social and political conjunctures, and in particular the social struggles of southwest Colombia (specifically in the territories of the communities and movements which have been part of the pedagogical process)*
- *Document the learning, knowledge and concepts which have been weaved and constructed during the history of the history of the pedagogical process*

Beyond these immediate objectives for the process, two broader, **emergent objectives** were identified in recognition of the inherent pedagogical and political value of the systematisation research process:

- *Strengthen, deepen and consolidate interaction and collaboration between the collective subjects which are part of the pedagogical process in question. This objective demonstrates an explicitly political intention: that the process of coming together to collectively reflect upon the experiences of the pedagogical initiative should lead to a strengthening of the intercultural collaboration and organising upon which the process is based.*
- *Encourage and deepen the exchange of experiences with other pedagogical-organisational processes in other regions or countries, by providing the UIP with an increased capacity to understand and communicate its history and knowledge and learning processes*

In particular, these last two objectives are central to the alternative character of the systematisation proposal, because they are rooted in the explicitly political intention that the research process should serve not just to understand, but also to strengthen the pedagogical process which is the subject of its inquiry. This means that the knowledge produced should be inherently relevant, practical and useful to the activists involved and to the social realities and struggles of social movements in southwest Colombia.

The broad chronological framing, constraints in terms of time, resources and the broader demands of Nomadesc's work agenda, limitations of availability of leading activists, plus the practical limitation of reliance upon contact networks and connections, all played a role in determining (and limiting) participation within the systematisation process. For practical reasons, primacy was given to those who had had extended involvement with the pedagogical process and/or Nomadesc's work in general, in order to seek to reconstruct the logic of the process from the perspective of those who had been heavily involved in or close to the process at different points in its history. This included those who had been part of the Nomadesc team; those who had facilitated workshops on the diploma,

specialisation and/or UIP; organic movement intellectuals who are close to the process; and ex-participants.

Research phases

The systematisation process was divided into three distinct phases with distinct objectives and methods. These phases were chronologically distinct, however in practice there was necessarily some overlap between certain activities of the different phases:

Figure 1.1: Fieldwork research phases

: **Phase 1**: Recovery of the lived process; organisation of existing; chronology and initial analysis • Organise and classify existing information • Analysis of existing records and materials • Interviews with protagonists of the design and coordination of the process in order to map the history • A draft mapping of the process, themes, moments, axes (to guide design of second phase) • Design of the spaces /activities of collective reflection and interviews for the second phase	**January-May 2018**
Phase 2: Collective recovery of the lived process; background reflection • Focus groups • Workshops for reflection and collective analysis; thinking about the future of the UIP • Analytical interviews with protagonists	**May 2018-December 2018**
Phase 3: Feedback and validation of findings, production and review of final proFducts	**Jan 2019-December 2019**

Research methods

Review & analysis of historical documentary materials

Over its two decades of existence, Nomadesc has accumulated a large breadth of diverse historical documents relevant to the systematisation, including bibliographic materials, project proposal documents, political declarations, audio-visual archives, human rights 'urgent actions', political declarations, students' investigations, and much more. The review and analysis of this documentation formed an important subsidiary component of the systematisation methodological process. In phase 1 of the process, this method served to inform the historical reconstruction of the process and to guide the design of the second phase, as well as to identify and locate documents which could assist in developing an understanding and analysis of the logics of the process throughout its history.

Semi-structured interviews

I carried out a total of 38 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with people from a wide range of movements and sectors, with varying relationships to the pedagogical process. These included past and present members of the Nomadesc team, past and present facilitators of the educational process, leaders of social movements and organisations which are part of the pedagogical process, ex-participants of the pedagogical process. The aim of these interviews was to develop a deep understanding of the history of the process, in order to identify the different phases and their logics and dynamics from the perspectives of those who have been most closely and consistently involved. I also sought to use the interviews to track the evolving dynamics and conjunctures which formed the context in which the pedagogical process had evolved.

Totalling more than fifty hours of audio recordings, these broad-ranging semi-structured interviews included such themes as memories and anecdotes of the pedagogical process, political analysis of the local, regional and international political context, discussion of the nature of the social struggles in the region, and the experiences and realities of social movements in southwest Colombia.

Territorial Pedagogical Memory Discussion Groups/Workshops

The systematisation involved five Territorial Pedagogical Memory Discussion Groups (*conversatorios*). These were central to the methodology, as they were the forums created specifically to enable collective reflection by participants, aimed at deepening understanding and discovering the underlying logics and dynamics of the process. In keeping with the pedagogy of the process, which has been deeply connected to the realities and territories of the participating organisations and

movements, these discussion groups were staged in territories considered to be zonal hubs (reflecting the zonal organisation of the diploma programme). They were divided as follows: Valle del Cauca (staged in the Nomadesc office, Cali); Pacific (staged in Buenaventura); Cauca (staged in the La Toma Afro-Colombian community, municipality of Suarez); Huila and Southern Cauca (staged in Popayan); Cali (specific to protagonists from the early years, mainly trade unionists, human rights activists and urban community processes).

These activities replicated the inter-cultural, inter-sectoral and intergenerational dialogues which characterise the pedagogical process, with the aim of collectively constructing knowledge about the process itself. Nomadesc team members were involved in the methodological design, which in turn was updated and adjusted according to a collective evaluation which followed each discussion group. Nomadesc team members were responsible for identifying and inviting attendees for each of the five activities, in consultation with the broader research team. These activities were the forums in which the research team took a back seat, and allowed the subjects who worked to create, mould and sustain the process to guide the systematisation. Hence the flexibility of the horizontal, participatory methodology, and the emphasis on allowing participants to fully articulate the meanings, emotions and memories which the process evoked for them.

Each discussion group involved an extended 'participative timeline' exercise, which sought to draw out the history of the process throughout its different phases in each of the territorial zones, whilst also encouraging participants to trace the socio-political conjunctures (specifically relating to the territories in question). Participants were encouraged to bring along objects or documents relating to the process which evoked certain memories or meaning, and these exercises were stimulated with photos, drawings or texts related to the history of the process. The participative timeline exercises sought to draw out the motivations of the individual and collective participants, and the factors or events which triggered their involvement with the pedagogical process.

Photo 1.1: Territorial Pedagogical Memory Discussion Group in La Toma community. Credit: Nomadesc

The sessions also included group discussions around the learning processes which had occurred in the pedagogical process in three distinct but interlinked dimensions: individual, institutional (movement or organisation) and at the level of social struggle. These sections inevitably included discussion of the usefulness and impacts of the learning processes associated with the initiative.

Activist ethnographic observation through participation

The Colombia case study also drew upon elements of the 'engaged ethnography' approach outlined by Mathers and Novelli (2007) and developed specifically for the purpose of studying social movement 'strategies and practices'. This approach identifies two key elements which provide deep insight into such experiences: solidarity and praxis, as with our theoretical framework. Rather than an intervention into the activist world from the standpoint of the academic world, they seek to '*transverse both worlds through the development of roles such as 'activist-researcher''* (Mathers and Novelli, 2007:p230). The researcher's politically committed role within the activist world reveals embedded dynamics, strategies and practices which would not otherwise be apparent. Furthermore, through this act of political engagement, knowledge production and learning becomes a mutual and dialogical process.

For an extended fieldwork period, the lead researcher, Patrick Kane was embedded within the Nomadesc team in the city of Cali. During this time he was based at the organisation's office and participated fully in the organisation's activities – his role within the team was focussed upon, but not limited to, the design and implementation of the systematisation process, also involvement in a range

of aspects of the organisation's human rights work. This allowed further opportunity for identifying and understanding the dynamics and processes within the organisation.

Feedback and validation workshop

One of the mechanisms designed to ensure accountability within the research process was a feedback and validation workshop, in which a summary of the research findings were presented to participants who had been involved in the systematisation process. The aim was to feed the summaries and analysis back to the protagonists of the pedagogical process in order to gather feedback and validate the main components and elements of the research findings, and ensure that they accurately reflect and interpret the variety of learning and knowledge processes which had emerged throughout the research process. This workshop was also aimed at identifying how the research process, and the knowledge produced, could be used to improve the praxis of the pedagogical process and be incorporated into strategic action plans. Unfortunately participation was lower than had been expected for this activity, due to it falling within a particularly hectic time in the calendar of Nomadesc and the social movements involved.

Participation

The broad chronological, territorial and sectoral scope of the Colombian case study made for a particularly challenging conundrum of how to identify participants for the process. How to ensure adequate representation of participants in terms of the variables of intersectional ethnic/cultural identity; gender, and the social movement sector which they represent, as well as the variable of their relationship to the pedagogical process?

Another challenge was the extremely demanding, unpredictable dynamics of social movements and their organising in the conflict-affected and repressive context of the southwest of Colombia, not least for a human rights organisation like Nomadesc which by its nature must respond to unpredictable events (human rights violations). On many occasions workshops or interviews were postponed or cancelled, and many invitees were unavailable or had to cancel at the last minute. The latter ended up overtaking the former, in so much as a heavy dose of opportunism and pragmatism was required, meaning that full representativity could not be guaranteed at all times. The aim was not to be dogmatic or scientific in terms of the demographics of participants, but rather to achieve an adequate level of representativity for this qualitative research process. Given the circumstances the research team is satisfied that a reasonable level of representativity was achieved. The tables below demonstrate the demographic breakdown of the territorial discussion group participants and interviewees. Of a total of 78 people who participated in the five territorial workshops, 37 were women, whilst of a total of 38 interviewees, 14 were women.

A further trial with regards to participation related to chronological phasing of the process and the relative prevalence of different demographics at different phases of the programme: for example, it was difficult to secure the participation of a broad section of the participants from the earliest phase of the diploma programme, which was when trade union participation was highest.

Territorial workshop participants:

Sector	No. participants
Trade union	7
Indigenous	25
Afro-Colombian	9
Peasant	5
Student	3
Women's organisations	1
Human rights/NGOs	10
Urban community and civic organisations	6
Religious	2
Victims' organisations	4
No organisation	2
Other	4
Total:	**78**

Figure 1.2: Territorial discussion groups participants by sector

Sector	No. participants
Trade union	6
Indigenous	8
Afro-Colombian	5
Peasant	2
Youth collectives	4
Women's organisations	1
Human rights/NGOs	4
Urban community and civic organisations	1
Victims' organisations	1
No organisation	2
Academia	4
Total:	**38**

Figure 1.3: Interviewees by sector

Conclusions

In conclusion, this chapter has laid out a combined methodological approach which was tailored for the study of social movements. This research process has demonstrated the potential of the systematisation of experiences as a methodological approach which has much to offer critical social scientists, particularly for the study of social movements. For this research process, the combination of systematisation of experiences with ethnographic methods proved effective, and both approaches contributed rich data which nourished the analytical process. The following chapter provides the reader with an overview of the historical, political, economic and cultural contexts in which Nomadesc emerged and exists.

2. Context chapter

The Colombian context for social movements and their organising is uniquely intense. A country with diverse, vibrant social movements and significant levels of social protest, it is also frequently the most dangerous country in the world for activists, who are regularly targeted for assassination. This chapter presents an overview of the contextual background to this case study. It aims to provide the reader with an understanding of the historical, political, economic and cultural contexts in which Nomadesc emerged and exists. The chapter traces a series of historical continuities which have defined the country's history, and which help to understand the challenging context social movement organising. The insights in this chapter will serve to locate the pedagogical initiative within the histories, processes and conjunctures of the country and the southwest region, and hence to deepen an understanding of the process as a whole.

2.1 Violence, plunder and wealth concentration: Locating Colombia's political economy

Historical continuities

Colombia is a country with an abundance of valuable natural resources such as gold, carbon, nickel, oil and water. It is also one of the world's leading producers of coffee, bananas and flowers. The country occupies an important geostrategic position at the Northern tip of South America, and its vast and diverse territories include 3 Andean mountain *cordilleras*, Pacific and Caribbean coastal regions, Amazon rainforest, the *llanos* or plains region, as well as a series of islands in the Caribbean and Pacific oceans. The country's political geography consists of prioritised zones and regions, and peripheral zones which have historically seen little state presence or investment. These peripheral zones have historically been sites of subaltern resistance and have been defended vigorously against would-be usurpers by the diverse rural communities which inhabit them. Such peripheral territories are the theatre of the Colombian armed conflict, as well as the illegal economy of the illicit drugs trade, particularly cocaine, of which Colombia is the world's leading producer (Molano, 2015; Vega Cantor, 2002a).

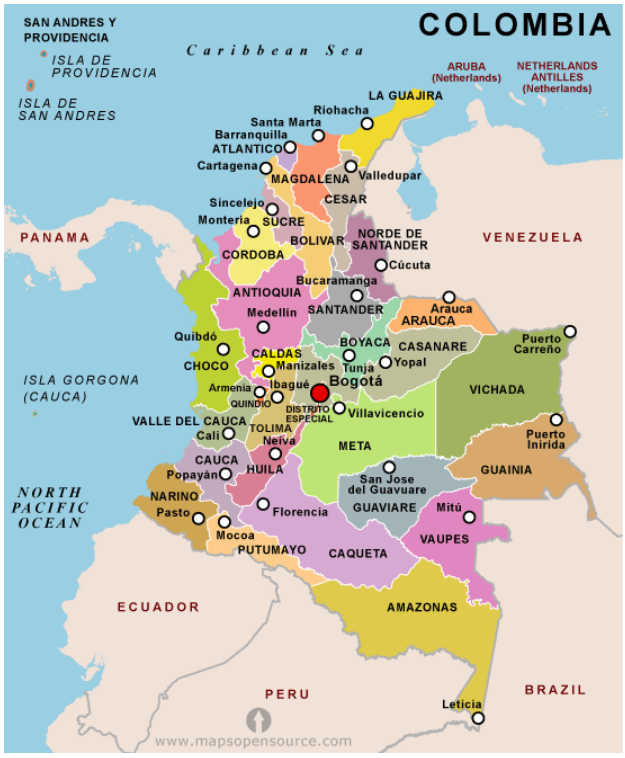

Figure 2.1: Map of Colombia. Source: www.mapsopensource.com

The Colombia of today is characterised by a series of continuities which can be traced back to the European conquest of America in 1492, bringing practices of genocide, slavery, exploitation (of people, environment and natural resources and domination (De las Casas, 1992; Galeano, 1973). The arrival of the Spanish marked the beginning of the continuity which above all others has influenced Colombia's political, economic and cultural destiny both during colonial times and during the current period of independence: that of intervention by foreign colonial and imperialist powers.

Colombian society's modern demographics can only be understood in reference to the genocidal colonial rule of the Spanish, both in terms of the ethnic cultural mix within the population, and also in terms of the racialised socio-economic hierarchy which continues to exist today. Colombia today has a population of around 50 million people (DANE, 2019), including 84 indigenous ethnic groups (DANE, 2005). According to the 2018 census, the population is made up of an estimated 85% white or *mestizo/*mixed race people; 9.34 afro-descendent people; 4.4% indigenous people; and 0.01 Roma people (DANE 2019). These figures unfortunately do not differentiate the white and *mestizo* populations and hence fail to capture an important aspect of the demographic. *Mestizo* is a term which encapsulates the majority of the population, most of whom represent some mixture of the different ethnic groups. In rural areas, many poor rural campesinos or peasants are classified as mestizos yet have over generations developed a cultural identity of their own, arguably deserving of

their own ethnic and socio-political category. The predominance of the mestizo category is also the result of policies of acculturation implemented by the Spanish colonisers, but also during the independence period until the beginning of the 20th Century (Vega Cantor, 2002a).

Colombia gained independence from Spain in 1819, and slavery was abolished by independent Colombia in 1851, yet the legacy of colonialism lives on: the continued racial stratification of society is clearly evident today. Colombia's political and economic elites are overwhelmingly white. Well into the 20th Century, these elites actively sought to:

> destroy black and indigenous communities, offering them as an alternative their integration and mixing with other ethnic groups, which implied losing their community links and the disappearance of their communitarian ancestral lands, and their substitution with private property' (Vega Cantor, 2002a, p115).

The country's afro-descendent population, directly descended from enslaved Africans forcibly brought by the Spanish, and the indigenous populations, tend to live in peripheral territories of the type mentioned above, with little engagement from the state other than being disproportionately affected by the armed conflict.

A second continuity which can be traced throughout Colombia's history are the numerous modes of accumulation, appropriation and co-optation of resources and democratic institutions which have by the country's elites:

> Separating communities from their lands and traditional territories and limiting access to them through the systematic exercise of violence alongside policies of appropriation…of lands (Fajardo, 2015: p6).

These processes have been closely related to the various phases of the implementation and deepening of capitalism within Colombia. Hence, connected to these processes is a third historical continuity: the systematic, widespread use of brutal elite violence and repression, which underpinned the Spanish invasion and occupation is a continuous feature of political and social life in Colombia, and a key characteristic of class relations in the country. Forming the other side of a dialectic with this violence and repression has been a fourth historical continuity which has characterised the country since the Spanish invasion until present times: the resistance and agitating of those subaltern classes who have for centuries struggled against domination and exploitation.

The roots of civil war

Colombia's little more than 200 years since independence have seen numerous internal armed conflicts. From the 1960s, a series of left-wing armed guerrilla movements have fought a low intensity, but brutal internal civil conflict against an authoritarian state apparatus and ultra-right wing

paramilitaries which operate on behalf of economic and political elites and in collaboration with elements of the state (Giraldo 2004, Molano, 2015; Richani 2005 & 2007, Sarmiento 2013). The largest insurgent organisation, FARC, signed a peace agreement in 2018, however the conflict continues with the second largest guerrilla group (Naitonal Liberation Army (ELN), as well as another small guerrilla organisation and various dissident factions of former FARC fighters.

Whilst the beginning of the conflict is identified with the emergence of the revolutionary struggles of the FARC and ELN in the 1960s, the processes which are credited with its genesis can be traced back to the 1920s (Fajardo, 2015; Giraldo, 2015; Molano, 2015; Vega Cantor, 2002, 2002a, 2002b). This period was one of capitalist transition and increased social conflict in the country, as the economy underwent a process of economic reform and industrialisation. This period increasingly saw:

> the imposition of conditions of super-exploitation in labour relations, and the exclusion from the access to land and political participstion, and the distinct forms of resistance of communities and workers to these living conditions (Fajardo, 2015:p47).

The process of industrialisation in urban areas, and a renewed offensive by landowning elites and national capital to appropriate land in rural areas, would assist the emergence of important collective subjects and bring about a period of renewed social resistance and political militancy. This period saw the emergence of a militant trade union movement which led important strikes around the country during the 1920s and into the 1930s including in the operations of multinational companies such as the United Fruit Company and Tropical Oil, as well as a peasant struggles revolving around demands for land and for the abolition of 'terraje' rent payments to hacienda landlords which reflected feudal serf-type arrangements (Vega Cantor; 2002 Giraldo, 2015; Molano, 2015). The indigenous communities of Cauca and Tolima also found a renewed militancy between the 1914 and the 1940s under the leadership of Quintin Lame, who led struggles for the recuperation and respect of indigenous territories and against the payment of *terraje* (Molano, 2014; Giraldo, 2014, Bonilla, 2015). All of these struggles were invariably met with heavy violence and repression by authorities. This period up until the 1940s also saw the formation of armed peasant self-defence groups in response to the violence of landlords (Molano, 2014).

La Violencia

La Violencia was a particularly intense period of internal armed conflict in Colombia that ran between 1948 and 1966, and which claimed around 200,000 victims and displaced at least two million people from the countryside (Guzman Campos et al, 1968). Colombian sociologist Alfredo Molano argues that *La Violencia* had its roots in the aforementioned period of deepening social conflict during the 1920s.

Ostensibly an intra-class conflict between the two political parties of the ruling class ruling, the Liberal Party and the Conservative party, it was a conflict which was fought predominantly in rural areas between poor peasant communities.

La Violencia played an important role in consolidating capitalist configurations of power and patterns of accumulation, following a period in which organised subaltern classes had become an important political force within the country:

> The economic function [of La Violencia] is indisputable, and is essential to an understanding of the historical form of the process of capitalist accumulation and the social conflict of this period. To reduce analysis to a question of fratricidal inter-party war would be to see it as independent of said process and to overlook the great economic, political and socio-political transition which took place in the country [during this period]. La Violencia played an ordering role in the unfolding and expansion of the social capitalist relation; activated mechanisms of social control and discipline; and destroyed struggles and forms of resistance -although it unleashed others, including armed resistance and the armed struggle. (Estrada, 2015:p9)

Hence, La Violencia also played in important catalytic role in terms of both dissolving some social struggles and generating others. When it came to an end in 1958, rather than create a democratic opening, the two ruling parties instead formed a pact known as the National Front (*Frente Nacional*) to ensure that the door to democratic renewal would remain firmly shut. The parties agreed to rotate power, changing president every four years. Meanwhile, despite the outbreak of peace between the two ruling parties, the violence continued against rural peasants (Torres, 1967, p72).

The *Frente Nacional* lasted until 1974, and it was during this period that a flurry of guerrilla movements emerged in order to seek revolutionary social change via the armed struggle, beginning the period of armed conflict which continues into the present. Both the FARC and the ELN guerrilla movements were formed in 1964.

Patterns of accumulation

The patterns of accumulation in Colombia, in particular relating to concentration of land ownership and the class conflict which is endogenous to the capitalist system, have been essential in sustaining the armed conflict (Fajardo, 2015; Molano, 2015; Giraldo, 2015; Estrada Alvarez, 2015). Colombia has one of the highest rates of inequality in the world, with a Gini coefficient of 50.4 (World Bank Gini Index, 2018). An estimated 27.8% of the population lives below the poverty line (Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadisticas, 2016), and 47% work in informal employment (DANE, 2020) Each of these figures are likely underestimates, particularly given the dramatic impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on increasing poverty and inequality in the global South (World Bank, 2021).

As a result of the violence, Colombia has almost 8 million internal refugees, more than any other country in the world (UNHCR, 2018). In 2018, the INGO OXFAM reported that 81% of the Colombian national territory is owned by the top 1% of the largest farms (OXFAM, 2017). In 2013, a government commission investigation found that at least 8 million hectares, or 14% of Colombian territory, was acquired illegally (National Centre of Historical Memory, 2013). This already drastic concentration of land in favour of economic elites deepened even further during the late 20th century and into the 21st, driven principally through violent processes of dispossession (Giraldo, 2015; Fajardo, 2015).

The neoliberal opening of the economy in the early 1990s would lead to profound shifts in the nature of the struggle for land, dictated by the shifting requirements of land use by national and international capital:

> During this period there were profound spatial transformations which ended up giving new content to the conflicts for land…to the historic conflict over the propriety of land was now added the question of land use, derived from the tendency of capitalist accumulation, which now demanded the extension of the economic frontier and not only the agricultural frontier. Rural territories are submitted to dynamics imposed by extractives, timer, biofuel and livestock industries, which all require infrastructure projects. The logical consequence has been the expropriation and appropriation of territories which become linked to the economic frontier, to redefine their use (Estrada, 2015:p20)

These processes can be understood as violent 'enclosures' in rural areas, as capital seeks to violently expand markets and bring new territories into the capitalist system, reconfiguring social relations in the process (De Angelis, 2007).

State terror and disarticulation of dissent

Throughout Colombia's relatively short history of independence, political and economic elites have demonstrated a willingness to employ violence in pursuit of their class interests (Estrada Alvarez, 2014; Vega Cantor, 2002, 2002a,2002b; Giraldo, 2015; Hylton, 2006; Motta 2014). They have established sophisticated strategies and mechanisms for dealing with the subaltern classes, '*premised upon and articulated through the disarticulation of dissent and the systematic elimination of opposition'* (Motta, 2014:p19). Over recent decades, the systematic extermination of generations of social leaders has damaged and diminished processes seeking social transformations, affecting all sectors including the trade union, indigenous, peasant, student and black movements:

> In different circumstances and moments of the historical process, the tendency to repression, criminalisation or stigmatisation, and even physical destruction and the intention of extermination [of entire groups], has been evident; The imposition of various forms and devices of social regulation that have naturalised the exercise of violence,and which are intended to break all

> expressions of cooperation and solidarity and extend a type of "social fascism" which doesn't rule liquidation of the opponent, who is converted into an enemy. (Estrada Alvarez, 2015: p60)

The National Centre of Historic Memory reported that between 1958 and 2013, the conflict in Colombia had claimed at least 220,000 lives, 80% of whom were civilians (National Centre of Historic Memory, 2013). The real figures are likely much higher, given the difficulty in documenting cases and the reluctance of many families to report cases to the authorities. In 2018, the same institution reported that it had documented more than 83,000 cases enforced disappearance in Colombia over the course of the armed conflict (between 1953 and 2018), more than double the combined number of disappearances of the dictatorships in Brasil, Argentina and Chile (National Centre of Historic Memory, 2018).

A prominent strategy of violence used against the civilian population in recent times is the 'false positive' mode of committing extrajudicial executions. During the far-right wing presidency of Alvaro Uribe (2002-2010), during which human rights violations against the general population surged, the Colombian armed forces and in particular the army began to systematically murder civilians and present the victims as guerrillas fallen in combat. Research by human rights groups has shown that this practice was directed from the highest echelons of the Colombian army, and was the result of a controversial, secretive government policy which created a system of rewards for soldiers based on the number of guerrillas killed, in order to demonstrate the success of the government's war policy for public consumption, but more importantly before the Colombian military's largest benefactor, the United States (Vega Cantor, 2015).. Research by Rojas and Benavides has estimated that over 10,000 Colombian citizens were murdered in 'false positive' execution cases between 2002-2010 (Rojas and Benavides, 2018).

Narcos, paramilitaries and the bleeding of Latin America's oldest democracy

The most prolific perpetrators of violence have been paramilitary militias, set up under the guidance of the United States during the height of the Cold War (Vega Cantor, 2015). Paramilitaries have been responsible for some of the worst crimes against humanity of recent history anywhere in the world, committing acts of barbarity against the civilian population on a massive scale. Paramilitary organisations began to be formed from as early as the 1960s, but it was during the 1980s that they grew exponentially and began a national campaign which saw a tsunami of crimes against humanity, often operating in concert with agents of the state, helped by the injection of drug money alongside support from national and international capital, an ultra-right wing political-military project with drastic implications for democracy and alternative projects. (Giraldo, 2004, 2015). Social movements,

political activists, and any sector seen as potentially oppositional to the interests of national and international economic interests have been extensively targeted by paramilitaries for elimination, harassment and intimidation (Giraldo, 2015; Montoya, 2015; Motta, 2014;Estrada Alvarez, 2015). This strategy continues to the present, despite changes in the modus operandi of the paramilitary organisations which have decreased their public visibility and allowed the political and economic elites to distance itself from their actions (Human Rights Watch, 2010).

The decade of the 1980s saw the emergence of hugely powerful drugs cartels, and their gradual fusion with paramilitaries who were already committing atrocities against the civilian population, employing their scorched earth policy which supposedly aimed to dismantle civilian support for paramilitaries in rural areas by targeting civilian for assignation and massacres, but in reality would drive one of the largest land redistribution processes in Colombia's history, from peasant to landowning elites:

> Narco-paramilitarism began a huge process of land dispossession, through massacres and mass forced displacement of the population from the 1980s until the present, which has interally displaced 6 million and usurped around 8 million hectares. (Giraldo, 2015:p18)

From the 1980s onwards, this fusion of drugs barons and paramilitaries has had dramatic implications for the possibility of democratic opposition and community organising in Colombia. Conspiring with state security forces, tens of thousands of activists and politicians were assassinated (including three presidential candidates), with thousands more forced into exile (Moncayo, 2015; Giraldo, 2015). This included the genocide of the left-wing *Union Patriotica* political party in which at least 3666 party militants, from grassroots activists to presidential candidates, were assassinated or forcibly disappeared between 1984 and 2002 (Comision Nacional de Memoria Historica, 2018) .

This period also saw an increase in corruption, as drug money undermined and weakened the country's already tainted democratic institutions (Moncayo, 2015). The multi-billion dollar cocaine trade has for decades played a key role in Colombia's political economy, with involvement of politicians, armed forces, paramilitary groups and the FARC guerrilla movement (Montoya, 2015; Estrada Alvarez, 2015).

The US-backed so-called 'war on drugs', has also had implications for the civilian population and social movement organising in Colombia. From the year 2000 onwards, despite overwhelming evidence of widespread human rights violations by the Colombian armed forces, and systematic collaboration by the military with paramilitary death squads (ibid; Hylton, 2006), US military support to Colombia was massively increased through the highly controversial 'Plan Colombia', an initiative ostensibly aimed at supporting the Colombian government in the struggle against the illegal drugs trade and thus help to

bring the violent conflict in Colombia to an end. In reality, the additional Plan Colombia funding coincided with a large increase in human rights violations against the civilian population, and saw the arms provided by the US used in human rights violations such as massacres (ibid).

In rural territories where coca crops are cultivated, the raw material for the production of cocaine at the lowest rung of the production chain, the illegal drugs trade has had devastating effect upon community and movement organising, serving to weaken and destabilise the organisational structures of communities and movements as drugs barons impose their own armed authority. This often means intimidating or even murdering any individual or collective who opposes them. The drugs business also serves to distort local economies causing the loss of traditional livelihoods and food sovereignty; destroy ecosystems; and affect cultural practices (*current leading Nomadesc member, interview, 2018).*

Javier Giraldo has described the mechanisms and strategies through which the Colombian state is able to enact and reproduce state terrorism (a term in which Giraldo includes paramilitary violence). One vital part of the process is a legal system which guarantees impunity for those responsible for committing human rights violations. Giraldo has described what he refers to as a criminal state apparatus, of which the paramilitary organisations form part, which operates in conjunction with and parallel to the formal, constitutional state and which is responsible for enacting and reproducing violence and repression against anything and anyone deemed a threat to elite interests. (Giraldo, 2004,2015).

Giraldo helps to understand why Colombia is able to retain the title of 'Latin America's oldest democracy', whilst maintaining such consistently high levels of political violence, human rights violations and armed conflict. The country's democratic system was historically dominated by two traditional political parties, the Liberal party and the Conservative party, both of which have invariably represented the interests of the national and international bourgeoisie. During the 21st Century their dominance has been ended by the emergence of a series of new parties, the majority of which represent the same interests as the traditional parties. The democratic system has historically functioned on the basis of patronage and corruption, with hugely powerful local political clans and caciques (Hylton, 2006). During elections, vote-buying is endemic, and allegations of electoral fraud are frequent.

As the foregoing discussion has demonstrated, the democratic system in Colombia has not been a viable route for political and social transformations in favour of the country's majorities. This lack of

genuine democractic participation, representation and possibility for change has been an important factor in the perpetuation of armed conflict in the country (Fajardo, 2015; Montoya, 2015).

Militarised neoliberalism

From 1991 onwards, the neoliberal restructuring of the Colombian economy brought mass privatisation of public services, deregulation of the economy, drastic reductions in levels of public expenditure, and casualiation of the labour market (Estrada Alvarez, 2010,2015; Sarmiento, 2006, Moncayo, 2015). National industry buckled as the economy was opened up to cheap imports from richer countries through bilateral trade agreements, and the economy was re-oriented to focus on the exportation of primary resources including coal, oil, gold, nickel and emeralds, to the benefit of foreign corporations and transnational aspects of Colombian capital (Vega Cantor, 2014; Moncayo, 2015; Estrada Alvarez, 2015, Higginbottom, 2005). During a period when millions of Colombians were driven from the countryside into the cities, the implications of the economic reforms for the Colombian population have been devastating: snowballing inequality; collapsing and unaffordable public services, and mass informality and unemployment (Sarmiento, 2006; Estrada Alvarez, 2015).

The mass violence of the state and its paramilitary allies has played a vital facilitating role in the neoliberal transformation of Colombian society and the counter-agrarian reform which have taken place over recent decades, leading some observers to characterise Colombia's political economy as 'militarised neoliberalism' (Novelli, 2004; Motta, 2014).

It is important to note the systematic, strategic nature of the political violence. It has been employed in different ways, targeted at different groups and social sectors, depending upon the different stages and requirements of the political and economic transformations and the nature and level of resistance and opposition. In urban centres, trade unions defending workers rights and public services, community activists and students organisations have found themselves targeted for selective assassinations, enforced disappearances, trumped up legal charges, and death threats. Communities in rural areas where guerrilla organisations were known to operate during the late 1990s and early 2000s were repeatedly targeted for massacres, torture and rape by paramilitary forces, often working in collaboration with state forces. This violence, along with the impact of the militarisation of civilian life, and the trauma of the ongoing conflict, drove mass displacement from the countryside, and much of the abandoned land would end up in the hands of national and multinational capital (National Centre for Historical Memory, 2013).

Subordination and dependence: Colombia/USA relations

A central feature of Colombia's political economy is the dominant grip which the United States has had over the country throughout virtually its entire history of independence. Since the mid-19th Century, US strategic economic and military interests have played a defining role in the political, military and economic life of Colombia, and it would therefore be difficult to overstate the US's role in shaping the country's history in almost every aspect of civic life. Throughout that time, domestic economic and military policy in Colombia have rarely moved in a different direction from that favoured by Washington. The relationship has between the countries been described as one of '*subordination and dependence'* (Vega Cantor, 2015, p1); as well as 'subordination by invitation', given that it has been reproduced and maintained by a longstanding '*pact between national elites, for whom the subordination has meant economic and political gains*' (Tickner, 2007; p98).

The country is considered the US's closest ally in Latin America and has for over a century and a half been central to the US' imperialist military dominance in the region. For decades it has been one of the world's largest recipients of US military aid, and hosts seven large US military bases, taking advantage of the country's geostrategic location at the northern tip of South America spanning the Pacific and Caribbean oceans. This relationship goes far beyond financing of the Colombian military and has included training for large numbers of senior Colombian military officers (many of whom would later be implicated in human rights violations), the permanent provision of military advice and guidance, and the full adoption of US counter-insurgency and domestic security policy recommendations. From the beginning of the 1940s, into the Cold War period and to the present day, the US has arguably been the principle architect of the policies and culture of the Colombian state security forces, including the bloody modern history of internal repression and of mass human rights violations against the civilian population. Vega Cantor (2015) argues that such is the role of the US that it must be considered a direct actor in the Colombian internal armed conflict as opposed to an external influence. The US was also directly responsible for the creation of the ultra-right wing paramilitary death squads which would go on to commit some of the worst crimes against humanity of the 20th and 21st centuries, terrorise the civilian population, persecuting and killing anybody deemed to be a left wing or 'communist' sympathiser. The creation of the paramilitaries was one of the recommendations of the military mission to Colombia led by the US General Yarborough in 1962 (ibid).

Throughout its modern history, Colombian domestic policy has repeatedly been bent to the will of the imperialist requirements of the US. The capitalist modernisation of Colombia which took place in the 1920s- from infrastructure building to economic institutions and industrial and economic policy- was

designed by Edward Kemmerer, a private consultant with close links to the US government who came to Colombia for 2 months at the invite of the Colombian government in 1923 and made a series of recommendations aimed at preparing the country for a transnational capitalist transition. Kemmerer's recommendations were highly beneficial to the commercial interests of US multinationals. They were adopted by the Colombian parliament without a single alteration (Vega Cantor, 2002). In more recent times, as mentioned above in the early 1990s Colombia adopted the neoliberal Washington Consensus policy agenda, leading to the economic opening of the economy and mass privatisation's, to the benefit of North American and European capital. Colombia in 2010 signed a far-reaching Free Trade Agreement with the US, granting further privileges to US multinational companies through legislation and further opening up the national economy. The government has signed 17 Free Trade Agreements including with the European Union, Canada, Israel, and Japan.

Multinational companies in Colombia

In foreign policy the term 'strategic economic interests' is often code for the interests of a country's multinational companies. US multinational companies are a vital part of the country's imperialist machinery. US foreign policy in Colombia has since the beginning of the 20th century been aimed at maximising economic benefits of the US multinationals which operate in the country (Vega Cantor, 2015). During the first decades of the 20th Century the oil companies such as Tropical Oil Company and industrial agricultural companies such as the United Fruit Company set up enclaves which employed tens of thousands of workers, in areas in which the companies exercised political, economic and military control (ibid). Ever since they arrived in the country, Colombian political elites have consistently demonstrated their willingness to defend the interests of multinational companies over and above the interests and including the lives and wellbeing of the Colombian population. Perhaps the most stark example was the '*masacre de los bananeros*' in December 1928, made famous by Colombia's Nobel prize-winning writer Gabriel Garcia Marquez, in which Colombian troops fired upon striking workers of the United Fruit Company plantation. The striking workers' demands were mainly in line with Colombian legal standards of employment, along with some additional petitions relating to basic hygiene, health and renumeration (Umaña Hernandez, 2014). As narrated by Garcia Marquez in his novel, the exact number of those killed was never established, however according to a cable to Washington from the US ambassador of the time it was over one thousand (Vega Cantor, 2015; Garcia Marquez, 1967). Another example of the influence of multinational companies over US foreign policy in Colombia was the intensive lobbying of oil companies, in particular Occidental Petroleum Corporation, for the creation of Plan Colombia and also over its eventual content and focus (Richani, 2005).

Whilst US multinationals may have had a head start on rivals from other countries, they have by no means been alone in playing an active role in fomenting violence and perpetuating conflict in Colombia. Some of the world's largest and best known multinational companies have been accused of collaborating with paramilitary death squads in Colombia in order to break trade unions and extinguish local community resistance. Indeed, during the worst years of paramilitary violence at the end of the 1990s and into the early 2000s, foreign investment in the country ballooned as foreign capital took advantage of the economics opportunities offered by the generous royalties offered by the Colombian government and the favourable conditions created by the activities of paramilitary death squads exercising violence and repression on their behalf. Richani (2005) contends that multinational companies, in particular in the extractives sector, have been responsible for perpetuating the conflict in Colombia through their role as one of the main financiers of illegal armed groups, but also by creating and exacerbating conflicts over land and natural resources with their presence, usually at the expense of local populations and local economies.

Non-peaceful peace

On 24 November 2016, after more than five years of negotiations, a peace agreement was signed between the Colombian government led by Juan Manuel Santos, and the country's largest guerrilla group, the FARC. The Santos government also engaged in several years of negotiations with the country's second largest guerrilla organisation, the Ejercito de Liberacion Nacional (ELN). However both processes were thrown into uncertainty by the election in June 2018 of the hardline right wing politician Ivan Duque was elected, dealing a blow to the already fragile Colombian peace process.

Despite the inevitable optimism which accompanies the end of such a protracted conflict, the conduct of the negotiation process with the FARC was broadly criticised by social movements and other civil society organisations for lacking genuine and meaningful civil society participation and for the content of the agreement itself. From the very beginning of negotiations, the Santos government refused to entertain the possibility of reform on issues which many identify as being structural causes of the conflict including the economic development model; the country's security and intelligence apparatus; and the country's electoral system (Giraldo, 2016; Ospina, 2016). In 2016, Javier Giraldo warned that developments suggested a peace which:

> benefits businessmen and transnational investors, who will be able to intensify their extraction of natural resources, but in which the government represses with cruel violence the social protests of communities affected by the social and ecological destruction which the multinational companies have caused (Giraldo, 2016: n.p.).

Events since 2016 have borne out this warning. The peace agreement brought an economic dividend to industries such as tourism and extractives sectors , however the incidence of murders of activists in Colombia rose alarmingly following the signing of the peace agreement, with the primary culprits being paramilitary organisations which continue to operate with almost universal impunity. According to the NGO Instituto para Estudios de Desarrollo y la Paz, 310 activists were assassinated in 2020 (Indepaz, 2021). Meanwhile in June 2020 the FARC political party (*Fuerza Alternativa Revlucionaria del Comun*) reported that 200 former FARC guerrillas had been murdered since the signing of the peace agreement (El Espectador, 2018).

In areas once controlled by the FARC guerrilla, particularly those considered to be strategically useful for transporting drugs and arms, new armed organisations including paramilitaries and dissident guerrilla groups, moved in to violently contest territories, committing regular atrocities against the civilian population and bringing a return of perpetration of massacres against rural communities. (Verdad Abierta website, 2018).

Unfulfilled promises and systemic opposition

Whilst the level of governmental opposition and non-compliance undoubtedly increased under the Duque government from 2018 onwards, internal resistance to the Colombian peace process has been consistent from powerful elements of the political and economic establishment. These have exercised their opposition in varying forms in order to obstruct the implementation of policies related agreement (Estrada Alvarez, 2019; Giraldo, 2015 Mendez Blanco, 2019). Estrada Alvarez argues:

> we are dealing with forms of seeking to continue the conflict, expressed now within the implementation [of the peace agreement], in which emerge particularly powerful systemic resistances which have historically opposed reform in Colombia, expressed in a variety of ways, including extreme political violence committed by their armed wings- paramilitaries…(Estrada Alvarez, 2019:p15)

Ivan Duque was the presidential candidate of Centro Democratico, the party led by far-right wing former president Alvaro Uribe. Still one of the country's most influential politicians, Uribe has been the peace process's most strident opponent and Colombia's most controversial figure in recent history. His time in office was notable for high levels of human rights violations and corruption (2002-2010),; a massive increase in militarisation of society; and persistent allegations of links to paramilitaries and drugs traffickers.

According to Estrada Alvarez, President Duque has sought on the one hand to devalue and de-legitimise the peace agreement in order to portray it as '*an event without significant historical meaning or impact'*; and on the other hand, allowing the persistence of political violence in order to

demonstrate the futility of the peace agreement, in order to justify a return to the hardline authoritarian policies of the Uribe era rather than peace-building policies (Estrada Alvarez, 2019:p17).

Throughout the 2018 election campaign, Duque and Uribe made clear their intention to alter aspects of the peace accords. Soon after taking office, Duque announced that his government's finances could not cover the commitments acquired with the FARC- EP for the post conflict period (El Espectador, 2018), whilst at the same time announcing a large increase in the military budget and cutting most other government departmental spending. President Duque also froze the peace talks with the ELN guerrilla.

Given the centrality of the issue of land tenancy to the prolongation of the Colombian conflict, an important example of the lack of political will to implement the peace process on the part of Colombian governmental institutions is the issue of land restitution, which fell under the first point of the peace negotiations: 'Comprehensive Rural Reform'. Yenly Mendez Blanco argues that the structural forces which have historically opposed rural reform and deepen the concentration of land ownership have not been halted at any point throughout the peace process, creating the challenge of carrying out '*land reform in the context of counter-reform'* (Mendez Blacno, 2019). In this way, the process of land restitution has been impeded by the same logic of land concentration which has been identified as a structural cause and driver of the Colombian conflict. According to a 2020 report by a group of NGOs, only 350,000 hectares of land had been successfully marked for restitution, against the figure of 6 million which had been initially set for redressing the issue . More than 63% of victims' applications were turned down by the land restitution unit (Comision Colombiana de Juristas, 2020:p6).

2.2 Social movements and popular dissent in Colombia

If the Colombian state has developed ever more sophisticated ways (both violent and non-violent) of dealing with popular classes in order to disarticulate dissent and see off challenges to elite dominance. Yet it has been the incessant agitating and thirst for change of those popular classes which has formed the other side of a dialectic and has at various times challenged and undermined the racial and class domination and privilege of creole elites. Hence, whilst repression of popular movements and political violence have been constant themes throughout Colombian history, so too have popular resistance and social mobilisation (Vega Cantor 2002, 2002a, 2002b; Molano, 2015; Hylton, 2006). At different points during the country's history, different subjects have come to the vanguard of urban and rural struggles for social change: including trade unions, students, peasant, black and indigenous movements.

As mentioned above, the rural struggles of indigenous, black and peasant communities have been particularly significant in Colombia. These rural subjects can be defined as socio-territorial movements, for whom the struggle for territory, and the fact of continuing to live their traditional subsistence agricultural lifestyles in their territories, is a central part of their social struggles and of their cultural and political identities (Halvorsen et al, 2019). Their territories are notable for a high level of autonomy, little presence and influence of the administrative organs of the state, and their own forms of organisation and coexistence, based upon reciprocity and solidarity.

In the case of indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, many of their territories are officially recognised as collective ethnic territories, where land ownership is held as a collective title, and an extent of autonomous territorial control is exercised over their territory through their own forms of political organisation. For indigenous people this includes the administering of alternative, customary justice. Hence, indigenous and black rural communities in their territories have achieved degrees of autonomy over the decisions which affect them in the control and administration of their territories. In rural territories, many communities still practice small-scale agriculture, which also provides a level of autonomy and sovereignty for social movements engaged in building counter-hegemonic alternative organisational projects by allowing them not to depend entirely upon the capitalist market.

Ever since the Spanish conquest, the country's subaltern classes have developed strategies to defend and expand their traditional cultures and forms of organising their communities and rural territories. Subaltern resistance has multiple and varied expressions, and besides the organised political struggles of the country's social movements, it can be observed deeply ingrained within the country's multiple ethnicities and cultures (Fals Borda, 2008). The ethnic indigenous and Afro-descended populations as elsewhere in the Americas were systematically subjugated and submitted to slavery and genocidal violence, meaning that today's black and indigenous movements articulate their struggles as part of a continuum which stretches back to the Spanish invasion. Nonetheless, it was in the second half of the 20th century that the militant, powerful indigenous and black social movements of today emerged onto the scene to lead emblematic struggles in Colombia.

From the mid-2000s onwards, Colombia has seen some significant attempts to bring together diverse sectors of the social movement in national 'movements of movements', breaching the urban/rural divide, and in which it has been rural indigenous and peasant movements which have arguably been the driving forces. Cruz Rodriguez identifies the Minga of Social and Communitarian Resistance as a key moment for social movements in the country. Initially, *'between sixty and eighty thousand indigenous and peasant protestors mobilised to block the Panamerican highway [in Cauca department, southwest Colombia] and were brutally repressed by police anti-distrubance forces'* (Cruz Rodriguez,

2016: p52). President Uribe refused to meet them to discuss their demands '*the fulfilment of previous commitments made by the government; and rejection of the government's free trade agreements and…[hardline]security policies' (ibid).* Upon the President's refusal to meet, the movement, led by the Cauca Regional Indigenous Council, decided to march from town to town all the way from Cauca to the capital city of Bogota, holding public meetings in town squares along the way in order to engage with local communities, explain their protest, hear the experiences of the local community, and make common cause. According to Cruz Rodrgiguez, the Minga generated a process of renewal of political discourses for social movements in Colombia, and would prove to be a spark for the birth of subsequent 'movements of movements' including the People's Congress and the Patriotic March (Cruz Rodriguez, 2016):

The *Congreso de los Pueblos* is a national social movement platform which was created in 2010 in response to:

> A call to the country's social and political movements and organisations which didn't participate in the Minga to join together with them in order to construct a common project and vision for the country through exercises of popular legislation. Popular legislation is a repertoire of action which consists in pronouncing the demands, diagnostics and propiosals of the movement in the form of legislation [as 'people's mandates'], the objective of which is to empower those who form part of the movement to participate in the construction and fulfilment of these mandates; it also seeks to denounce and oppose institutional legislation...the Congreso de los Pueblos' slogan is the construction of a country for dignified life (Ortiz Maya, 2016: p8)

Nomadesc has actively participated in both the Minga and subsequently in the People's Congress movement, and has committed substantial organisational energy and resources to them in the process.

The southwest region of Colombia in which Nomadesc operates, and in particular the departments of Cauca and Valle del Cauca, has played a disproportionately large role in Colombia's history of radical popular politics, partly because of the region's ethnic and cultural diversity, with the largest numbers of indigenous and afro-descendent peoples in the country. Having been one of the county's main industrial regions, Valle del Cauca has also been the site of important trade union struggles through the 20th and into early 21st century (Castro & Castro,2007; Vega Cantor, 2002). In recent years, the region has continued to produce some of the country's most prominent social movement uprisings and mobilisations.

Indigenous, peasant, black and trade union struggles

For over 100 years following the arrival of the European invaders, indigenous communities fought an all-out war against the Spanish forces. An unprecedented alliance of different indigenous ethnic groups came together to form huge indigenous armies, even uniting tribes which had previously been sworn enemies. At one point in 1583, over 20,000 indigenous people from multiple ethnicities formed part of an army which would achieve important military victories, until they were eventually defeated in 1632 (Bonilla, 2015). The indigenous struggle was 'neither blind nor spontaneous…but corresponded to a clear anti-colonial indigenous politics' (ibid; p18). Despite their military defeat, the indigenous peoples immediately reverted to pacific resistance to defend their right to govern themselves and the territories which they inhabited (ibid, p20). The Nasa indigenous ethnicity, one of Colombia's most numerous and militant indigenous groups who have led important struggles in recent decades, emerged from this period of the great indigenous war against the Spanish and its aftermath, a fusion of indigenous tribes from different region who had fought together against the Spanish, or who had been displaced from other regions (ibid, p20). From 1914 through to the 1940s, as mentioned above the indigenous struggle was once again ignited, and once again the epicentre of the struggle was the southwest. Indigenous leader Quintin Lame led significant uprisings in Cauca and Tolima in the struggle to defend and expand indigenous reserves, and against the exploitative rural labour relations (Vega Cantor, 2002a). Cauca department was an important centre of indigenous and black struggles for land and political participation from the early days of the modern Colombia's independence from Spain in the 19th century, and the region was at the forefront of democratic developments which created a vibrant democratic culture in the country for a brief period during the 19th century (Hylton, 2006). The Cauca department has one of the highest concentrations of indigenous peoples anywhere in the country, and is widely seen as the cradle of the indigenous struggle.

The founding of the Cauca Regional Indigenous Council in 1971 was part of a renewed militancy on the part of indigenous peoples in their struggle to defend and expand their territories, and would lead to the foundation of the national indigenous movement, the ONIC (Bonilla, 2015) . 'Territory, autonomy and culture' has been the CRIC's slogan since its foundation, and captures the central axes of the indigenous struggle in Colombia. Today, the indigenous movement remains one of the country's most militant, and continues to struggle to protect indigenous autonomy as territories continue to be affected by presence of the multiple armed actors involved in the armed conflict and the illicit drugs industry.

The Pacific region of the southwest, meanwhile, has the highest concentration of Afro-descendent people of any region in Colombia, and is the heartland of the black struggle in Colombia. Many Afro-descendent peoples, forcibly brought from Africa as enslaved peoples and forced to work on haciendas, plantations and mines, made the region their home as they won their freedom, some as maroons who escaped and set up 'palenques' or independent settlements and others who gradually won their freedom following the 1851 manumission law (Escobar, 2008, p28). This history of struggle and resistance continues into modern times. It was during the late 1980s and into the 1990s that a powerful, organised national black movement emerged in order to articulate these demands based on the uniqueness of the history, culture and experiences of oppression and resistance of Colombia's black community (Grueso et al, 1997). The struggle for the recognition in the 1991 constitution of Afro-Colombian communities' unique ethnic and cultural identity, and hence their collective rights to autonomy and self-government, was driven by rural riverine communities of the Pacific region, led in particular by the emergence of the national black movement the Proceso de Comunidades Negras (PCN) (ibid). PCN frames the black struggle in terms of the demand for freedom and autonomy.

In the face of the historical aggressions and abuses suffered by afro-Colombians over centuries, their survival as a people and a culture is a sign of the centrality of resistance within their cultures and knowledge practices. An activist who has been a historic leader in the struggle of black communities in Colombia, describes how black communities in the Colombian Pacific carry with them the historic memory of the injustice of slavery, and a sense within their culture and knowledge practices of having been brought from the continent of Africa:

> …there are people who say that the black struggle was invented in 1990 [with the struggle for recognition of black communities] but I believe our people already had their consciousness… I remember so much that my grandmother whenever we had an argument she'd say 'you are white!' and with that she closed the discussion… they were clear on things and what had happened, that is my story but we've picked it up all over the place ... maybe they didn't express it in the same way that we can express it today, it was expressed another way and what we did was understand that that was there… in that sense my generation ... those of us that had the opportunity to go to the university and study, all we are is translators, that was in the language of the people somehow we got some things out of here we translated them into the other language, and other things we translated and took them to the communities…but this consciousness was already there, for example I remember so much a word which they use in the Pacific, the word 'renaciente' for me that what I'm going to tell you is like the holy grail, a conversation we had in Yurumangui [remote Pacific region jungle river community]and we started talking about what the word 'renaciente' meant and the elders told me 'it is as if we were before on one side and now we are here, as if we had an accident and now we are reborn in another place' and I asked the old men, 'and where were we before?' And

> they said, 'in Africa', and 'what was the accident?'… Blacks have always known what happened... That day, talking to those elders, I came to understand that when they speak of renaciente it has two senses, that we are not from here and that we are here because there was slavery ... it was already there in the memory of the elders, it was there hidden behind the word, of course it is the same as we know now, but they already knew it and what we did is translate it in another way ... we weren't the first to say that we must defend our territories as black communities, our people have been saying that for a long time. (historic leader of black movement at regional and national level, historical ally of Nomadesc and pedagogical process, interview with Patrick Kane, 2018)

In May 2017, the predominantly black population of the city of Buenaventura, on the Pacific Coast, engaged in a historic 22-day civic strike over the dreadful living conditions and lack of basic public services in the city. The strike paralysed not only the entire city, but also the country's most important port, shutting down businesses, public transport, schools, public services and closing off transport routes around and into the city (Kane & Celeita, 2018). The strike represented a key moment for the black struggle in Colombia.

As mentioned above, Colombia has also seen significant workers' struggles at various stages of the 20th and early 21st century. Unsurprisingly, these have coincided with periods of capitalist transition and re-organisation, during the 1920s, and from the 1970s through to the early 2000s (Cantor, 2002; Estrada Alvarez 2015; Castro & Castro, 2007). From the 1970s into the 2000s, Valle del Cauca, one of the country's most important industrial regions, was the scene of historic labour struggles, with a particularly powerful trade union movement in the city of Cali (Vega Cantor, 2002; Castro y Castro, 2007; Novelli, 2004, 2007, 2010). As the country went through a process of capitalist transformation and neoliberal opening, the de-industrialisation process was fiercely contested by workers in the region. Novelli's research into the social movement unionism and anti-privatisation campaign of a public services trade union provides a demonstration of the creative, militant resistance of popular sectors in Colombia as a response to the violent imposition of militarised neoliberalism (2004, 2004a).

The 21st century has also seen significant peasant protests, particularly around the issue of land and also relating to the drastic negative impacts of free trade agreement upon the rural economy. The most significant of these was the national agrarian strike, during which tens of thousands of peasants blocked roads throughout the country for almost a month.

Conclusion

This chapter has laid out the broader social and political context in which the pedagogical process emerged, and which ultimately the pedagogical process exists in order to transform. We have emphasised the economic logic which has underpinned the violence of political elites in Colombia,

and the role of colonialism and imperialism throughout the country's history and up to the present. The chapter has also highlighted some of the principle structural factors which have historically served as generators and drivers of violence, and emphasised the vibrant history of resistance of the subaltern classes ever since the genocidal invasion by European conquistadors in 1492. This chapter provides the reader with a base understanding of the context in which the Nomadesc pedagogical process is embedded. There exists a dialectical relationship between this context, and the pedagogical process which emerges as a deliberate political response to the context and at the same time an attempt to transform it. The following chapter traces the history of the pedagogical process in relation to the shifting contextual dynamics of the southwest region.

3. Sketching a history of the pedagogical process

This chapter traces the evolution of the pedagogical-organisational strategy of Nomadesc, which began in 1999/2000 and today is manifested as the *Intercultural University of the Peoples* (Universidad Intercultural de los Pueblos, henceforth UIP), a social movement-based and led popular university, an alternative educational process that challenges Western notions of the university and brings together 37 diverse movements and grassroots social organisations in the Valle del Cauca, Cauca, Nariño, Huila, Chocó and the Coffee region. The chapter attempts to give an overview of the history of the pedagogical process in question. It follows the shifting structure, thematic focus and demographic of participating organisations, explaining how these must be understood within a broader region-wide political strategy, and as part of a dialectical relationship with the shifting dynamics and conjunctures in the southwest region. In line with the systematisation of experiences methodology and the ethos of this social movement learning research project, the chapter seeks to foreground as much as possible the voices of the activists who have been part of the pedagogical process, in order that they be allowed to tell their own story.[2]

Origins and Antecedents: pre-1998

Nomadesc was founded as an organisation towards the end of the 1990s, by group of highly committed human rights activists. The group had begun their activism together during their time at university, and had gone on to found Bogota-based human rights NGOs such as Asociacion MINGA and Corporacion SEMBRAR. The founding members of Nomadesc were an interdisciplinary team of professionals committed to social change in Colombia, who prior to arriving in Valle del Cauca had experience of accompanying social movement organising processes in the northeast of the country (South of Cesar, Southern Bolivar, Magdalena Medio and Catatumbo regions), advising movements including campesino communities, trade unions, and student organisations. In these regions they developed their approach of '*integral*' or comprehensive education and training of leaders, a process which was developed through several non-formal education processes focussed on leadership , defence of civil and political rights, as well as economic, social, cultural and environmental rights.

> Part of the learning and the knowledge dialogue which we had during our university years from the mid-80s and which continued on right through the 1990s, allowed us as a group of new leaders, from different disciplines, to come together to think deeply about the situation in the country, on the one hand, to look at the structural causes of the conflict and to look for alternatives, and that

[2] See Appendix 1 for profiles of a selection of the social movements and organisations involved in the process.

> amongst these alternatives there was always a comprehensive/holistic approach to the defence of human rights, that is to say that education can't be detached from research; education and research can't be detached from the legal support and advice to communities and from actions to support them in demanding their rights, and all the rest of the work with communities…so we set up the NGO Sembrar at the beginning of the 1990s, all people from different disciplines, and in that process we put a lot of emphasis on education and participatory action research: working not from outside of the communities, but rather being immersed in communities- that is, going to their territories and being immersed in the communities. (Nomadesc founding member, interview, 2018)

Hence Nomadesc was founded as the result of a process of critical reflection and debate about the national reality in Colombia and the challenges facing social movements in the regions of the country which had lived with the war, as well as the philosophical principles emanating from social movement struggles in the 1960s, 70s and 80s . All those involved were convinced that a key task in the defence of human rights is to work hand in hand with communities in order to identify the structural causes of social and armed conflict : *'to identify reality in order to transform it '.*

> …it was based on a concept of working in-depth with communities, on generating community research processes aimed at bringing about transformations, so that with the empowerment the communities could generate processes of mobilisation and social action which would be transformative, and that is what was developed at the end of the 1990s and early 2000s, in a context which was increasingly complex because it was a time of great violence. It was the way of putting into practice the human rights pedagogy which we had developed over many years. (ibid)

The history of Nomadesc in the southwest region of Colombian began in 1998, led by an interdisciplinary team including an educator, an anthropologist, a psychologist, a social communicator, a lawyer and a researcher, all with extensive experience of working with communities and social movements in areas affected by the social and armed conflict in Colombia. Their approach was radical in the literal sense of the word: to go to the root of the problems affecting communities and delve deeply in order to achieve an accurate diagnosis, and from there look for far-reaching possible alternatives.

This entailed an overtly political and emancipatory approach to the defence of human rights, since the structural causes of violations of human rights are inevitably political and economic, and hence solutions should seek to produce transformations which are equally structural and deep. The human rights framework upon which the work is based goes far beyond the liberal civil and political framework, and took as a reference point under collective rights of the 1976 Universal Declaration on the Rights of Peoples. Not only did they identify with the political struggles of the

communities and social movements with which they worked, but they saw it as part of their role to strengthen and support those struggles. The approach was also based on the conclusion that historically, collective social action was the only successful tool upon which communities and social movements could rely in their struggles for rights and dignity:

> Unfortunately, I think that a constant in the history of Colombia and in the history of social movements, is that no right has been won without mobilisation: all of the rights that communities have, and this is central to our pedagogy, have been a product of social struggle, of protests, of peaceful occupations of state institutions, of marches on the roads, this type of thing have been historic, and at least in what we have lived directly, they have played an important role. (ibid).

An encounter in the Colombian capital Bogota in the late 1990s between one of the Nomadesc founding members, and a group of trade unionists from the Valle del Cauca region would spark a conversation that would eventually lead to the inception of the pedagogical process which forms the focus of this case study:

> …I met some of the trade union leaders when they were on a trip to Bogota to denounce what was happening and we began to talk, I saw that it was really similar to what we had seen in Magdalena Medio and what happened to the USO [oilworkers union], and we started to develop a deeper reading of what was happening, and we connected on the theme of education. I told them, I learned from the organisations that I worked with in the south of Bolivar, in Catatumbo, and in the south of Cesar, that one of the key elements to avoid deterritorialisation is education and training, and so we started to do workshops for trade unionists, and from there we would later develop the diplomas…I came to a relaxed, tranquil region, where there was no problem in terms of human rights (laughs)…and I meet with all of these wonderful characters, and it coincided with the situation [of violence] against trade unionism, more than 200 leaders assassinated…(ibid)

Context of mobilisations and paramilitary violence: 1998-2003

Towards the end of the 1990s, Valle del Cauca was a region characterised on the one hand by a vibrant, militant social and trade union movement spearheaded by the trade unions and the peasant movement; and on the other hand by the high levels of systematic violence being targeted against the movements, particularly with the arrival of paramilitary squadrons to the region in 1998.

> Between 1999 and 2000 was a period of many mobilisations, both at national level but also here in the southwest region, between 1997 and 1998 the CUT [trade union central]called for two national strikes, which had both a political and a social agenda, that is to say they went beyond sector-specific or workplace specific demands; and many other things were happening in terms of mobilisation [and the movement at Cali level] was articulated around the largest trade unions: SENA (vocational college union]; Sintraemcali [utilities public services]; and Sintraunicol [university workers]. And of course at the same time

> we had the presence of the paramilitaries from 1999 onwards, on top of the police violence, as well as the violence of the legal system… (Trade unionist involved during early years of pedagogical process, interview, 2018).
>
> The (national) civic strike of 31 August 2000 left the popular movement with hundreds of people arrested and charged across the country. This toll is indicative of the government's attitude and response to popular protest, and clearly shows the war treatment with which the social movement is treated from across different state institutions. (Nomadesc project proposal document, 2002)

Militant, creative and unified in a class-based political approach (despite ideological diversity mainly between different strands of revolutionary theory), the trade union movement in Valle del Cauca, between the 1970s and 1990s, had led historic struggles and was in many ways the vanguard of the national trade union movement, having made important gains for workers in the regions' industries over previous decades (Bermudez Prado et al, 2020). The principle underlying driver of both the protest and the violence was the deep neoliberal economic restructuring from 1991 onwards, as a result of which this region (along with the country) experienced a wave of mass layoffs of workers, closures of companies and erosion of working conditions. The systematic violent onslaught against organised labour was aimed at facilitating these neoliberal transformations and severely weakening the union movement in the process.

> In the decade of the 1980s we began to see the transformation relating to the neoliberal economic model and the transformation and technification of industry. That's why trade unionism was attacked on three levels: on the economic level; the ideological and organisational. So trade unionism itself was transformed - in the factory where I worked, the work became more unstable, we hadn't understood the stability that we had, no other company had the same level of job security. (ibid)

In Cali, the emblematic struggle of the Sintraemcali union against the privatisation of EMCALI, the state-owned municipal utilities company, spurred a broad, diverse civic movement in the city involving trade unions, urban and rural communities, human rights organisation coming together. At a time when trade unions and social movements found themselves under attack both physically and also in terms of the implementation of reforms at the expense of workers and communities, the Sintraemcali struggle served as a totem around which a strong, solidarity-based civic movement coalesced in order to struggle against privatisation around the city but also to confront the violence that activists were facing.

> The confrontation against the privatisation of EMCALI played an important role there, we managed to install an office inside the trade union's building, and we could use their space to do workshops and other events because they had an auditorium...we had a social base as well via the Emcali workers...it wasn't a

> fixed process, it was an open process of building, open to the conjunctures and whatever mobilisation was going on, and that is where different trade unions and social movements started to come together, and we started to work and organise in the barrios, the work in the university of Valle, the health sectors….(ibid).

Collectively, the unions had recognised the existential threat posed by the arrival of paramilitaries to the region in 1998, and had begun to develop organising initiatives aimed at developing a collective response:

> A human rights network was being built between the organisations, that was before Nomadesc arrived to the region...at the time, the workers who were members of the trade unions were protesting about the murders of trade unions leaders, which was very strong (Nomadesc founding member, interview, 2018)

Nomadesc's arrival to the region coincided with the determination of a group of exceptional activists and professionals from different movements and institutions who recognised the danger posed by the arrival of the paramilitaries to the region, and who would come together to put their lives on the line in order to defend human rights and support activists and communities in Cali and across the region.

> Every time I talk about it sounds like a 'click', we came together from each different sectors and our different spaces, trying to do something to respond to the situation, to try and confront that moment of anguish and the feeling that we had no way out, and when we came together we could see other possibilities, and with the compañeros we concluded, with the actions of each of us in our different sectors- in the university, in the political prisoners work, in my opinion that was a key moment and really important, because we were in a situation of permanent persecution of social leaders and communities…. (Participant in territorial workshop Cali, 2018)

> I think the spark was ignited, and the pedagogical [initiative] was the way of being connected…(Participant in territorial workshop Cali, 2018)

> It was the need to do something and confront the situation, and say we aren't going to let this happen, they are killing us but we aren't going to allow it...(Participant in territorial workshop Cali, 2018)

Nomadesc arrived to the region initially in order to document the violations of civil and political rights that were taking place against the most powerful and combative union in the region, the public service union Sintraemcali, which had been one of the main victims of repression in the region. But they were met with a panorama of widespread, systematic human rights violations taking place across the region:

> We had more or less 30 cases of peasants who had been victims of massacres in the centre of Valle, and I remember in particular the case of one peasant who was killed and the family weren't allowed to take his body, so they had to put him on a horse, tie him to the horse, and the horse arrived [to the town] with

> the body. These were the stories we were getting at the time...so why did I stay here? So we start working with the trade unions, then the Naya massacre[3] happened and I had come quickly to Valle...and when I was in a meeting at Sintraemcali, I got a phone call saying 'stay there because they have just sent a bouquet of sunflowers [traditionally sent in cases of bereavement] to your house with your mother's name on them'...I was marked by all of the cases [of massacres and murders in the region]- Sintramecali, Trujillo, Buenaventura, also by the struggles... and I was struck that [Sintraemcali] wanted to investigate the crimes that were happening, but to do something different, to work on identifying the structural causes, and I found that exactly the same thing was happening here what I had found ...in Magdalena Medio region: there were multinational [economic] interests and part of the pedagogical exercise , which we debated a lot, was about what was behind all of the violence, why the massacres? Why the disappearances? And I think that has been the route which we have taken for the past twenty years (Nomadesc founding member and currently a leading member of the organisation, interview, 2018)

The region witnessed a dramatic upsurge in human rights violations, beginning with the massacre of peasant community members in La Moralia, a rural area outside of the city of Tulua, on 31 July 1999, announcing the arrival of the Bloque Calima paramilitary structure of the national paramilitary organisation the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC). Dozens more massacres followed against communities in the region, perpetrated by paramilitary forces belonging to the Calima, Farallones and Pacifico AUC squadrons with the consent and often the collaboration of military and political structures of the Colombian state. The strategy of paramilitary territorial control was multi-facted: it involved on the one hand the military control and intimidation of the civil population; the declaration of activists and leaders as military objectives and assassinations, enforced disappearances and threats against them (forcing many to be forcibly displaced and even to go into exile); mass arbitrary detentions in rural communities; institutional pressure and persecution of trade unionists within workplaces; and co-option of leaders and movements; criminalisation of protest; amongst many other forms of violent pressure, violating human rights on a massive scale. Organising and any kind of collective activity became very dangerous and difficult under the violent presence of paramilitaries:

> ...because of the paramilitarism, which arrived on that 31st July [1999] with the massacre of the president of our local council and all of the leaders who were there, that is when the murdering of leaders started and we couldn't do anything, we couldn't even leave….to move about we had to hide from the army and the paramilitaries…we had about a thousand displaced people in shelters in the local town...there was one family who saw their baby born in those

[3] The Naya massacre in which more than one hundred victims were dismembered by paramilitaries is a rural territory between Cauca and Valle del Cauca

> circumstances, having lived all their lives in the countryside and then giving birth to their son in a cardboard box in this situation [of displacement], it was really sad…(veteran peasant community leader, diploma graduate during early years, interview, 2018)

The response: a pedagogical strategy begins

Nomadesc's initial involvement in the region entailed working with Sintraemcali in 1999 to develop a strategy that sought to prevent human rights violations and strengthen the union's struggle against the privatisation of Cali's public services company, Emcali. This initiative would lead Nomadesc to set up and run the human rights department within Sintraemcali (between 2000 and 2006), developing the organisation's human rights strategy and linking it to the union's broader struggle against privatisation. In line with the principles outlines above, what was ostensibly a defensive strategy to protect the lives of the union's activists and members, became an 'offensive action which allowed the union to mobilise human rights mechanisms to weaken Colombian government policy' (Novelli, 2004, p181). The human rights department monitored human rights violations affecting the union, but also across the city and increasingly across the southwest region relating to other organisations and movements, an example of what can be understood as 'social movement trade unionism' (Fairbrother, 2008). An important element of the strategy that was developed involved designing a pedagogical proposal aimed initially at trade unions in the region that included a series of workshops for trade unionists from across the region, and some organisations involved in the civic movement which has coalesced around the struggle against the privatisation of EMCALI on human rights, labour rights and leadership:

> there was a period of no more than one year in which the education was specifically centred on trade unions, on the one hand because of the mass lay-offs - there were several large industrial disputes going on such as at the Goodyear factory, the Proaves factory, the trade unions in Yumbo, Bugalagrande, Sintramunicipio trade union...but on the other hand because at the time the repression had been more strongly focussed on them…(Nomadesc founding member and currently a leading member of the organisation, interview, 2018)

Hence Sintraemcali, and its struggle, became a pretext for unity; the struggle involved a wide range of counter-hegemonic organisations and movements, uniting in order to defend the public status of a state company as part of the city of Cali's patrimony, resisting it being passed into the private hands of transnational capital. Nomadesc's arrival would play an important role in this coming together between diverse sectors of the movement, as an articulating node which helped to forge unity through its human rights work (including the pedagogical dimension of this work), which was and is an area of

common interest for the social movements and trade unions in the region, students, peasants and other sectors. Sintraemcali was also able to provide the physical space for the pedagogical activities:

> In relation to the pedagogical work, because Sintraemcali was a strong trade union, it had its own school called the Sintraemcali school, where we were able to develop the educational strategy (Nomadesc founding member and currently a leading member of the organisation, interview, 2018)

> So all of us, despite the blows which had been suffered especially in the industrial sectors, we managed to channel the solidarity, the accompaniment, and the advice all together; for example in the negotiation table (in the Sintraemcali struggle), there were representatives of Sintraunicol, the CUT, ASONAL Judicial, of human rights defenders we were there, Nomadesc, and myself, we were all articulated together in the process despite not being EMCALI workers. There was so much external support, all that support that was seen later on in the occupation, with the accompaniment [of the different sectors], not being alone in the occupation but with accompaniment and support from national and international level denouncing what was happening, we managed to locate and project the struggle at a level that the politicians couldn't have imagined, they couldn't have imagined that this struggle was going to have national and international repercussions. (Trade unionist involved during early years of pedagogical process, interview, 2018)

In this sense, the pedagogical space of the human rights workshops became one of exchange, dialogue and interlocution between the trade unions and other members of this civic movement, in which they were able to discuss and reflect upon the realities and issues which they were facing in each of their struggles. They were able to do this within the framework of a human rights focus, which aimed to provide them with basic skills and knowledge that allow activists to confront the human rights crisis being experienced throughout the regions in their territories, in particular in relation to self-protection mechanisms and strategies, recording and reporting human rights violations.

This pedagogical human rights work was also aimed at consolidating and strengthening the capacity of the network of activists which were at the time coming together in the region in order to collectively respond to the spike in violence against social movements, and would have a lasting impact and legacy for the trade unions involved, in terms of generating their own organised, focussed approaches to human rights defence:

> We can say that Nomadesc was the pioneer of the human rights departments in Sintraemcali, in Sintraunicol, in the CUT Valle (trade union central), because we arrived and began a human rights education process which hadn't existed... (Nomadesc founding member and currently a leading member of the organisation, interview, 2018)

Transition: From workshops to diplomas

Nomadesc and the organisations it was working with quickly realised that the human rights situation in southwest Colombia at the turn of the century demanded a broader, coordinated response across the region. The paramilitary violence was being experienced in urban and rural territories, with devastating effects for social movement organising. As part of the strategic response, the pedagogical process was about to undergo a qualitative leap which would allow it to become a vehicle for developing unity and collaboration between diverse social sectors, as well as increasing human rights defending capacity within the movements:.

> We met with reality in the different parts of the region, and these realities included the massacres which were happening in the Cabal Pombo road between Cali and Buenaventura, that was where Nomadesc comes into contact with that reality and we began to work hand in hand with some of the organisations that at the time were maybe some of the strongest in organisational terms, but that despite being strong were very vulnerable, some of the most vulnerable in the region, on the one hand there was the reality of the rural communities, in particular the afro-descendent communities, which were being affected by the armed conflict in their territories, and on the other hand the threat to the trade unions which were being gradually exterminated. (Nomadesc founding member and currently a leading member of the organisation, interview, 2018)

The worsening human rights situation in the region led Nomadesc and Sintraemcali to develop a broader organising initiative along with other leading trade unions and organisations, and a major component of this was the Prohibido Olvidar campaign (Forbidden to Forget). This initiative brought together around 30 different social movements and organisations in a wide-ranging campaign against privatisation, corruption and the criminalisation of social protest.

> there were a range of different political, pedagogical and legal tools which came together, and one really important aspect was that it allowed us to be really creative in order to defend lives, and the Prohibido Olvidar campaign was an action of revindication and of historical memory of the murdered and exiled leaders...with a very strong element of international solidarity, which allowed us a certain amount of protection for the most vulnerable and threatened activists...there were several other components [of the campaign], there was communication, advocacy work, diplomatic and political action, both with international human rights organisation and developing solidarity links with trade unions in England, Canada and Spain, and central to all of this was the development of a pedagogical strategy (Nomadesc founding member and currently a leading member of the organisation, interview, 2018)

The Prohibido Olvidar campaign, and Nomadesc's expanding work with social movements and communities across the region, generated discussions about the need to expand the pedagogical strategy in order to include a broader array of trade unions and social movements, including peasant

communities from rural areas. Working with prominent social movements and trade unions in the region, Nomadesc developed an expanded, more structured pedagogical strategy rooted in principles of solidarity, criticality, and knowledge dialogue between diverse collective subjects. It took the format of a diploma course in 'Human rights research and pedagogy', which would run between 2001 and 2010. The transition to diploma programme represented the first major qualitative leap for the pedagogical process.

The first cohort of the programme in 2001-2002 was a self-funded pedagogical initiative sustained by solidarity and collaboration with sister organisations and movements, embedded within the network of relationships which was emerging and being consolidated between individuals, collectives and movements in the region:

> the first diplomas were done with the support of trade unions, without any international financial support: each trade union gave a small amount of money to pay for the logistics and each trade union sponsored two or three people from a community, from rural peasant communities, from black communities, displaced communities, urban communities, so at the end of 2000 and start of 2001 we had our first intercultural team for the diploma. (Nomadesc founding member and currently a leading member of the organisation, interview, 2018)

Those involved in these early phases of the diploma highlight several points about the purpose it served, and the aspects which made it an important, timely initiative. In the context of the time, activists placed a lot of value on the simple fact of the diploma providing a space in order to bring together diverse movements and organisations which were all living with the chaos and terror created by the actions of the state and paramilitaries.

> It was the way to be able to meet again, because the armed conflict was so intense that a meeting of 2 or more people was seen as subversive, and a meeting of more than that could be threatened or even attacked, many massacres were committed when people were holding meetings…(Nomadesc founding member and currently a leading member of the organisation, interview, 2018)

In particular, the intercultural nature of the diploma was novel for the social movements of the region. This entailed more than simply bringing these sectors together: it was a deliberate attempt to foster collaboration and solidarity between the sectors, and to generate networks of social action and human rights defence:

> Before [the diploma] it wasn't even on our agenda the idea of coming together as indigenous, Afro-Colombians, trade unionists, students, to do something on an ongoing basis...we met each other for specific things like May Day or for a strike or mobilisation or whatever...but that was a big advance for us as social movement educators, and we have preserved that principle since the beginning,

> which was to bring together different sectors which all had their own agendas…(participant in territorial workshop, Cali, 2018).

Aside from seeking to provide knowledge of basic tools and strategies for the defence of human rights, there was also a deeply political intentionality in the diploma. Whilst the collective struggle against the privatisation of EMCALI was central, the ambitions went beyond any particular individual struggle of the organisations and movements involved:

> I think that people needed a space to come together, because of the political moment, so [the diploma] was the space where we saw each other and it sounds strange but where we could be inspired, by that I mean to be able to think bigger, to think that we have a vision of transformation and a different country, because the situation of violence had broken something so that was important…(Activist involved in early years of the diploma programme working as part of the Nomadesc team, interview)

> ...there were needs, but there were also expectations, there were also dreams, there was also the search for the people to build and politically organise, so there was a confluence of different factors and you couldn't say it was just about strengthening the defence of EMCALI, that was part of it but it was also about getting people organised, and the construction of a pedagogical model which was different to what was being done by others at the time, linking together different social movements, all of these things meant that the diplomas kept on advancing in their organisational and resistance perspectives…(Trade unionist involved during early years of pedagogical process, interview, 2018).

The diploma not only came at an opportune moment for the social movements, but was also very relevant to the movements involved and the violent conjuncture. This relevance was facilitated by the fact that the diploma programme was connected to Nomadesc's broader human rights work with social movements in the region, and hence was closely linked to the struggles and realities of those movements. Nomadesc's work across the region, and its work in bringing together diverse social movements, allowed an ongoing, up to date and comprehensive political analysis of the conjunctures across the region:

> The difference with a political education process run by an organisation like Nomadesc is that there is an intentionality and an ongoing reading of reality, as well as a vision of the country, and it is so linked in to the social movement, all of these components is what gives different results. If you take the education and research and put them in a different context, you won't get the same results. (Activist involved in early years of the diploma programme working as part of the Nomadesc team, interview, 2018)

> The diploma was never a loose wheel: the dialogue with the social movements, and the framework across the whole southwest region permitted us to be up to date with what was happening [in the struggles of social movements] (current leading Nomadesc members, and diploma student during early years, interview, 2018)

Given the predominance of trade unions within the early phase of the process, the thematic content of the diploma (beyond the basic human rights skills and knowledge) during the first year or so was more heavily influenced by issues such as privatisation and the impact of the neoliberal reforms upon workers and organised labour:

> There were several [thematic] focusses, one principle focus was privatisation because of how much it was affecting the trade unions towards the end of the 90s and early 2000s: privatisation of education, privatisation of health, of public services, so it was a critical study and analysis of the economic system which was generating mass layoffs and also driving the human rights violations. Another theme was that of multinational companies, which we had been investigating since our time working at MINGA and Sembrar in[in other regions] Cesar and south of Bolivar, where the implementation of corporate projects such as mining...were part of the drivers of the conflict (Nomadesc founding member and currently a leading member of the organisation, interview, 2018)

Expanding the scope of the diploma programme: 2003 - 2006

Nomadesc's ongoing and deepening human rights work with trade unions, social movements and communities across the southwest region, along with the increasing network collaboration around the Prohibido Olvidar campaign and its pedagogical component, provided the organisation and the movements involved with the possibility to deepen their analysis and understanding of the dynamics and the structural causes of the situations being faced across the diverse territories of the region. This can be understood as an ever-deepening learning feedback loop, or what could be described as a dialectic learning process in which experiential learning was immediately used to improve praxis (see following chapter for further discussion). In terms of the pedagogical work, the knowledge dialogue which developed through the coming together of diverse collective subjects ensured that the thematic focus could be honed and kept relevant to the movements and the conjunctures. Nomadesc's human right work, accompanying and supporting communities and social movements in the region, brought home the stark reality of what was going on beyond the trade unions' urban settings, in rural peasant, indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities.

> From 2001 until 2004 what was happening in our territory, just like for everyone else, was the presence of the AUC [paramilitaries], of the Calima block. That period was really tough for us, even to buy some food shopping we had to be really careful and not buy too much rice because they would give us problems [the paramilitaries]. Another problem that coincided with this was the presence of AngloGold Ashanti (mining multinational company) in our territory, because we practice artisanal mining not opencast mining, which is what they wanted to do… (Rural Afro-Colombian community leader who was an diploma student in the early years).
>
> Paramilitarism arrived to Buenaventura's rural and urban communities, it went extending up through the river communities, in Yurumangui at that time we

> were a strongly organised community, if I look now at how it started affecting us little by little the arrival of the paramilitaries, starting with the massacre in 2001, that started to weaken us, of course people started to leave the community...(Participant in Territorial workshop, Buenaventura, 2018).
>
> We began in 1998, because of the paramilitaries we were hiding and speaking about, it was really tough, we couldn't even have meetings... (veteran peasant community leader, diploma graduate during early years, interview, 2018)

The learning outlined which was generated through Nomadesc's broader human rights work in the region, and the increased collaboration through the Prohibido Olvidar campaign and the pedagogical process, led Nomadesc and the movements involved to decide to expand and further diversify the diploma programme.

> In 2003 the diploma was diversified because there was a political discussion that it wasn't just about supporting the trade union movement which was being attacked, but that all of the sectors were being attacked, so it was about trying to strengthen the broader social movement, so the focus was no longer trade unions but all sectors of the social movements... (current leading Nomadesc members, and diploma student during early years, interview, 2018).

This expansion and diversification represented another qualitative leap in the pedagogical process. Despite some scepticism over the dangers of receiving international funding, a partnership was formed with the left wing British NGO War on Want which lasted until 2006. The funding facilitated a large expansion in the numerical and territorial scope of the pedagogical initiative, whilst the partnership with War on Want allowed Nomadesc to retain autonomy over the form and content of the work. This type of partnership with radical Global North NGOs which operate on principles of solidarity rather than charity has been a constant within the project since 2003 until the present day. International funding for the project also meant being able to cover the costs of transport, accommodation and food for all participants, which was more onerous with the increased participation of rural community activists *(Araujo, 2015).*

Photo 3.1 Diploma course participants in Cali 2010 Credit: Nomadesc

The expansion in practice meant that Nomadesc collaborated with allied organisations and movements in 4 different 'zones' of the region: the Black Communities Process (Proceso de Comunidades Negras- Palenque el Congal) in Buenaventura, coastal Pacific region of Valle del Cauca department; the trade union of the SENA technical college of Tulua, in the mountainous area of centre of Valle department; ASOINCA trade union with support from the National Trade Union Institute (INS) in Popayan, Cauca department, and the Lanzas and Letras activists collective and the Observatorio Sur human rights organisation OSEDH in Neiva, in Huila department. These alliances facilitated the joint coordination of the implementation of the diploma course between Nomadesc and the local partners (Nomadesc alone coordinated the implementation of the diploma courses which ran in Cali). Each zone would implement their own version of the diploma course, which was be adapted in accordance with the specific local context and needs. Between 2003 and 2011, 14 cohorts of the diploma programme ran across the five different zones (see table 1 below). This collaboration and shared implementation meant that the thematic focuses of the diplomas were developed very much as a collective construction.

Year	Zone	No. graduates	Women	Men
2003	Cali	40	18	22
2003	Buenaventura	38	16	22
2004	Centre of Valle	45	18	27
2004	Popayan	40	19	21

2005	Cali	38	20	18
2005	Buenaventura	36	14	22
2005	Popayan	45	25	20
2005	Centre of Valle	38	10	28
2005	Neiva, Huila	45	25	20
2006	Cali	35	18	17
2006	Buenaventura	36	22	14
2007	Cali	31	15	16
2009	Cali	38	20	16
2010	Neiva, Huila	42	28	18
Total		**547**	**268**	**281**

Figure 3.1: Numbers of diploma graduates for each cohort. ***Source: Araujo, 2015, p83***

Understanding the rationale behind the diploma programme

It is important to seek to understand the rationale behind the diploma course, particularly during this period in around 2003 when it was expanded and became more structured. It is also important here to understand the role which the diploma played in the view of the protagonists from those early years. In the original project proposal document for the 2003 diploma expansion, the overall objectives of the pedagogical initiative are described as such:

> To strengthen the organising processes [of social movements] developing a policy of qualification and education in human rights and developing leaders with the capacity to be human rights defenders, to investigate the structural causes of human rights violations, in order to be able to multiply the learning within their own organisations; and to be able to interact with other social movements as well as state institutions...(Nomadesc project proposal document, 2002: p14)

The excerpt demonstrates the human rights focus of the early years, and the express purpose of raising the human rights defending capacity of social movements who found themselves in a moment of crisis as a result of the violent onslaught of paramilitaries in the region, providing skills and knowledge for example around basic legal mechanisms. It also show how the course aimed to provide participants with increased investigative and analytical capacity to identify the structural causes of human rights violations. For rural communities, this increased human rights capacity was explicitly aimed at supporting their struggles against being displaced from their territories, in a context where mass forced displacement was occurring as a result of the violence. Yet the document also outlines the broader political objectives of the process, which relate to strengthening the social movements in their struggles, and by extension strengthening the broader movement:

> Social movements must build and join a national educating and organising strategy with human rights work teams in every organisation. This organising process is designed to raise the capacity of the trade union and social movement for the coming period, which we know is full of urgent challenges with regards to human rights. At the same time, the construction of a network of social movements, NGOs and other organisations implies a political initiative with an undeniable impact upon the agenda of those involved in the network as well as the broader popular movement. It is imperative to strengthen the human rights education work not only for prevention of human rights violations but also for the strengthening of social movements. (ibid, p3)

This deeply political statement demonstrates the emancipatory, transformative character and intentions of bringing together such diverse collective subjects engaged in social struggle in territories across the southwest region:

> It was a political education process within the context of a broader struggle for social transformation and articulated with social movements...what kind of society do we want? There was a clear intentionality here, and the process managed to provide tools for the struggle for social transformation- two elements which are key in the ideological dispute - education and research, and later they also included communication too...if you look at the ideological apparatus- communication, education, research and culture are tools and are elements of the ideological dispute, because just as the right have these tools, we also have them in our alternative organising processes, so to join up education and research in the context of a process that is seeking social change was key. (Activist involved in early years of the diploma programme working as part of the Nomadesc team, interview, 2018)

As mentioned above, there was also a sense from early on that this was a collective pedagogical construction between Nomadesc and the movements involved, as demonstrated by the collaborative approach to coordination and implementation. The participants were recognised in their capacity as political actors, as activists who belonged to collective subjects engaged in social struggle:

> the participants are also participants in the construction of the model, not passive subjects who are going to receive knowledge - those who arrived were active subjects...this allowed the analysis of the reality to become richer and richer, and this enriched the content and the themes of the diploma in its construction, based on the realities of the communities, their lived experiences etc (Trade involved during early years of pedagogical process, interview, 2018).

> in the group there were people who were real fighters, who had gone through difficult moments but were trying to find answers to the issues, and seeking support [in their struggles] (Nomadesc founding member and currently a leading member of the organisation, interview, 2018)

The diversification and geographical expansion of the pedagogical process around the region came in the midst of a highly dangerous and repressive period for social movements, in which activists in many

cases continued to risk their lives each time they attended a meeting. Something which interviewees emphasised was the importance of the role the diploma played in simply providing the opportunity for them to come together with activists from other organisations and sectors who were involved in their own struggles but were also being targeted by paramilitaries.

> Each region had its own specificity in terms of the participation, in Centre of Valle the majority were peasants and some trade unionists, it was literally a question of those that were left, those that hadn't been killed or displaced, so the simple fact that they were here meeting together, having been able to meet, was an important gain at that time. That was a really important aspect of the diploma at that time, just being able to bring people together, because the context was so difficult, that's why it was new and it was so necessary at that moment. We could say the same in Buenaventura for the Afro-Colombian processes, in Popayan for the indigenous and peasant processes, or in Cali with more trade union and urban processes. (Activist involved in early years of the diploma programme working as part of the Nomadesc team, interview, 2018)

A radical, holistic approach to defending human rights

As shown by the full name of the organisation, the Association for Research and Social Action Nomadesc, from the beginning there was a clear understanding of the centrality of education, participatory action research and social action in the defence of human rights. These elements were seen from the beginning as pillars of the organisation, that is to say, the basis on which the pedagogical processes would be based. These pillars were also seen as inseparable from other aspects of the holistic defence of human rights and the rights of peoples such as legal advice, communications, and national and international advocacy. If the central objective of the pedagogical-organisational strategy is to strengthen the region's social movements in their struggles, then the focus on human rights can be understood by grasping the way that the threat of violence from the repressive apparatus of the state and paramilitaries dominates the existence of many organisations engaged in processes seeking social transformation in Colombia.

This holistic approach to the defence of human rights came through strongly as an element highlighted by protagonists in interviews, particularly the way that, from the very beginning, the approach served to enrich the pedagogical process and to ensure its relevance to the struggles of social movements in southwest Colombia. We have already established above the role which Nomadesc played in the strengthening of collaborative organising within the trade union movement in Valle del Cauca, particularly in relation to the defence of human rights, and its role in facilitating the coalescing of a broad civic movement around the struggle against the privatisation of Emcali. As the paramilitary violence expanded across the urban and rural territories of the region, so too did Nomadesc's human rights work in accompanying social movements and communities. Frequently communities,

movements and struggles which Nomadesc accompanied would be invited to send representatives to participate in the diploma programme - whether trade unions, students collectives, rural indigenous, Afro-Colombian or peasant communities, or urban communities. That is, an important dimension of Nomadesc's work with social movements to defend their human rights and strengthen their struggles was the pedagogical process. People arrived to the pedagogical process by virtue of their participation in social struggle in the region, not as individuals but as representatives of collective subjects. Throughout the history of the pedagogical process, in its different phases and guises, this has been a vital element which has defined and distinguished the political character of the process.

> I arrived to Nomadesc in 2004 after a research process that... [Nomadesc] had been doing about the impacts of the Salvajina [hydroelectric dam in north-west Cauca department], and the investigation ended up in an organising process...at that time we had the strike of the Emcali workers...I remember that as a human rights organisation Nomadesc supported us, because at that moment the paramilitaries had arrived to our territory, and Nomadesc took us to Cali [to the diploma]. (Rural Afro-Colombian community leader, graduate of diploma programme during the early years, interview, 2018)

> I had to come to Cali [forcibly displaced] in 2003, since then we have had other leaders killed, we were looking for alternatives and ways to continue surviving and struggling for the people who remain in our territory, and we met with Nomadesc, who knew how to work on human rights but in favour of the communities in their territories, not just staying here in Cali [but going to the territories], they provided support and advice….we began to document the cases and the massacres and the victims, because the government was denying that anything was happening, for them our region didn't exist, so we worked to document and we did an SOS document, and took the case to court, and the government finally had to recognise what was happening…(Rural Afro-Colombian community leader, graduate of diploma programme during the early years, interview, 2018))

> I heard about the diploma and the Prohibido Olvidar campaign in the university because I was really involved in the student movement and some of the student groups had participated in the diploma. (current leading Nomadesc member, and diploma student during early years, interview, 2018)

The quotes above demonstrate the nature of Nomadesc's holistic approach, and how participants in the diploma programme came to it by virtue of their involvement in organised struggles. In two of the examples, Nomadesc was actively supporting community struggles in rural territories, and the interviewees came to the diploma programme through having connected with Nomadesc in the context of these struggles. The pedagogical process was a way of strengthening these territorial struggles, by providing tools and knowledge to the activists involved. The third excerpt demonstrates how the diploma course, and Nomadesc's work within the Prohibido Olvidar campaign, were also connected with broader networks of activism and solidarity within the student movement.

Shifting regional dynamics: 2006-2011

Nomadesc's work with social movements across the region allowed them to identify a shift around the midpoint of the decade, as the dynamics of the conflict and the modus operandi of the paramilitaries began to alter. Increasingly the territories being disputed and hence with greater vulnerability tended to be rural ethnic territories belonging to indigenous and Afro-Colombian. At the same time, it was these sectors who were leading some of the most emblematic social struggles during this period. At regional and national level, the trade unions had been weakened after being heavily targeted by state terrorism, with multiple strategies employed against them, including assassination of leaders, threats, arbitrary detention of leaders, mass lay-offs of workers, and also the promotion of parallel, boss-friendly trade unions. As the organisation found itself working closer with black and indigenous communities at the forefront of paramilitary violence, so too the presence and focus of the diploma programme would begin to broaden out from the trade union agenda. As it did so, the widening participation and changing demographics began to influence the thematic and pedagogical construction of the process. The political struggles, and the mix of cultural identities and epistemological paradigms of indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities became increasingly influential within the educational spaces. In rural territories the implementation of the neoliberal economic model was causing equally disastrous effects for the indigenous, peasant and black movement as it had for urban populations (interview with HC). Meanwhile, violence and human rights violations continued to increase in the urban area of Buenaventura on the Pacific coast, as paramilitaries fought with FARC guerrillas for control of the city:

> [the year] 2007 was historic for Buenaventura because it was the consolidation of paramilitarism in the urban area, that year there could be armed confrontation at any time of the day, there were tanks on the streets, but it wasn't to protect people, it was to generate terror, it was a crazy time (activist belonging to the Black Communities Process- Palenque el Congal and former diploma student, interview, 2018)

> At the end of 2008, we had a very sad day when we were waiting for the arrival of companero Robert Guacheta [vice governor of Honduras nasa indigenous reserve] and we were told that he had been murdered, it was terrible...we had to leave [the territory], it was a really complicated time, later on we got got our strength back and we went back, we got our strength back with the help of Nomadesc. (Participant, Territorial Workshop, La Toma, 2018)

Identifying the pedagogical principles of the diploma programme

During the period of the diploma programme (2001-2011), the pedagogical principles and experience with which Nomadesc had arrived to the region in the late 1990s would gradually be consolidated, weaved and transformed through the experience and interaction with the social movements and

conjunctures of the southwest region. The following discussion seeks to identify some of the central characteristics and principles of the diploma programme throughout its history.

The group of activists who founded Nomadesc shared the conviction that education and the empowerment of communities and social movements should be at the heart of human rights work, and that their role was to provide the tools to build the capacity of social movements in order to defend their rights and strengthen their struggle organisationally. In organisations where leaders face the constant threat of violence, this means seeking to build human rights prevention capacities within organisations in order to prevent acts of violence against them, as well as to build and disseminate leadership skills, so that the movements can resist the repression they face.

From the beginning, those leading the development of the pedagogical process were critical of traditional popular education models which they felt were not receptive to the particularities and diversity of social subjects which exists in a country like Colombia, and therefore tended to offer a unique (ideological) solution or model to the oppressed classes.

> Rather than generating moulds, and that those moulds come as if like a recipe with the first step, second step, third step, for us what we saw was that the reality [in the region] required the opposite, which meant building the process hand in hand with the communities and generating processes which weren't static but which were permanently changing and were permanently creative,, in which people felt they were the protagonists of the process, not others coming in and taking the protagonism. (Nomadesc founding member and currently a leading member of the organisation, interview, 2018)

> It was about thinking really critically, including of the concept of popular education from the 1960s and 1970s, and building something different based on the elements which we had been provided by social humanism and the principles of knowledge dialogue, in order to generate our own unique process that would break with the paradigms in order to generate transformative organising processes which weren't based on the idea that we all have to think the same or be the same, but rather based on respect for our differences (ibid)

This meant that by its nature, this pedagogical and organisational approach required a high level of flexibility, dynamism and adaptability, since it must respond to the situation, the requirements, the experiences and the struggles of the communities, which in turn are dynamic and changing.

> Education, and especially alternative education, cannot be static, it has to be in movement and based on reality, and reality isn't static, it is constantly changing, and in the same sense the economic model and its impacts are not the same today as they were in the 1990s, [the elites] are constantly updating and perfecting their strategies to be able to control and take over territories and resources (ibid)

> [the diploma] in its pedagogical practice, takes as it starting point the lives and realities of the communities and social movements, within the content and activities these are the basis of the methodological structure (Araujo, 2015, p14)

The pedagogical-organisational strategy has constantly evolved over the years, in relation to a range of factors, including:

- The changing political, social and economic situation of the communities in the southwestern region and at the national level in particular through the implementation of a militarised neoliberal economic development model;
- The ebbs and flows of the struggles of social movements and mobilisations at regional and national level against this model and to maintain and expand alternative forms and ways of organizing themselves
- The learning that has taken place through praxis throughout the years of the strategy.

Having been tutored by the famous activist-lawyer and teacher Eduardo Umaña Mendoza, all were heavily influenced by the principles of social humanism[4], as well as the participatory action research of Orlando Fals Borda (1987) and the Freirean notion of 'dialogo de saberes' or knowledge dialogue, and hence sought to develop solutions working with communities, based on the realities, experiences, history, culture, identity and practices of communities and movements. Solutions are developed through the knowledge dialogue that is established with the community, which means that the whole approach is deeply rooted in the struggles of social movements in Colombia. Who better understood the situation or the needs of a community than the community itself? Who better to design a solution than the community itself? Who better to defend the rights of a community, than the members of a community?

The coming together of Nomadesc with radical activists and trade unionists in Valle del Cauca involved in emblematic trade union struggles in the region created an eclectic, hugely effective political-ideological mix rooted in the actual praxis of struggle, with social humanism, Marxism and popular education providing important ideological/theoretical references points:

> All of us had ideological formation and diverse experiences in education, it wasn't homogenous, some had more ideological 'baggage', in say Marxist

[4] Social humanism can be understood as a praxis-oriented, people-centred ideological approach is influential within some sectors of Colombian social movements. It is discussed further in chapter 5. Social humanism emerged in Colombia from critical scholar-activists who were influenced by Marxism, but critical of orthodox Marxist-Leninist approaches to organising.

> studies or in popular education, it was really heterogenous and so there was no imposition, nobody saying it had to be done their way, the heterogeneity allowed that and meant that the process wasn't tied to x or y [ideological] posture. Nonetheless, there is undoubtedly an influence of Marxism; also of liberation theology; also of Fals Borda and many of the popular education thinkers . (Trade unionist involved during early years of pedagogical process, interview, 2018)

In each of the diploma programmes the students – all of whom are activists representing organisations and communities from across the region- critically analysed their own reality, their own struggles and situations of oppression, injustice, inequality and dispossession; with the aim of identifying the structural causes of the human rights violations they faced. However, beyond the diagnosis of the situation, the key was to develop collective strategies to transform that situation. This intercultural dialogue of knowledge between different sectors is a central principle of the organisational-pedagogical strategy. The objective was to increase unity and collaboration among varied sectors. On the one hand this meant increasing the protection of human rights through the strengthening of networks in the territories of the region in order to reconstruct the social fabric broken by violence. At the same time, this also meant to collectively strengthen social movements in their struggles by deepening the political consciousness of social movement militants and leaders through the creation of spaces in which organisations can build common cause. Instead of trying to amalgamate the struggles and create a uniform approach, the strategy recognises diversity as a richness. This is based on a recognition that whilst all sectors are being affected by the same neoliberal economic model and the same repressive apparatus, they are affected in different ways, they have different histories, different cultures, different approaches to their struggles, and different epistemologies, and hence emphasises the importance of efforts to build strategic and thematic unity.

The diploma programme also created a deeply political educational political space shared by activists from indigenous movements, Afro-Colombian, peasant, student, trade unions and women, along with experienced teachers, on issues that enriched the intercultural dialogue and understanding and shared their experiences of resistance, alternative forms of organising and seeing the world. Between 2001 and 2011, 547 social movement leaders across the southwest region participated in the diploma (*Araujo, 2015, p83)*

Thematic and regional flexibility: understanding the functioning of the diploma programme

The receptivity/sensitivity to the realities of communities and dynamism which have characterised the pedagogical process have required a dynamic approach to content and thematic focuses over the years. The process has always had an overall curricular structure - during the diploma years, the programme was arranged into four different axes or blocks (see annex 1) for the diploma curricular

and thematic structure from 2005). The courses would run at weekends, usually two full-day workshops every two weeks, with some variations depending upon the particularities of the different zones and also the unpredictability of the conjunctures of social movements and human rights in southwest Colombia.

The conceptual aspect was aimed at providing theoretical conceptual elements for example around understanding and analysing the democratic system; the debates around human rights (Araujo, 2015). The contextual axis examined:

> the events, systems and principle influential factors in the economic, social, political and environmental spheres at local, national and international level, in order to analyse the structural causes of human rights violations (Araujo, 2015, p12).

The procedural axis was rooted in action, and aimed at providing participants with human rights skills and knowledge which they could directly apply to their own activism and the struggles of their movements:

> [it] tried to bring into consideration the different mechanisms for the protection and defence of human rights (both legal mechanisms and alternative mechanisms including those of the communities themselves), as well as providing tools for human rights pedagogy, investigation, documenting and reporting (ibid)

Key to this axis, in a country where state institutions are notoriously ineffective and corrupt, was the fact that the programme didn't just provide legal mechanisms for human rights defence but also 'alternative mechanisms' which related to collective, direct actions which could be taken in defence of human rights.

The research axis was a cross-cutting element of the pedagogical process from the very beginning, with each student expected to produce a research proposal, having carried out preliminary research into an issue affecting their own community or movement:

> ...to provide methodological tools for qualitative research based upon the principles of participatory action research which allows the planning and development of research project proposals by the students, based upon their perceptions and comprehension of the realities and problems experienced in their territories...beginning with documenting and demonstrating human rights violations…(ibid)

Within this overall structure, much flexibility would be given to the thematic content, which would be constantly updated, rearranged or changed depending upon the specificities of the movements, the zones where the diploma was running, and the broader local, regional and national contexts.

> [when I started to work at Nomadesc in 2005] I came to better understand the methodology and I realised that the pedagogical strategy wasn't established like we are used to in the university where at the beginning they would tell you the course is going to include x, y and z and they stay more or less the same; here I realised that there were a few themes/subjects which were permanent, but others were changed according to the political situation in the country, the conjunctures... for example I remember when I was a student on the diploma there was a lot of discussion about the impact of Plan Colombia which was in its first phase of implementation, and it was the first term of President Uribe, and obviously there were a lot of massacres at the time…(current leading Nomadesc member, and diploma student during early years, interview, 2018).

According to one facilitator, during the earlier years of the pedagogical process, the pedagogical approach was less developed, and the focus was more on the political accompaniment aspect, with the pedagogical process a kind of appendage to the broader political work. As the diploma course developed and the experience and learning accumulated, so the pedagogical focus would be expanded and deepened:

> [in the early years] we did it more as a question of political accompaniment, I think that those pedagogical reflections have developed over time, I think at that time [in the early years] we didn't really sit down and have debates about the pedagogical focus, I think really there were political intentions that were being driven through education space….more in the logic of political activism and the defence of the public. (Activist involved in early years of the diploma programme working as part of the Nomadesc team, interview, 2018)

During the early years of the diploma, central themes within the diploma included the impacts of Plan Colombia; understanding the origin and nature of the state and paramilitarism in Colombia; and the role of multinational companies in Colombian history and the armed conflict, which would remain a constant theme throughout the history of the initiative; and the potential impacts of the Free Trade Agreement between Colombia and the US (Araujo, 2015). With the shifting demographics and changing regional and national contexts, new thematic focusses would emerge between 2007 and 2011, including the issue of the extractivist model of economic development and the impacts of large scale natural resource extraction projects (which had always been a focus but were now given much more emphasis); women's rights; the rights of displaced people, and customary laws of indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities (ibid).

The dynamic, flexible approach to the methodology was reflected in regional variations in thematic focuses of the diploma programme, depending upon the sectoral identities of the organisations and movements participating, and the identified needs and strategic priorities. In Cali, where in total five cohorts of the diploma course were run (2003, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009) during the early years of the diploma the participation of trade unions was highest, with other urban sectors including students,

community activists and human rights or church groups also participating. As the participation of indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities in North-West Cauca increased, they also participated in the Cali programmes (ibid, p36).

In Buenaventura, where diploma courses ran in 2003, 2005, and 2006, the local partner movement, the Black Communities Process (Procesos de Comunidades Negras) was at the forefront of the Black movement in the region, and at the time was particularly involved in organising work in the rural Afro-Colombian river communities of the Pacific jungle in the area, and hence these communities provided a strong proportion of the participating organisations, as well as Afro-Colombian urban activists from Buenaventura, and representatives of civic organisations including church groups. Because of the predominantly Afro-Colombian participation, and the ongoing struggle for territory (and in particular against displacement), the diploma was given an additional focus of the collective ethnic rights of Afro-Colombian communities, as well as an emphasis on Afro-Colombian history, culture and cosmovisons in order to '*strengthen the identity, the sense of belonging to the territory, as mechanisms for the defence and protection of the territory and the community*' (Araujo, 2015, p40).

> Nomadesc often did the facilitation, the teachers were really good quality, and we decided the themes, methodology and content together, and often PCN facilitated sessions for example around the Law 70 (of collective ethnic-territorial rights of Afro-Colombian communities) which is our strong point, collective rights, we were the ones who led those sessions always accompanied by Nomadesc, it was all very collegiate. (Activist of the Black Communities Process, former student of diploma programme during early years, current facilitator for UIP)

In Tulua, Centre of Valle, where two cohorts of the diploma course were run, in the 2004 cohort the highest participation was that of peasants and trade unionists, whilst in the second cohort there was an increase in participation of community activists (Araujo, 2011). The courses in Tulua were notable for the high numbers of participants, despite or perhaps because of the levels of violence being faced at the time:

> I arrived to the classroom in Tulua and I saw so many people...each region had their own specificity in terms of participation, for example in centre of Valle the majority were peasants, because its a peasant area, and then some trade unionists. (Activist involved in early years of the diploma programme working as part of the Nomadesc team, interview, 2018)

The situation in Tulua was so dangerous at the time that the subject of human rights had to be dealt with in a discreet manner, and the pedagogical space of the diploma course in the local technical college provided an opportunity for activists from different sectors to come together in a way which was very difficult and dangerous at the time:

> I remember that X said to me, 'we've had to leave aside the human rights discourse, but we still put it into practice, its just that we use a different discourse, like food sovereignty...we are still resisting just like we always have, defending our territory... but we have to use other strategies', and these are forms of resistance: the diploma was the possibility to meet with activists from loads of other processes, but in a really heated moment (Activist involved in early years of the diploma programme working as part of the Nomadesc team, interview, 2018)

In Popayan, Cauca, where two cohorts were held (2004 and 2005), the local partner was the teaching union ASOINCA, and the majority of the participants were teachers and peasants. Given the high number of teachers, the diplomas in Popayan were given an additional focus on popular education methodologies, to support them in their work as educators and in their activism, aimed at generating more critical consciousness through their work (Araujo, 2015).

In Neiva, Huila, where two cohorts of the diploma were run (2005, 2010), the local partner was the Lanzas y Letras activist collective, who gave the diploma an additional gender-oriented focus. The diplomas in Huila were notable for the high level of participation of women, and different women's collectives, as well as urban community activists, peasant and indigenous representatives. Today, this local women's movement in Huila is one of the strongest bases of the women's section of the People's Congress, a national social movement alliance.

Participatory Action Research

A constant characteristic of the pedagogical strategy, from the beginning of the diploma program to the current format of the UIP, has been the centrality of the principles of Participatory Action Research (PAR). As mentioned above, one of the main intellectual influences of the process is the pedagogical approach of PAR developed by the Colombian sociologist Orlando Fals Borda. Each student is required to produce a detailed mini research project into some aspect of the situation of the community or organisation he or she represents. The idea is that the research process itself is a pedagogical process that must be closely linked to social action:

> [The idea was] the construction of knowledge in order to be able to mobilise around the problem that was being studied. (Activist involved in early years of the diploma programme working as part of the Nomadesc team, interview , 2018)

The guiding principle of " knowing reality in order to transform it", has been put into practice and developed throughout the history of the process. The participatory action research process is a vital part of developing participants' political awareness, in which they develop a deeper understanding of their own realities and, in particular, a deeper understanding of the structural characteristics of

their conditions of oppression, hence increasing the capacity of movements to act upon that reality (Araujo, 2015).

The research component also seeks to provide participants with the skills and knowledge required in order to carry out a participatory action research investigation. In the early years of the process, the research element was based upon a fairly academic conception of participatory research methodologies, rooted in Eurocentric research frameworks; however the accumulated experience has transformed this conception. The PAR conception of the Intercultural University of the Peoples remains rigorous research approach, but is more attuned to the realities and needs of social movements, as well as allowing for more creativity on the part of the students.

This research element has been closely linked to Nomadesc's broader work, and in some cases it has led or contributed to broader investigations, social mobilisations, legal actions and publications:

> We worked on an investigation about privatisation of the public energy service in Valle del Cauca and Cauca, and we worked on the case study of the EPSA company, and that investigation was a product of the discussions and reflections of the diploma participants from the affected communities…(Activist involved in early years of the diploma programme working as part of the Nomadesc team, interview, 2018)

> I arrive to Nomadesc in 2004 after an investigation that they were doing into the impacts of the Salvajina (hydroelectric dam), and which ended up in an organising process…(Rural Afro-Colombian community leader, graduate of diploma programme during the early years, interview, 2018)

Nomadesc's way of linking their investigation work with their pedagogical work, and training communities in participatory action research methods and principles, was something which at the time was novel within the social movements of the region, and would have a lasting legacy upon the broader movements and activism in the region:

> I seriously think that Nomadesc were pioneers with the diploma programme in terms of putting investigation into political education processes, I hadn't seen anyone doing that before in the social movements here in the region...they said 'we have to have a research module, and we have to start to talk about research'. (Activist involved in early years of the diploma programme working as part of the Nomadesc team, interview, 2018)

Replication workshops

Another feature of the pedagogical approach since the beginning of the diploma programme has been the requirement that all participants design, organise and facilitate a 'replication' workshop in a movement, community or organisation. This aspect is rooted in the objective of the ensuring that the knowledge and learning acquired by the participants is as far as possible put to the benefit of the

collective subjects which are part of the process; but at the same time is about deepening and consolidating the learning processes of the participants, not only in terms of the thematic learning but also through experiencing the territories of other social movements or organisations, as well as the practical experience of planning and facilitating a workshop. This aspect also ensured a sense of accountability to the broader social movement on the part of the participants:

> it isn't you that came to study as an individual, here you are a delegate on behalf of an organising process, so at the end you have to go and respond to your organisation, and that is where the replication workshops were important, because they were done in the organisations so it brought the process into the organisations...and people knew that later on they had to take the knowledge back to their organisation, and we would mix it up so that people would do workshops with other organisations...and create an exchange of experiences through these replication workshops. (ibid)

During the early years of the diploma, participants would be randomly allocated the community or organisation in which they would facilitate the workshop, in order to allow participants to get to know each others territories and to encourage collaboration and links between different organising processes.

> They gave me the Salvajina for my replication workshop, so I had to go there, and it was one of the things that really grabbed my attention about the process, this contact with different people, and I arrived to Suarez to do the workshop and you see the cultural difference between the black population i[in mountainous Cauca] compared to the black population that I knew [on the coast], I remember being struck by that….at the time they were living with the consequences of the construction of the Salvajina hydroelectric dam, and I remember hearing the community's stories and that helped me to locate myself and understand the situation and the territory a bit more, to understand a bit more the territorial dynamics of the region, but also the political logic behind human rights work,...I think every pedagogical exercise should have some contact with reality, and that for me was one of the biggest learning processes and I never forgot it (current leading Nomadesc member, and diploma student during early years, interview, 2018).

This territorial-experiential approach to learning has been a constant feature of the pedagogical process, and would later be built upon further within the Intercultural University of the Peoples. Part of the process extended to engaging with active struggles and mobilisations which occur in the region, and using these as thematic, live learning experiences exchange. Invariably, when one of the organisations or movements of the UIP is involved in some kind of mobilisation, campaign or activity then this will be shared, debated and analysed as a thematic topic. For example, during the sugar cane cutters strike of 2008, a bus was hired to take students to the picket lines where they were able to dialogue with the striking workers, exchange experiences, and learn about trade union issues, the

right to strike, the causes of the strike and the demands of the workers, as well as broader lessons about the realities of neoliberalism and who it benefits.

Communication

Since its inception, Nomadesc's work in defence of human rights has included a strong emphasis on communications and alternative media, as a way of showing not only the ongoing human rights violations in the regions and the structural causes which drive them, but also in order to make visible the social movement organising and mobilising activities occurring in the region (particularly in the communities and movements which Nomadesc works with).

> [The idea] is to make visible the organising processes that we accompany, and to show those faces that aren't seen in the mainstream media. (current leading member of Nomadesc, interview, 2020)

Hence the organisation has engaged in gradually more prolific production of short videos which serve as an ongoing audio-visual record for the historical memory of the social struggle in the region, playing an important role in a region and a country where the mainstream media pays little attention to the activities of social movements and their struggles. In the midst of the danger faced by social movements and activists across the region, the fact of making visible their work is at times also a form of providing protection through raising their profile (although clearly a calculation is always made about the possible risks involved).

Year	No. of videos produced
2017	83
2018	69
2019	71

Figure 3.2: Nomadesc video production. Source: interview with current leading member of Nomadesc, 2020

Nomadesc's communication work has also included the production of several documentaries (highlighting the structural causes of human rights violations), the most recent of which being about the Buenaventura Civic Strike of 2017, production of written texts, as well as the frequent production of 'urgent action' document alerts over human rights violations. In recent years, the organisation has also increasingly used social media such as Facebook as a tool for its communication work.

What is particularly relevant for this research is the way that the communication work is central to Nomadesc's work strategy, and interlinks with the other aspects including the pedagogical component:

> I had graduated in social communication, and so I proposed a transversal axis to our work which was communication, alongside education and research, but communication that could also be a community exercise beyond the sharing of information, so it wasn't just about making communicative products like bulletins or videos, or radio programmes, but rather it was about linking it up to the rest of the work, to the pedagogical work...so that is where popular communication starts to play a key role and it is a role the debate about what to do with alternative media and the need for investigative journalism or in-depth journalism, it was about actually undertaking the task of studying in depth the communities' problems and not only increasing the knowledge of the communities for preventing human rights violations and recording them, but also increasing the communicative capacity...to empower them in that regard too. (Nomadesc founding member and currently a leading member of the organisation, interview, 2018)

This emphasis on the importance of communications, and in particular on the importance of raising the communicative capacity of movements and communities to tell their own stories and hence strengthen their struggles, led to the development of the 'Diploma in alternative and popular communication Antonieta Mercuri' in 2012, a joint initiative with Sintraunicol Valle university workers union (with financial support from the British trade union UNISON).

> We saw that the communities and the territories that we accompany have their own communications [mechanisms] but they often aren't very visible [or widely seen] because often they don't have the tools, or even they have the tools but don't know how to use them correctly, so we created the diploma in alternative and popular communication… (current leading member of Nomadesc, interview, 2020)

The diploma was another intercultural initiative similar in structure to original the diploma course, with the participation of approximately 25 representatives of organisations, social movements and communities from the region, most of which had participated in the broader pedagogical process.

> We applied a little bit of everything that we have learned over the years about communication to a pedagogical format, so that this knowledge and experience can be then taken to the territories [by the movements]…we cover theory and practice, and we covered written communication, audio-visual, radio, as well as things like how to make a banner or a sticker, different things that can help you communicate in a direct, practical form… (ibid)

The success of the diploma course, and the need expressed by the communities and social movements they were working with for increased communication capacity and knowledge amongst their activists,

led to debates within the UIP about the importance of incorporating the theme within the thematic content.

> We could see the need that communities had, and they were telling us they didn't have communication capacity. We helped some of the students to make a documentary in order to present their final work [at the end of the first cohort], and this created a lot of discussion, people felt very identified with it… and the discussions led to the creation of a transversal module called Transformative and Territorial Communication within the second cohort of the UIP. (ibid)

Whilst this pedagogical approach to communications is a relatively new and developing aspect of Nomadesc's pedagogical work, some indicators of the importance and potential of this work can be pointed to:

> [one of the diploma graduates] is now in charge of communications for his indigenous community, which is a big responsibility, and for example he filmed all throughout the [Buenaventura] civic strike…during the strike their community was a key point [of resistance], and they also had to be in contact with other areas [where roads were being blocked], and coordinating that was part of his role (ibid)

Tejiendo Resistencias

During the years of the diploma programme, Nomadesc would organise annual Weaving Resistance (*Tejiendo Resistencia)* events in Cali which would bring together social movements from across the region, including those which participated in the pedagogical process. These events would often have around 150-200 representatives of social movements and organising processes from across the region, and were an opportunity to gain a broad panorama of the conjunctures in the region's territories and the state of the varied social struggles of movements. They were also a way of linking the pedagogical process to Nomadesc's broader work with social movements in the region, and seeking to consolidate and increase regional-level cooperation, collaboration between movements, as well as increasing a sense of belonging and collectivity between the diverse collective subjects. The overall political intention was 'the interlocution and articulation/linking of the collective actions of the social movements and communities of the region' (Araujo, 2015, p28).

> The 'Tejiendo Resistencias' events seek to bring into dialogue the social movements of the southwest region in order to jointly reflect, analyse and debate the political conjunctures of the country, but from the basis of the reality lived by communities and the human rights situation. The conclusions of the event would then be put together in public declarations which manifest the sentiments and the realities which are ignored by the mainstream media, and left out of official reports. (ibid, p89)

The Weaving Resistance events would also serve as important forums for the strengthening of collective identity and historical memory, in remembering and honouring past struggles, as well as martyrs who had been murdered along the way. Memorial galleries of photographs of victims of state violence would be set up for participants and passers by to view. The events were also infused with a celebration of the cultural and artistic resistance of the movements of the regions, including music, dance and poetry. These aspects encouraged further intercultural exchange, and a deepened sense of solidarity and belonging.

Bespoke pedagogical initiatives

Beyond the diploma course, a major part of Nomadesc's contribution to social movements and their struggles in southwest Colombia has always been pedagogical. Over the years the organisation has regularly designed and implemented bespoke pedagogical activities for the organisations and movements it works with. From 2008 onwards, Nomadesc began to develop a series of ongoing pedagogical initiatives outside of the diploma programme, including strategies working directly with movements and communities in their territories. This included designing and implementing bespoke pedagogical processes aimed at strengthening the struggles of the organisations, movements or communities involved by strengthening organising processes, raising consciousness and defending human rights. These would vary according to the particularities of the conjunctures at local level and the struggle in question. These processes always emerged from and were part of a broader strategy of accompaniment and support from Nomadescc to the struggles in question. They included the following examples:

- Women's Sugar Cane Cutters Committee (2009-2014) - as part of Nomadesc's work supporting and accompanying this women's collective in its organising, a bespoke pedagogical and process around the defence of human rights from a gender perspective was developed. The pedagogical process also had a component which involved the teaching of horticulture and annual crafts such as dress-making and jewellery making in order to provide the women with more economic capacity and autonomy, given the extremely precarious situations which most of them lived in

    - The Triana collective of Men and Women: A central part of Nomadesc's work in Triana was pedagogical, working with the group (majority women) to support their organising, to identify and understand the structural causes of the violence in the area, and to collectively construct and commemorate the historical memory of the violence in the area, as well as allowing for a collective grieving process in an area

where fear and the continued presence of paramilitaries meant a wall of silence still existed around what had happened.

- The development of an 'educational process for communities in resistance' with the indigenous and peasant communities in Cisneros, Dagua (2006-2008), who were organising together to oppose the expansion of the Cali-Buenaventura road and the human rights violations being committed against the communities.
- In the indigenous Nasa community of Honduras, the department of Cauca, the Intercultural School of Knowledges (EIS) was set up between 2008 and 2012, whose purpose was to provide a space for political formation based on the cultural needs, rights and practices of the indigenous, Afro-Colombian and peasant communities that inhabit the territory (Araujo, 2011). The curriculum was aimed at recognizing the historical evolution of communities and social movements, the revindication of traditional practices and customs, the analysis of the structural causes of the complex human rights situation, and supporting the development of community life plans for the future of the communities. Nomadesc designed and implemented the human rights aspect of the community's pedagogical initiative. The community at the time was dealing with the presence of paramilitary, guerrilla, and state forces in its territory, and leaders faced grave danger, with regular death threats, attacks and even murders of leaders (for example Vice Governor Robert de Jesus Guacheta in 2008). Nomadesc's pedagogical support was one part of a broader strategy of human rights accompaniment and legal support for the community's struggle for justice over the impacts of the Salvajina hydro-electic dam and against the attempts of multinational extractives companies to enter the territory. Many members of the Honduras community would go on to participate in the diploma course.

> I joined the process on the basis that we need a lot of political knowledge and capacity here, as well as organisational capacity, and that was what the initiative aimed to provide...in order to strengthen our organisation in our territory, and it was a really important experience because we dealt with all of the key aspects of organising for us, such as the rights which we have as indigenous communities. (Rural indigenous community leader, graduate of Intercultural School of Knowledges)

The quote below shows how Nomadesc's network of relationships with social movements in the region led them to develop a pedagogical relationship with the Honduras community, which would eventually expand into a much broader, comprehensive human rights political organising strategy:

> Our vision was to create an intercultural school of knowledges in order to guide our youth and our elders in terms of political organising, in terms of indigenous identity, in terms of native laws, we began in 2008...the CRIC (Cauca Regional Indigenous Council) told us that there was a human rights organisation called Nomadesc that existed in Cali and they put us in touch and Nomadesc invited us to Cali and we spoke about our community, about organising, about our territory...and we brought Nomadesc to our communities. (participant, territorial workshop, La Toma, 2018).

Nomadesc's socio-legal work, which involves taking forward strategic legal cases related to the collective rights claims of communities, is also inextricably linked to its pedagogical strategy. The organisation's approach to legal action is that it is only feasible and worthwhile if it is linked to pedagogical and organisational action and mobilisation. Hence Nomadesc's legal accompaniment of communities and struggles such that of the Jarillon area on the banks of the River Cauca in Cali (2014-2018); the seafront communities of Buenaventura (2011-2018) and the Salvajina, Cauca (2003-2018) have been accompanied by pedagogical processes of knowledge dialogue and the collective construction of proposals and solutions, increasing the mechanisms and tools through which the movements and communities resist.

Towards the Intercultural University of the Peoples: 2010-2018

Specialisation in Economic, Social, Cultural and Environmental Rights Robert de Jesus Guacheta

> One of the difficulties [identified by the social movements] has been providing continuity [for the participants to continue their learning], the participants of the diploma manifested the need to deepen the education processes with specialisations and longer courses, around central issues that communities are facing, in order to strengthen them organisationally and in particular support new leaders/activists, so during 2010/11 this need was pulled together with the Specialisation in Economic, Social, Cultural and Environmental Rights Robert de Jesus Guacheta with the participation of former diploma participants with the aim of strengthening and broadening their knowledge of socio-legal issues affecting communities as a result of the innumerable legislative reforms in recent years. The emphasis was on political economy, natural resource extraction policy and free trade agreements. (Nomadesc, 2014: p7)

With the experience accumulated through all of these elements and initiatives, the accumulation of over a decade of regional work in defence of human rights; 15 diploma cohorts around the region: a new phase was embarked upon. As the quotation above demonstrates, the emergence of the specialisation in 2010-11 was based on the need identified by Nomadesc and the movements involved in the pedagogical process for a deepening and consolidation process which was able to follow on from the diploma programme, for participants which had been involved in the diploma.

The specialisation course represented a qualitative leap in the strategic vision of Nomadesc and its work in support of social struggles across southwest Colombia. It can be understood as a brief

transition phase in the journey of the pedagogical process towards what would become the Intercultural University of the Peoples:

> *[*it was]...a transit between the pedagogical strategy of the diplomas to the qualitative leap which was the Intercultural University of the Peoples. (Nomadesc founding member and currently a leading member of the organisation, interview, 2018)

The course was established with the aim of providing further education and skills to activists who had participated in the diploma course throughout the ten years of its existence in the region. The programme had a focus on encouraging students to develop their analytical skills on issues relating to political economy and government policies which were affecting social sectors - in particular relating to mining and energy and Free Trade Agreements; as well as strategic themes relating to ethnic rights o indigenous and black communities, and national and international legislation and human rights mechanisms. It was named in homage to Roberth de Jesus Guacheta, a leader of Honduras indigenous community, Cauca, who was assassinated in 2009. Guacheta had opposed the implementation of growing of illicit crops in his community's territory by armed groups, as well as the government policy of granting mining license in indigenous territories such as his own, and had worked to highlight the impact of the Salvajina hydro-electric dam upon black and indigenous communities in his territory. The programme consisted of 6 separate 2-day workshops and pedagogical activities. The inaugural session was made up of representatives of the diverse sectors of the region's diverse social sectors. In the words of one of Nomadesc's leaders, the specialisation began:

> with the theme of multinationals and megaprojects in southwest Colombia, with a group of approximately 40 people from all over the southwest territory: from Bahia Malaga and Buenaventura in the Pacific region; from centre of Valle (Tulua and Riofrio); from Cauca; from Cajibio, Suarez, Mralez and Buenos Aires; and also from Huila; a really diverse group, because we have indigenous, peasants and black community representatives, as well as workers representatives such as the sugar cane cutters. That diversity allows us to understand a bit more, what is the reality of the conflict in the region? What are the structural causes of the armed and social conflict that the communities suffer across all of the territories? (Nomadesc, 2011).

The specialisation phase of the pedagogical process can be understood as part of the process of laying the foundations for what would be the largest qualitative leap: the construction of the Intercultural University of the Peoples. It was a phase which sought to deepen and broaden the inclusive, radically humanist learning process.

The Universidad Intercultural de los Pueblos

The election in 2010 of President Juan Manuel Santos would bring about a change in the government's attitude towards social movements, from the hardline, violence rhetoric of President Uribe to a more conciliatory, human rights and civil society-friendly discourse (whilst retaining and expanding much of Uribe's policy agenda). As laid out in chapter 2, Santos would go on to open peace talks with the FARC guerrilla movement in 2012. The government's shift in discourse, and the broader optimism generated across the country with the opening of peace talks, created a wave of debate and action across civil society including within social movements, around the social transformations which were required in order to end over half a century of war.

These developments formed the background for the biggest and most recent qualitative leap in the history of the pedagogical process. In 2010, Nomadesc and social movements involved decided to transform the pedagogical-organisational strategy in order to set up the *Intercultural University of the Peoples* (Universidad Intercultural de los Pueblos - hereinafter UIP), a popular university run by and for social movements. For several years, Nomadesc and the movements involved in the process had discussed the idea of an alternative model of university:

> I remember we would meet and there were many conversations for us to take the decision and finally do this, a university with a lot of strength here in the southwest of Colombia, I think it was the best thing that could happen to the indigenous movement, the peasant movement, the workers, the Afro-Colombians, because its there that we learn and get to polish the knowledge and concepts that one has, and put it together with the ancestral knowledge, the knowledge that comes from the elders and the grandparents, and you combine it with other knowledge, with literature… (Rural Afro-Colombian community leader who was an diploma student in the early years).

The UIP was based on the desire for a more comprehensive pedagogical process that could support social movements in the region by encouraging the emergence of a new generation of leaders by providing activists with skills and knowledge that could go beyond the human rights focus of the diploma and help advance the struggles of social movements , for example by providing tools for diagnosis and strategic planning; deepening the exchange and revindication of the alternative and ancestral knowledges held and produced in the social movements and their struggles; and forging stronger and deeper links among social movements in the region in an effort to foster collaboration on the basis of strategic and thematic unity:

> ..when the diplomas finished, we already had a rough idea and an objective to create a much deeper and more developed education process, for example the diplomas lasted for 6 months, and we were talking about the formation of these new leaders for three years...people would come on behalf of the organisations

> and already with a certain amount of experience of activism…[the extended formation process] would support them to become authorities in their territories but obviously 'alternative' authorities, as well as to look profoundly into the effects that the economic model was having upon territories...when we began to design the strategic plan for the university, from the start we were thinking about what the programmes/modules could be, and it was about building on the experience of the diplomas and the specialisation, in order to think collectively between us about what the emphasis of the university programmes could be (Nomadesc founding member and currently a leading member of the organisation, interview, 2018)

> [The objective is] to make a qualitative leap from the diplomas and the specialisations towards an education which would continuously rescue and revindicate ancestral principles and traditions in defence of life and territory, and which allow a deepening of the their and practice of human rights, the rights of peoples, economic social , cultural and environmental rights, and native law (Nomadesc, 2014, p8)

From the beginning, Nomadesc and the organisations and movements involved in the creation of the UIP were critical of the peace process between the Santos government and FARC guerrillas, because of the narrow scope of the agenda for negotiations, and the limited opportunity for civil society participation (see chapter 2). But the context of the peace process and the flurry of activity and debates which it spurred within social movements had a large impact upon the early years of the UIP.

> [the UIP] must develop a long-term pedagogical strategy which allows it to contribute to the permanence of the communities in their territories and the the collective construction of an inclusive, transformative peace proposal which is able to overcome the failures of the bilateral and unilateral peace initiatives over the past two decades. That is to say, a peace proposal where the communities, social movements and peoples are the principles actors. (ibid, p9)

Between 2012 and 2014, before the beginning of the first cohort of the UIP, the organisations held several conversations which resulted in the booklet and short animated video " The socio-political Colombian conflict and the construction of transforming and participatory peace". An international peace seminar was held at the beginning of the university's first cohort in 2014. These discussions were focussed not upon inventing a new vision of peace, but rather about pulling together the diverse struggles, histories, cultures and visions of the region's social movements in order to collectively envisage and articulate an alternative social movement vision of peace.

Developing an idea: building the UIP

Having decided that the next phase of the pedagogical process would be to create a social movement university, a comprehensive process of collective conceptual development followed, to determine the feasibility and to give form and content to the initiative. This process took place between 2010 and

2014. The first cohort of the university eventually began in 2014 and ran through until in December 2017 (2014, Nomadesc document). The conceptual development process involved consulting with not only the leaders of the organisations involved, but also travelling to the various territories of the UIP's member organisations in order to consult with the grassroots. What would a social movement university look like in practice? How would it differ from the diploma programme? How would the university be run, on what organisational, political and pedagogical principles? These were the questions grappled with by Nomadesc and the movements involved. The process included not only consulting with those involved in the process, but also creating spaces of debate and exchange with other social movement or popular university processes from Colombia and other Latin American countries. Formal and informal universities which were identified as reference points included the Itinerant University of San Jose de Apartado Peace Community (Colombia); the university of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo (Argentina); the University of Brazil (Brazil); the Bolivarian University (Venezuela); the University of Havana (Cuba); and the Autonomous Indigenous University (Colombia), amongst others.

An alternative university concept

The thinking behind the UIP challenged the traditional conception of the university as an institution for the academic production of elite knowledge within Western modernity. This challenge ran through every aspect of the university, including the structure and organisation of the university.

The leap from the diploma programme to the UIP on an organisational and pedagogical level meant a switch to an extended three-year course organised along three complementary modules aimed at providing a more detailed educational process as mentioned above, with sessions taught in residential weekend workshops throughout the year calendar and combining theory and practice. As with the diploma programs, students were all representatives of the different social movements, communities and organisations that belong to the process, and entrance to the university is not based on the individual request but on the nomination by the organisation or community involved. The organisational structure is horizontal, with general political, philosophical and organisational decisions taken during three annual meetings general assembly - the Territorial Academic Council where all the organisations of the university are represented. Decisions are taken by consensus. Operational decisions are taken by the Academic Council, which is made up of authorities and leaders of all the movements and communities involved in the process. A central principle is that the UIP is conceived as a dynamic process of collective construction in progress rather than a complete, fixed process, in order to continuously respond to the ever-changing needs of social movements in the political, social and economic contexts of southwestern Colombia.

The consolidation of an alternative epistemological approach

The shift to the UIP represented the consolidation of the gradual construction of the alternative epistemological approach and framework which had developed through over a decade of intercultural dialogue and praxis--based learning. From the very inception there had been a clear epistemological sensitivity to the knowledges, organisational forms, cultures and struggles of the movements involved, and these had been seen as an important element of the learning process. This sensitivity would grow in importance as an aspect of the pedagogy with the increased participation of indigenous, Afro-Colombian and peasant sectors. From the beginning of the UIP, the process would seek to put these 'epistemologies of the South' at the very centre of the university's pedagogical content and processes.

> For me its important to have a university based on our own thought, because that generates identity, and so it allows us to think in different logics, in alternative forms of exercising authority in our territories, to think about autonomy, to think about cultural practices. I think that we are trying to change the world, and for me education is central to that, as Malcolm X said we can either educate ourselves to be slaves or we can educate ourselves to be free, I think today we have to think about the environment and nature, because we aren't the owners but we are part of nature... so I think we have a challenge of building together from the basis of our differences, if we have the capacity to do that then I think we can advance, I don't necessarily have to think or organise the same as the indiogenous companeros or the peasant movements, we each have our own logic in the way we see the world, our own logic n how we organise, but we also have things in common, and we can come together and think together respecting our differences…(Rural Afro-Colombian community leader, former student in later phases of diploma).

Many of the movements involved in the process belong to groups whose cultures and ethnicities have been denigrated and marginalised within Colombian society, not least in the educational system (indigenous, Afro-Colombian, peasant communities etc). The UIP represented a space where these knowledges would be not only valued, but understood as a source of potential for social transformations and alternative social models, and as precious resources which have been gradually appropriated or exterminated by Western capitalist culture. Hence the notion of knowledge dialogue becomes even more important to the pedagogical process, with the aim of sharing and promoting knowledges which can be beneficial to social sectors which live in the context of the implementation of a particularly violent and repressive neoliberal economic model.

> ...we were seeing that the [mainstream] university was changing the kids who went to study there, the few that got to go people would be made to feel that we speak wrong, so that is the first thing that they go changing, and from there they...I think one of the things we've learned is that we need to put our heart into this university, because it is our own university where our own knowledge is validated, because often in our community, a lawyer might arrive and they

> can have all of their knowledge as a lawyer but on the technical knowledge or territorial knowledge, they haven't a clue, so we have to start to value our ancestral knowledge and that is what the UIP is about. (Rural Afro-Colombian community leader who was an diploma student in the early years).

In terms of the pedagogical praxis, the epistemological approach meant expanding and giving more emphasis to the horizontal intercultural knowledge dialogue within the educational spaces of the UIP:

> A lot of emphasis was given to the individual and collective knowledges that were represented within the university, and there we could propose reflection spaces which were a bit more horizontal...(Activist expert in participatory action research - UIP facilitator, interview, 2018).

A strong motivation from the very beginning amongst the protagonists of the UIP was the belief in the need to support, foment and inter-weave communities and social movements in their autonomous, traditional alternative forms of organising, based on the conviction that a genuinely transformative peace is only possible with the real participation of civil society, and in particular those living in the territories most affected by the conflict. In order to achieve this, the objective was that the UIP should go beyond providing communities with the tools and capacity to respond to human rights violations and other scenarios presented by the armed conflict, and seek to support communities in preserving and deepening their own alternatives models and forms of organising.

What was intentionally established with the UIP was a deepening of the intercultural dialogue, which was made possible through the exchange of experiences and cosmovisions between the participants and facilitators, particularly around the related phenomena and problems facing communities in their territories. This dialogue took place on the basis of a critical reflection and inquiry into the actors, interests, motivations and modus operandi which drive the conflict and the ongoing human rights violations (Kane, ethnographic fieldnotes).

Pedagogical content and structure content

As mentioned above, in keeping with the dynamism which has characterised the pedagogical process since its inception, the UIP is a process in 'permanent construction'. This means that the pedagogical structure and content are subject to constant debate, adaptation and alteration based upon the 'constant knowledge dialogue and permanent verification of the reality' faced by communities and social movements. (Nomadesc, 2015: p8)

As a result of the extensive process of collective construction of the UIP, the initial pedagogical structure which was agreed was a three year course which would be divided into 3 different blocks or 'cycles' of one year each, with three different thematic modules: the first year is the 'Foundation cycle' in which participants are introduced to the core background of each of the modules ; the second year

is the 'research cycle' during which the course continues with a focus upon the students' participatory action research projects; and the final year is the 'Consolidation and culmination cycle', in which thematic learning is consolidated and deepened and research projects are culminated. In this extended format, the participatory action research process is given an even more prominent role, and participants are supported in designing and implementing their research processes, which was identified as an important aspect by one graduate of the first cohort:

> [it allows you] to have arguments in order to be able to make demands or to question a state policy, either at national level, regional level or municipal level you have to have arguments but you can only develop those arguments from investigating, it isn't something you can read somewhere, you have to go there and find out for yourself, you have to see for yourself how things are and be able to show…. [when you interact with authorities] that you have collected information about the problem...I think this is a really useful tool for the communities and for us as young activists in the defence of human rights…(Activist Macizo youth organisation, graduate of first cohort UIP)

The three thematic modules for the first cohort were, 'Development Models and the Rights of the Peoples'; 'Life Plans and Social Humanism'; and 'Sovereignties and Buenvivir' (which was initially called Sovereignties and Technologies for Life', but was changed after an internal debate about the concept of technology and its links to notions of capitalist development). As suggested by these names, the modules continued with some of the central thematic and pedagogical focusses which had been important throughout the history of the pedagogical process. The 'Development Models and the Rights of the Peoples' module examined 'basic structures, foundations and principles of development models and human rights frameworks, with emphasis upon collective rights and common goods' (Nomadesc, 2015). This meant that as well as including the Rights of People as contained in the Algiers Charter, this module also included content on the collective ethnic rights of indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, including aspects such as alternative governance and legal systems.

> I studied law at the Universidad Santiago de Cali (private university), and I never received a single module which mentioned native law, ethnic law...and I think the UIP allows us to think about that, right? What does our own law mean for the black people of this country? What does it mean within a broader system which is the Rule of Law? And that gets us to thinking, what does it mean to think about autonomy in this country? So I think this puts into crisis the dominant educative model which is based on the economic model of extractivism, of exploitation, of racism, so I think it will help us a lot in our communities…….(Rural Afro-Colombian community leader, former student in later phases of diploma).

The module also included deep discussion of the issues affecting communities in their territories and sought to generate discussion around potential solutions.

> ...the content was about the development model we looked at how the state has its own sophisticated machinery for emptying out our territories, and we discussed the megaprojects which are affecting our different territories, it was something which was really important for us in our territories because we also discussed how we can confront this development model, this slavery economic development, and what we can do in our communities to carry on resisting, what strategies can we implement (urban Afro-Colombian community leader in Buenaventura, interview, 2018).

The 'Life Plans and Social Humanism' module introduces participants to the indigenous concept of 'life plans' (planes de vida), a methodology of strategic planning used to help movements and communities to think more strategically and long-term in their organising. The life plan methodology is rooted in a rejection of the very concept of 'development' (and its connotations of capitalism, progress and accumulation), and instead rooted in a recognition of cultural, organisational and territorial particularities of communities and movements, and based on the indigenous notion of *buenvivir*[5], and which prioritise a harmonious relationship with the natural environment. Life plans can be understood as a collectively produced long-term strategic vision for how a collective subject (community, movement, organisation) wishes to live in the future in their territory, and how it will organise in the short, medium and long term to achieve this vision. The module is also rooted in the principles and ideas of social humanism, and seeks to give participants a grounding and understanding of the tenets of social humanism in relation to social movement organising (ibid; Kane fieldnotes).

One objective of this module is to provide participants with an understanding of the basic concepts and principles, as well as the methodological knowledge and skills to be able develop a life plan within their own community or movement (Nomadesc, 2015).

> I have insisted a lot on life plans, to plan life in terms of how long we want our communities to carry on living, that is a challenge for the UIP. To plan, but in the process of planning we are organising ourselves, we are struggling….and part of

[5] Buen Vivir or Vivir Bien, are the Spanish words used in Latin America to describe alternatives to development focused on the good life in a broad sense. The term is actively used by social movements, and it has become a popular term in some government programs and has even reached its way into two new Constitutions in Ecuador and Bolivia …. it refers to alternatives to development emerging from indigenous traditions, and in this sense the concept explores possibilities beyond the modern Eurocentric tradition. The richness of the term is difficult to translate into English. It includes the classical ideas of quality of life, but with the specific idea that well-being is only possible within a community. Furthermore, in most approaches the community concept is understood in an expanded sense, to include Nature. Good Living therefore embraces the broad notion of well-being and cohabitation with others and Nature. In this regard, the concept is also plural, as there are many different interpretations depending on cultural, historical and ecological setting. (Gudynas, 2011:p441

> that is about creating consciousness…(indigenous activist and university academic, facilitator in UIP).

There is also an element here of seeking to construct and promote alternative concepts, as part of the recognition that an emancipatory educational process must seek to break away from the reproduction of the conceptual constructions which have served as part of the broader system of oppression:

> Often we don't plan in a real sense, we have our own concepts, we have a life project...we have to think about the language and terms we use, it is a constant debate that we have had, we are doing alternative education and if we want to build alternatives and change our life plans, we must also start to challenge concepts which come from capitalist terminology and aren't based on our own constructions and what we have ([as subaltern sectors]....that means going back to valuing ancestral medicine, these types of knowledge...and this helps us to recognise ourselves and to recognise the enormous potential that we have and the strength that we have as peoples. (Activist from Red Proyecto Sur youth collective, interview, 2018)

The module on 'Sovereignties and Buenvivir' module is based upon the revindication of alternative strategies, techniques and knowledges which can form the basis for the construction of alternative forms of living and organising. These may be on a very practical level - for example around the the use of medicinal plants or the construction of community viaducts; or may be around conceptual constructions, such as alternative concepts of human dignity and the environment, and alternative epistemological principles. This module is rooted in the aim to deepen the intercultural knowledge dialogue in order to circulate and inter-weave knowledges which can be of use to the movements in their struggles.

> it is something which emerges from the communities...social movements have our own dynamics, our own knowledges, our own ways of knowing and organising, and our own ways of resolving problems…(Activist Macizo youth organisation, graduate of first cohort UIP, interview, 2018)

Pedagogical praxis of the UIP

The objectives discussed above, and the intention of deepening the intercultural knowledge dialogue within the UIP, had important implications for the pedagogical praxis within the educational space. Even more so than during the diploma programme, participants experiences were brought to centre stage in order to create as horizontal learning space as possible. This also facilitated the generation of strong human connections between participants, which is a crucial prerequisite for any process which seeks to create organic links for strategic collaboration between collective actors:

> When I entered the UIP it was something else….something where we all built together, the teachers isn't the one that knows, the students also know and we construct between all of us, it was wonderful...there is a constant feedback of the experiences from the different companeros in the different territories

> where they live….(urban Afro-Colombian community leader in Buenaventura, interview, 2018).
>
> The biggest thing that being the first cohort of the UIP gave to me is fraternity (hermandad), and that this fraternity breaks down borders and also breaks down the paradigms of Western education… (ibid)

The implications of this pedagogy for the learning processes of participants are analysed in detail in chapter 4.

Recorridos territoriales

It was decided from the beginning that the university would be 'itinerant': as opposed to having a fixed site as is the common perception of a university, the UIP takes as its site the territories of the communities and social movements across the southwest of Colombia which form part of the process. within the pedagogical practice, this means that a central aspect of the approach is to carry out 'recorridos territoriales'- in which the group travels to a community and the residential workshops are held in the territory of the community, based upon dialogue exchange through which the students learn out about the history, culture and contexts of the community in the area, and exchange experiences. These activities allow students to understand the intercultural aspect of the UIP from an anthropological and sociological perspective, to be able to learn about the history of the peoples of a territory, their beliefs and struggles through observation and experience. The aim is for students to understand the different peoples and communities of Colombia- black, indigenous, campesinos, and urban communities- as well as their struggles (Kane, ethnographic fieldnotes). This is a key aspect and focus of the UIP's pedagogy: the importance of the relationship of the community to its territory, the understanding of a territory in order to strengthen its collective defence, in a region which has seen huge levels of forced displacement over recent decades. It is also the continuation and expansion of the territorial-experiential dimension of the pedagogy which has been gradually developed throughout the history of the process, and relate to the popular education principle of '*aprender haciendo':* learn through doing).

> the most significant memories for me were the recorridos territoriales because its not just that we go and look, but we go and do, it is practical...I remember the word that one of the teachers taught us, lecturaleza (learning to read nature and the territory)....the economic model has bled our territories so much, we need to be able to understand what the impacts are, identify the weaknesses, but also work out how to turn those weaknesses into strengths in our communities and in our territories in order to build buenvivir for our children in our territories (ibid)
>
> The experience of getting to know the realities of the sugar cane cutters, of the black communities, peasants, it allowed us first of all to recognise the richness of our communities in our different forms of struggling and resisting, for

> example in the case of the sugar cane cutters we heard about the terrible wages, and that despite some of them still having work, at the same time they are having their territories taken away from them, they're having their culture taken from them, and they are taking the possibility of a dignified life away from them….an in terms of the peasant community [which we visited[we found that they were no longer able to cultivate their own seeds because laws have been passed to say that they must use the seeds of the large companies, so these were the cruel part of the realities and they help you to see the really cruel way that the system dominates us more everyday… (Activist from Red Proyecto Sur youth collective, interview, 2018)

This chapter has presented a comprehensive characterisation of the pedagogical process, along with an in-depth discussion of the historical evolution of the pedagogical process and its relationship with the struggles of the social movements involved in the process, as well as the social, economic and political conjunctures of the region. The following chapter goes on to analyse the learning processes related to the initiative.

4. Unpacking the learning and knowledge production processes

This chapter seeks to further unpack the question of how Nomadesc and the social movements it works with learn and produce knowledge. What follows is an in-depth discussion of the learning processes which we were able to identify through the systematisation process. The chapter outlines the different ways in which the cultural, political and organisational diversity of the social movements is converted into a movement resource. It also analyses the horizontal, collective processes of knowledge construction which occur, and demonstrates how the proximity of the pedagogical praxis to the struggles of social movements ensures that the learning processes are of value to the struggles of the social movements involved.

In order to talk about the learning processes that occur within Nomadesc's pedagogical initiative, we must first establish what we mean when we talk about learning and knowledge production within social movements. We must also set out some categories in order to facilitate a discussion of the learning and knowledge processes which have been constructed throughout two decades of the pedagogical process in question. All social practices are practices which require and contain knowledge, and hence we can say that all social practices are knowledge practices (Santos; 2006: p138). It follows then that all social movement practice must contain knowledge. So, what are the knowledge and learning processes which interest us within Nomadesc's pedagogical initiative?

Within the diverse literature on social movement learning, various authors have attempted to address the issue of how to categorise the knowledge and learning accumulated by social movements (Santos, 2006; Cox, 2018). Following the call of Aziz Choudry (2015), as a starting point it is important that our discussion must centre upon, and seek to document, learning and knowledge which is somehow useful and relevant to the social movements and activists who create them, in their own contexts and struggles in different parts of the world. For our systematisation process, this means documenting learning and knowledge that have been important for the protagonists of the educational process in question, and which can be useful for activists involved in similar alternative pedagogical processes in other parts of the world. As stated above, as critical academics we consider that the role of research with regards to social movements to be that of a translation process, through which we seek to facilitate *'mutual intelligibility between different counter-hegemonic experiences'* (Santos; 2006: p133).

Praxis of struggle

To understand the context in which the learning in question occurs, and in which knowledge is constructed and woven, it is important to start by highlighting an aspect which has characterised the process since its inception and which was demonstrated in previous chapters: we are concerned with a pedagogical practice which was born and has always been deeply rooted in the social struggles of the southwest region of Colombia, and that exists in order to strengthen and benefit the involved social movements in their struggles. That is, the Nomadesc pedagogical process is an initiative which is a product of a broader commitment to the search for social transformation. In this sense, it can be considered an educational initiative of an emancipatory nature:

> ... it can't be detached from the process of building to seek social transformation, if it had not been linked to that broader objective then it would simply be a subsistence process ... that is the key, the education and training is linked to a political initiative ... always with the clarity that the [pedagogical] model had to serve to the cause of seeking social transformation, if it didn't then it wouldn't make sense…the whole point of the process is to contribute to the social movement, to strengthen the social movement, to create social movement. (current leading Nomadesc member, and diploma student during early years, interview, 2018).

The quotation clearly articulates the raison d'être of the pedagogical process. This citation is important as a starting point which introduces the intentionality and logic which guides the entire process, locating the following discussion of learning processes within this logic. Through pedagogical process, Nomadesc seeks to harness learning and knowledge processes towards the social transformations for which the social movements struggle. The pedagogical process cannot be understood in isolation from Nomadesc's broader work to support social movements in their struggles and defend human rights in the region.

A central objective of the pedagogical process is that the participants come to *understand reality in order to transform it* (an oft-repeated refrain within the pedagogical activities): in other words, that the learning processes which occur within the process are closely linked to social action. The proximity with the struggles of the region's movements is a defining factor in the development and evolution of the pedagogical process, in what can be understood as a *praxis of struggle:* the pedagogical actions are oriented towards the strengthening of the social movements' struggles, and at the same time are influenced and guided by the experiences and the learnings which arise from those struggles.

It was clear throughout the research process that both students and facilitators considered the pedagogical process as a space to reflect upon their own experience and praxis within their organisation or community; in order to better understand reality, as well as to acquire knowledge and

tools. In the demanding and at times highly fraught context of repression and violence that frames the existence of social movements in Colombia, taking the time to reflect on praxis and reality, and to exchange knowledge with activists from other struggles and organisations, is something which isn't often prioritised:

> ... sometimes situations make us react immediately to events, particularly relating to human rights violations mainly from the state and from the armed actors. It doesn't allow us to stop, think and reflect on what we are doing, and whether what we are doing is right or maybe we could do it better, right? And I think that the Intercultural University of the Peoples has allowed us [the opportunity to do] that, to sit down for a moment, to sit down one day to see what we are doing and see if what we are doing is right or maybe we could improve those practices and strengthen our organisation. (Activist Macizo youth organisation, graduate of first cohort UIP, interview, 2018)

As the excerpt demonstrates, the process places a strong emphasis on praxis, and a learning relationship between action and understanding can be identified, wherein the learning space serves as a space for activists to reflect upon their experiences within social movements, and adapt and strengthen praxis continuously according to the changing dynamics of the region and the needs and demands which arise from their struggles.

Dialectics of learning

It is useful here to think dialectically in order to understand the learning processes at play, and the relationship between the pedagogical process and the conjunctures of the region (including the social struggles of the social movements as well as the ever-changing political, social, economic, and cultural factors relating for example to the implementation of the neoliberal, extractivist economic model in the territories of southwest Colombia, and the ongoing armed conflict). According to Lukacs, to think dialectically helps us to understand how '*all social phenomena change constantly through their constant dialectical interaction with each other*' (Lukacs, 1971, cited in Halvorsen, 2017). The reality of social movements and their struggles- whether they be struggles in defence of territory, against the privatisation of public services, or for access to basic services such as housing or healthcare – is not static, but one which is in constant dialectical motion, '*the (capitalist economic development) model is always seeking to advance, seeking new strategies to maintain and extend its power and protect the status quo, and this obliges the communities and social movements to also be constantly developing new strategies' (current leading Nomadesc member, and diploma student during early years, interview, 2018).*

A dialectical relationship exists between Nomadesc's pedagogical process and the struggles of the social movements which are part of the process. The process itself exists in order to intervene in and

strengthen those struggles, but at the same time it is constantly altered and shaped through its proximity to the dynamic realities/contexts of the communities and the struggles which it aims to transform. This dialectic, and its effects, are reflected in chapter 3 in the different phases which have been identified throughout the journey of the process. These mark a fundamental characteristic of the initiative: the pedagogical process is itself a constant learning process, and as such is a dynamic pedagogical intervention and one which is in permanent construction. Undoubtedly the process has been influenced and shaped by theoretical reference points, however its architects argue that the single largest influence on the evolution of the pedagogy, principles and philosophy of the process have been the social movements themselves and the experience of their struggles over recent decades:

> we don't take academia literally – we learn from the organising processes of the movements we work with, and I could give three examples: the struggle of Sintraemcali was a school for us from which we learned so much; the Minga of Social and Communitarian Resistance of 2008 was a school which we learned from - we learned to walk the word; and the Buenaventura civic strike [2017] was a school. (Nomadesc founding member and currently a leading member of the organisation, interview, 2018)

Based upon the conjunctures facing the social movements and the challenges which they pose for organising, content has been developed throughout the history of the process along strategic thematic axes. Hence, to trace the history of the Nomadesc pedagogical process is to trace and map out the learning which has occurred within it. This process of constant learning, and the disposition to learn from the social movements and their diverse struggles, facilitates the continuous renewal and adaptation of the process. It is this ability to constantly adapt, renew and reinvent which has allowed the pedagogical process to continue for over two decades, and which has maintained its relevance for the collective subjects which are part of it.

The process' dynamism can also be related to a deep sensitivity and receptiveness to the diverse organisational forms, histories, cosmovisions, ideologies and symbology of the different social movements involved. Within the process, this diversity is understood as the social movements' principal source of transformative potential:

> [some people] say that the difficulties we have in unifying the Colombian social movement are because of our cultural diversity, which doesn't allow us to unify our criteria, because obviously we have the cultural diversity of the ethnic minority groups, but also we have different social sectors…but we think the opposite, we believe that this is the Colombia people's biggest source of wealth…because this diversity facilitates creation and permanent activation (current leading Nomadesc member, and diploma student during early years, interview, 2018).

It is important to underline the difference here with many emancipatory political education initiatives: the starting point for any theme which is dealt with within the educational space is always the everyday experience of the activists and their movements. The following phrase articulates the methodological horizontality of the process, and contrasts it with the tendency of political education initiatives to arrive with a pre-prepared (ideological) solution for communities and movements in search of social change:

> To be able to generate transformational processes which are not based on the idea that we all have to be the same, but rather that we respect our differences…it was about going beyond the old way of creating a mould, and that this mould has a step by step recipe which should be followed, because what we were seeing was that the reality [of the communities] needed the opposite, it meant going to the territories and being immersed in the communities, and based on their practices, based on their experiences, on their work, their identity, their culture and their history, develop pedagogical strategies which could bring about small or large transformations…it was about building it hand in hand with the communities and generating processes which weren't static, which weren't fixed, but which were permanently being changed and permanently being creatively developed, where people felt like they were the protagonists of their own processes (Nomadesc founding member and currently a leading member of the organisation, interview, 2018) .

The quote above demonstrates a central aspect of Nomadesc's pedagogical philosophy: that the participants are protagonists who are not only knowers, but experts in their own reality - and hence any pedagogical activity must be collectively developed. Rather than seek to provide an ideological 'solution', but to create a practice of collective construction between diverse perspectives.

The collective construction of knowledge

Since its inception, the philosophy of the pedagogical process has been based upon the belief in the emancipatory potential of the social subject, who is recognised as the bearer of knowledge and protagonist of social action. The social subject is recognised as culturally, ethnically and organisationally diverse. When asked to identify the learning processes which occur within the Nomadesc pedagogical initiative, interviewees identified the centrality of the concept of 'knowledge dialogue' in order to understand how this diversity is leveraged for knowledge production and circulation.

The coming together of different subjects, territories, knowledges and epistemologies creates an intercultural knowledge dialogue (*dialogo intercultural de saberes*) which can be understood as a process of collective construction of knowledge:

> To create a dialogue based on our differences, on the different knowledges [which the different actors bring], to seek solutions and learn from the interaction of different ideas and ways of thinking, different experience; so it is about recognising that the subjects arrive to the educational space with their own knowledges and practices, and that these practices and experiences are the source of the knowledges of our peoples (current leading Nomadesc member, and diploma student during early years, interview, 2018).

This dialogic and collective process is responsible for the cultivation, multiplication, distribution and also generation of knowledge. Interviewees also described how the learning environment creates a rich environment for organic and dynamic learning processes *between* the participants (who lest we forget are representatives of the collective subjects which belong to the process). This requires a more horizontal relationship between facilitators and organisers of the process and participants, which facilitates dialogic, horizontal learning processes:

> we were able to create spaces for reflection which were more horizontal, in which the protagonism was theirs (the participants) as social and political subjects, and their opinions were guiding the collective interpretations which we reached – more than a teacher I was an instigator and provocateur of debate' (Activist expert in participatory action research - UIP facilitator, interview, 2018).

Consciousness

Political education initiatives with an emancipatory intention invariably seek to generate an increase in the political consciousness of participants, understood here as an increase in their ability to understand the structural causes of the social injustices which exist, and the potential of people to change that situation.[6] Within the field of pedagogy, Brazilian educator Paolo Freire used the term 'critical consciousness', conceived as the ability to understand and act upon reality in order to transform it (Freire, 2005). When we talk about an increase in the critical consciousness of a subject (conscientisation), clearly we are referring to a learning process. In terms of our discussion of the learning processes that occur within the Nomadesc pedagogical process, the issue of critical consciousness was prominent during the systematisation process, raised by several respondents. How can we understand the learning processes related to the construction of critical consciousness within the educational process? How is it generated, and why is it important?

[6] There is no widely accepted definition of the concept of 'political consciousness' , but it is a concept that has been associated with the work of the Marxist tradition, and here it is understood as the learning process through which the members of the Working class become aware of the injustice of their situation, and thus manage to break the 'false consciousness' created by the capitalist system, and which serves to hide that reality.

As subjects who are already politically active and who come to the UIP as representatives of collective organisational processes which are actively struggling for social change, all participants already come with a certain level of critical consciousness which arises from that experience and the learning that has resulted from it. These learnings arise from the experience of being an activist in the southwest of Colombia, a region characterised by violence and repression against social movements. And of course, as already established above, that experience and that knowledge is given much importance within the pedagogy of the UIP, where it is seen as knowledge that contains emancipatory potential and which is fundamental to the collective construction of knowledge.

We identified several learning processes in relation to the generation of critical consciousness which occurs. One aspect which participants referred to is the development of participants' capacity for critical analysis. The pedagogical emphasis placed on the lived experience of the participants as the entry point for understanding economic, political and social macro-processes plays a decisive role here:

> It really was a break with the education model that had been the norm in social movements, because people felt they could relate to the topic, not just on the micro terrain of their problem within their community, but also in the understanding of the global nature of issues…knowledge was built from below from everyday life but also reflected in the macro framework and that was a novel relationship, because the norm was to go from the macro to the small, it was very systemic in how it approached problems- political economy says this and is reflected locally here in this way, but we said let's start from the problem and the community and understand the macro, so that inversion of categories allowed people to understand things better and relate them to their own situation. (Trade unionist involved during early years of pedagogical process, interview, 2018)

Within the pedagogical process, critical analysis of macro-processes is developed by starting with the local level and asking: what is happening in the local territory, and what macro processes (the structural causes) could be behind it?; Whose interests are benefitted from the situation? This approach recognises that participants already have a reading of what is happening in their territory and puts the emphasis on providing tools and knowledge to better understand reality at the local level, and thus develop a broader perspective and the capacity for political analysis of the participants. Below, an Afro-Colombian community leader explains how the process helped him understand the way in which the free trade agreement signed between Colombia and the United States would directly impact his community:

> for example, the Free Trade Agreement (FTA). It's something we heard about as something done by these people away over there, and then in the class I could identify how the FTA in the case of La Toma [community] specifically impacted

> upon us, yeah? The territorial problems we have – dispossession, the dynamic of the armed conflict - are framed by that economic model, for me these were very important tools (Rural Afro-Colombian community leader who was an diploma student in the early years, interview, 2018).

In their responses, several interviewees described how their participation generated a critical attitude towards events: '*I am not a politician but in Nomadesc I learned to analyse politics, to be politically critical and to look at the different perspectives and question what was happening, I didn't do it before but from then I started to draw my own analysis of things* (*Rural Afro-Colombian community leader* , interview, 2018). For example, several interviewees mentioned the impact which learning discourse analysis on the diploma programme had upon their activism, in terms of developing a more critical and analytical stance, and particularly in terms of their interactions with state officials or multinational companies.

A leading activist from the Proceso de Comunidades Negras who participated in the early diploma programmes as a young activist and more recently has been a facilitator in the UIP, described how the process serves to "awaken the investigator's spirit' within participants *(Activist of the Black Communities Process, former student of diploma programme during early years, current facilitator for UIP).* Herein lies an important aspect of the learning process which was identified by several interviewees – the emphasis upon the importance for any social organisation to actively investigate and gather information, in order to be fully informed about what is occurring within their territory, their organisation, their community etc. An example of such an approach in practice might be a trade union: before they can negotiate and make demands of employers, it is key not only be clear about the main issues which affect workers, but also to have the information in terms of precise data and figures about that situation, to have developed their own analysis of the situation, and to be able to propose alternatives, as was the case in Sintraemcali's fight against the privatisation of public services, when the union developed a whole alternative proposal to privatisation for the operation of the company (Novelli, 2004).

This may sound like a common sense aspect of organising, however the pedagogical process seeks to ingrain it within the mentality and praxis of the activists involved, and the result can be transformative for participants. These elements require a high level of organisation, information, and strategic capacity within the organisational processes, and the pedagogical process seeks to provide the tools for that, but also to generate the 'spirit of the researcher'.

Identity formation processes: culture as a movement resource

In our discussion of learning processes, it is important to consider those relating to the formation and strengthening of identity. In this intercultural initiative, which celebrates difference and diversity between sectors and understands them as a source of wealth and potential, different processes can be identified that serve to strengthen existing identities, as well as to generate and deepen a sense of common or shared identity. Several interviewees alluded to the sense in which the intercultural encounter and the pedagogy of the process, served to reinforce, vindicate and deepen the diverse cultural, ethnic, and political identities of the participants.

The intercultural space generates an environment where diversities are identified, discussed, and celebrated as a valuable resource of the peoples, and as a source of knowledge which contains the building bricks needed to build a new world. This meeting of diverse cultures and identities within the UIP serves to strengthen identities that continue to be discriminated against and marginalized within Colombian society (indigenous, black, trade unionist etc) because it allows participants to recognise themselves through the encounter with the other. Through having the opportunity to dialogue and share cultures, histories and experiences, not only to learn from others as mentioned above, but also to come to better recognise, understand and value their own identities, and the histories of struggle which are contained within them:

> …to have clarity of what we have and what our identity is to understand who our ancestors were, how they have struggled and built liberation processes in situations of slavery, feudalism, neoliberalism… (Nomadesc founding member and currently a leading member of the organisation, interview, 2018).

This emphasis is key in a country where the exclusion, oppression and extermination of subaltern peoples has historically implied the invisibility and denial of these peoples and their histories, cultures and knowledge, and even their very existence.

It is important to highlight that Nomadesc's work, and the pedagogical praxis in question, is based upon a dialogical and dynamic concept of culture and identity. They are treated as living processes that are full of history and memory, but which adapt and change over time, as a result of the lived experience of social movements in their struggles. This dynamic notion of culture goes against the static and fixed-in-time concept which tends to prevail within large sections of academia, and also within many social movement organisational processes. This conception is culture is one which recognises the rich, generative potential of such an intercultural knowledge dialogue:

> the indigenous movements of today are not the same as the indigenous movements of a few years ago and nor are the peasant movements, nor is the black movement, or the urban movement the same today, so this

> interculturality is also a dialogue with time, with the historical identities but also with these new identities that are forming, it may sound cliché, but forming in the heat of the struggle, that is, those identities that are formed and inter-woven, and in the university this process has a very important class component, which makes it a common identity which exists based upon the cultural differences .., these differences are there and recognised but also there is a common identity of class and territorial defence that gives the interculturality a common purpose, it doesn't separate them, which is the big theoretical discussion of interculturality, it is often used to end up separating peoples, but in this case on the contrary it ends by uniting them through dialogue. (movement intellectual allied to process, interview, 2018)

This phrase shows that while cultural and ethnic differences are celebrated within the pedagogical process, and the different identities of the political subjects which make it up are strengthened, at the same time the process seeks to put them into dialogue and generate processes of learning, solidarity and unity among the various actors. Here we can also identify learning processes at stake which generate a sense of common cause and common identity.

Photo 4.1: A UIP workshop demonstrating cultural diversity. Hanging from the ceiling are the symbols of the different movements which are part of the process. Credit: Patrick Kane

An issue that has caused much debate within the literature on social movements in recent decades, and also within social movement learning literature, is about collective identity within social movements, and processes of identity formation (Flesher Fominaya, 2010). It has been widely established in the literature on social movements that a sense of belonging, based on shared beliefs and solidarity, is a key element for the sustainability of a social movement (Diani, 1992). In recent decades, the impacts of the consumerist culture of neoliberalism, the invention of the internet and

social networks, and the struggles for the recognition of identities that have historically been marginalised and oppressed, are some of the factors that frame the issue of identity within social movements, and which have made today's collective identities more dynamic and changing . For the purpose of this discussion, we understand the process of identity formation as a learning process, which in this case occurs within a space characterized by multiple and diverse cultural, ethnic, political, and social identities.

On the first level, participation in the intercultural process, and interaction with other subjects carriers of different identities, works as a mirror in allowing participants to recognise and value their own identity through that encounter. Rather than emphasising their individuality, this process is very much about the reinforcement of a collective identity, involving participants who are representatives of collective subjects and carriers of collective identities (for example indigenous, trade unionist, Afro-Colombian) which have historically been marginalized and undervalued by society, but which bring a whole history of struggle and collective endeavour:

> The spaces of the intercultural university also serve as a mirror for the participants, who are involved in counter-hegemonic or alternative efforts but who may not have they have not given themselves the opportunity to recognise themselves in this condition of marginalisation, as part of broader counter-hegemonic efforts and faced with the hegemonic forces... it works as a mirror in the sense that they come to see themselves as counter-hegemonic or emancipatory subjects involved in these struggles that are part of broader struggles...(Activist expert in participatory action research - UIP facilitator, interview, 2018).

Key here is how, unlike many intercultural processes, these different identities are not only recognised within the pedagogy, but those cultural differences and the knowledge they contain are harnessed as a source of transformative potential. The ethnic, political and social identities that are part of the process - indigenous, afro-descendants, trade unions, peasants and so on - have historically been violated, stigmatised, subjugated and discriminated against. Colombian society, beginning with the main instrument of cultural hegemony which is the mass media - is characterised by a structural racism which is the legacy of colonialism, and which is manifested primarily in continued essentialisation, marginalisation and often the ridiculing of ancestral ethnic cultures; and at the same time the stigmatisation and marginalisation of alternative political identities opposed to the dominant sectors (Kane, ethnographic fieldnotes, 2018). In this context, a pedagogical process which creates intercultural dialogue based on the mutual recognition and valuing of cultural identities, and the emancipatory potential contained within this diversity, is an important starting point in terms of strengthening individual and collective identities. It is a praxis that seeks to put into practice the belief

that the route to social emancipation is contained within the peoples and their cultures and stories; but which recognises that this process must begin with repairing, recovering, strengthening and valuing that which has been so violently subjugated for centuries. This is why a key element of the pedagogical process is the aim that participants recognise the value of the collective identities that they carry, and that they are aware of the history of struggle and sacrifice that is part of each of those identities.

Aside from serving as a 'mirror' that strengthens the various identities within it, there is another level to this learning process which has to do with the formation or strengthening of identity. As a process which seeks to generate organic links and common cause between diverse sectors- links that can hopefully produce collaboration for strategic action- it is vital that it should seek to generate a sense of intercultural class identity. Throughout the history of the pedagogical process, an important aim has been to generate a sense of common identity, but without collapsing cultural diversities and the multiple identities that exist within the process. How does the pedagogy of the pedagogical process seek to generate a sense of intercultural class identity? What are the main elements and character of this learning process? Here it is important to highlight the role of two elements within the praxis: *mistica* and historical memory. The praxis of *mistica* can play a fundamental role in the constitution and reproduction of a collective identity and the sense of belonging of any group (Issa, 2016). Writing about the *mistica* of the landless movement in Brazil, Hammond says:

> Shared identity makes social struggle possible, and it has to be cultivated. Correlatively, mistica identifies a common enemy, an other against whom the landless define themselves and their struggle. So, unity is produced within the group and at the same time the group is separated from its adversaries' (2014: p382)

Hence, a strong element around which identity is formed is through the identification of common enemies (the capitalist economic model, the ruling classes, paramilitary groups and so on. Within the pedagogical praxis, much emphasis is placed on identifying those responsible for the situations of oppression of the various sectors and demonstrating the interconnectivity between the structural causes of those situations. On the one hand, this increases the participants' capacity for critical analysis, but on the other hand this generates and strengthens the sense of collective identity, which must be understood as an intercultural class identity.

Participants talked about the transformative experience of sharing the pedagogical space with activists from other territories and cultures, and how this formative interaction deepened their political consciousness. The possibility of learning first-hand about other struggles occurring in the same region; to share histories which are ignored within the formal educational system and the

mainstream media in Colombia; and to spend time in territories characterized by values, social relations and alternative organisational forms, was something that strongly marked the experiences of the UIP graduates and had a conscientisation effect. A former facilitator on the diploma programme describes the learning process which occurred in the intercultural pedagogical space:

> There is a combination of experiences which generates an understanding of the other- more than anything else- to understand the other and to know that this individual cannot transform their reality by themselves, and that they also have a degree of consciousness: the indigenous have an ancestral accumulation of consciousness and culture, the peasantry has also accumulated consciousness and knowledge through the struggle for food sovereignty and through working the land… this combination of knowledges generates an understanding of three things: first, that alone we cannot transform this reality - we have to unite; second, that the enemy is the same, we are facing an economic globalising project; and third- that this knowledge must be collectivised beyond activists to the [benefit of the] whole movement and community. (Trade unionist involved during early years of pedagogical process, interview, 2018)

The quotation above describes a learning process based on the encounter and interaction between the different experiences of struggle, cultures, and organisational forms of the subjects. Central to the process is a realisation that participants' struggles are interdependent, that is, in order to achieve social transformations, they must join forces; and that to achieve this as leaders they must also raise consciousness within their organisations and communities.

Part of the process described above is related to the participants coming to identify with and regard themselves as belonging to a broader social movement. Participants described how they were left with the feeling of belonging to a social movement which extended beyond their own movement or territory to regional and national level, made up of very diverse peoples and organisations with very different stories. In particular, the experience of participating in the pedagogical process made the existence of a region-wide social movement in the southwest tangible, and a key learning which was identified in the research was how this sense of belonging (which is closely linked to the formation of class consciousness) deepened the political consciousness of the participants, as described by a graduate of the first cohort :

> ... I arrived to the UIP to find an inspiring scene really because the diversity of knowledge ... I am from Huila and I did not know the reality of what was happening in Valle del Cauca, what happened to black communities, what happened to indigenous communities, so I'd say the UIP really allowed me for the first time to understand what is happening in my country, and be able to visit different areas and to understand the different peoples, to see how they think, not only about the problems they face but also their solutions, how they organise for example their life plans (Activist from Red Proyecto Sur youth collective, interview, 2018)

> ...[because of my time in the UIP] I no longer think in terms of my region the Macizo colombiano, but in terms of the southwest region, and this was an important change , because it allowed me to have a broader vision of what the social movement is in the Colombian southwest and understand that although there are similar processes, all have very particular ways of assuming the social organisation of their struggles. (Activist Macizo youth organisation, graduate of first cohort UIP, interview, 2018)

The role of emotions

An aspect which arose in discussions with activists was the role played by emotions and the way that they are harnessed within the pedagogical praxis. Most processes of political education do not simply aim to increase participants' knowledge and understanding; implicit in the term 'critical consciousness ' is an aspect of increased commitment to the cause for social change on the part of the participant. That is to say – the desired outcome is that, upon obtaining an increased level of understanding of the reality of social injustices (and their structural causes), an increase will occur in the subject's commitment to act in order to transform that reality, and hence also an increase in the capacity of action of both the individual and the collective.

This issue is vital in the case of Nomadesc and the movements which are part of the pedagogical process: in the repressive context of the southwest of Colombia where the reality of social movements, how can an increase in the commitment of the participants occur as a result of an increase in their understanding of such a harsh reality? Clearly, when talking about an increase in commitment to the cause as a result of a political education intervention, we are not talking about a pedagogical process that simply transmits knowledge to the participants: we are talking about a learning process that must involve and sensitise participants on an emotional level.

In recent years, the importance of emotions in understanding and explaining political action within the academic literature on social movements has begun to be recognised (Jasper, 2011) , but there is not much literature on the role of emotions within social movements in cases like Colombia's where social movements are confronted with strategies of the state and paramilitary groups which are designed to generate terror. In the case of Nomadesc, the pedagogical process cannot be understood without understanding the role that emotions play, how they are harnessed within the praxis, and the learning processes which arise.

The use of political violence against civil society actors seeks at the most basic level to generate an emotional reaction which prevents or inhibits the organisational activity of social movements in the pursuit of their objectives. As already established, all organisations that are part of the pedagogical process in question (and therefore all its participants), have experienced the repressive and violent

aggression of the state and/or paramilitary groups in some way. In a context like this of widespread human rights violations, in which doing activism means risking being targetted and possibly assassinated, and where the fear of being targeted by the state's security apparatus or another armed actor paramilitaries is part of everyday life, how can a political education process generate an increase in the political commitment of political subjects?

When graduates were asked in interviews about their experiences and learning within the pedagogical process, something which emerged prominently was the issue of hope, and how their participation within had generated a feeling of hope. Hope is essential for any process which seeks to generate social transformations, as argued by Paolo Freire: *'I do not understand human existence, and the struggle that is needed to improve it, without hope and dreams. Hope is an ontological necessity* '(Freire, 1992: p13). Interviewees described how the pedagogical space cultivates hope through the intercultural coming together, the act of joining with people from other organisational processes, territories and cultures, and coming into contact with the hope which drives each of the struggles represented within the UIP, and by others who are also fighting for social justice. The recognition of the interconnectivity and similarity of these struggles, but also the possibility to participate in a space with other activists in which a different world is openly debated and imagined, to be able to debate and collectively visualise social transformations with activists engaged in other struggles, was something which had a profound, hope-generating impact upon participants. The following quotes from former participants give a sense of this phenomenon:

> Sometimes you get a bit down, for example, something that did impact me and that I could go on to do in my own community, when you hear the experiences of the others [in the UIP] and when I saw them with all that desire, and that empowerment in their territories, then it activated me again , I knew I have to keep fighting, I have to keep resisting, for my children and for the children of my children and for the children of my brothers ... we must continue, we must continue (urban Afro-Colombian community leader in Buenaventura, interview, 2018).

> …sometimes one feels alone, as if we are the only ones who are struggling… but no, in other regions and in other departments there are also people motivated and fighting for the transformation of society, and I think that the UIP becomes like a meeting place that is necessary, where we can share the experiences. (Activist Macizo youth organisation, graduate of first cohort UIP, interview, 2018)

This praxis of hope is a vital element of the learning processes that were identified by participants in the pedagogical process. Here it is important to highlight that this hope does not just appear out of nowhere: it is already contained within the processes and struggles which the participants belong to; and also, within the subjects themselves, as individuals who are committed to the struggle for a

different world. The praxis of the hope serves to instrumentalise and multiply this pre-existing hope, through the intercultural interaction between the diverse individual and collective subjects in struggle, and the sharing of their stories, experiences, symbols and cultures.

The pedagogical praxis seeks to generate connections at an emotional level between participants based on affection, solidarity and equality. This generation of affective links at the individual level has a collective level objective of facilitating the linking of the different organisational processes, territories and struggles of the participating organisations that are represented by the individual participants:

> There are possibilities for cooperation and exchanges which are outside of the logic even of the university itself, so that people get to know each other in their resistance processes, and emotional bonds are created and behind these links there can be new exchanges and collaborations, new solidarity, affection, and that for me is a fabric of solidarity, the weaving is done at the emotional level, then later the head is what explains and justifies it. (Activist expert in participatory action research - UIP facilitator, interview, 2018).

This discussion demonstrates that the pedagogical process has a strong element of prefigurative politics, that is to say that the pedagogy and human relationships which are formed within the process reflect the values and the changes which are being fought for. Harley and Langdon argue that *'the politics and praxis of [prefigurative] movements are based on love, hope, care, belonging, creativity - not for the future but for now. The ontological link here is clear - that the struggle itself becomes a place where you become more fully human'* (Freire, 2000). The intercultural pedagogical space can be understood as a place of encounter and reflection within the struggle, characterised by the prefigurative politics and the alternative and humanist values of the social movements which participate.

The role of *mistica*

To understand the learning processes at play here, it is necessary to introduce a concept which arises from social movements in Latin America, and hence is well known across the continent and even within Latin American academia, but which is still little known in western literature: the practice of *mística*. In relation to social movement praxis, mística is a term which has been used to refer to the 'abstract, emotional element, strengthened in collectivist movements, which can be described as the feeling of empowerment, love, and solidarity that serves as a mobilizing force by inspiring self-sacrifice, humility, and courage (Issa , 2016: p125).[2] Thus understood, *mística* is a fundamental factor for the sustenance and reproduction of social struggle, since it generates and sustains hope in contexts where social movements are often in conflict with hegemonic political, economic and social

forces. The *praxis of mística* is any practice which seeks to generate the feeling of *mística* and the emotions which accompany it, often involving '*representation of the reality of social movements through word, art, symbolism, and music*' (ibid). The praxis of mistica should serve to make subjects feel connected - with themselves, with their peers, and with the struggle of their movements. It has been argued that the praxis of *mística* has its roots within liberation theology (ibid), however in many cases (such as that of Nomadesc), the praxis is strongly influenced by the diverse cultures of varied social movements.

Within the Nomadesc intercultural pedagogical process (and in fact any activity organised by Nomadesc), throughout its history there has been an emphasis on the praxis of *mística*. Any activity - be it forum, workshop, meeting, usually contains elements of praxis which invoke and celebrate the identity and historical memory of the social movements of the region music, dance, word and symbology are used to invoke and deepen the feeling of *mistica*. This usually takes place at the beginning of any activity, and is used in order to connect participants with each other's struggles, and to identify the task or activity in hand- for example a meeting or a workshop- with the broader struggles for social change and the sacrifices of martyrs (Kane, ethnographical fieldnotes, 2018). The praxis of mistica within the pedagogical praxis also serves to collectively remember the deceased and hence to emphasise to participants that the struggles of today are built upon the struggles of those who are no longer here and in many cases who lost their lives as a result of their activism.

Within the intercultural process of the pedagogical process of Nomadesc, the praxis of *mistica* is one of the main tools employed in order to generate a sense of collective identity; an identity woven like a patchwork quilt made up of the diverse ethnic, cultural, political, and social identities. When *mistica* is practiced within an intercultural pedagogical process, the learning which occurs in terms of the generation and strengthening of identity takes on another dimension. These aspects are used to integrate the group and generate feelings of affection, love and solidarity with each other and with their different struggles. Hence, within the UIP process, a feeling of belonging is generated that includes but goes beyond identifying with the UIP as a pedagogical institution: it is about students strengthening their political identity and recognising themselves as empowered political subjects that are part of a larger movement that goes beyond community or movement they represent, in a counter-hegemonic struggle, through their interaction with other political subjects involved in other social struggles, and coming to appreciate their innate connections.

Historical memory as an identity formation tool

Our research identified another important aspect in the formation of identity within social movements is how collective memory, or historical memory, is harnessed, within the actions and strategies of any

social movement (Choudry and Valley, 2018). According to Issa (2016), the construction of the identity of a movement occurs through maintaining the collective memory of past struggles and reviving the contributions of protagonists and martyrs of the struggle. So how, within the praxis of the Nomadesc pedagogical process, is collective memory instrumentalised as a learning process in order to preserve, reproduce and circulate knowledge, and to forge and strengthen collective identity.

Central to the Nomadesc pedagogical praxis is the constant emphasising and reproducing of collective historical memory. This aspect of the pedagogy is closely linked to the praxis of mistica and can be understood as a process of preserving and instrumentalising the history and knowledge of social movements - a history which has been invisible to hegemonic institutions, and often also by academia. It seeks to create a sense of collective identity not based on all of the subjects having the same history, but based on the different histories and knowledges of the organisations involved in the process. In that sense, the past is harnessed in the present as a pedagogical tool which increases the consciousness of participants and provides lessons and inspiration for the present and future of social struggles. Hence, movements' histories become tools for the reproduction of movements and the construction of new strategies of action.

In the context of violence and repression, the preservation of historical memory, not only in terms of the archiving of materials but also through social movement praxis, is a process of preservation and reproduction of knowledge, and of the struggle itself. In a context where the action of military forces and paramilitary groups has eliminated hundreds of thousands of militants and community members, the act of remembering is an eminently political one, a rejection of the erasure of the victims' memory (Kane, ethnographic fieldnotes, 2018). One aspect of that praxis means remembering the martyrs of the struggle, victims of violent government action. Within the social movements of Colombia, and especially within the praxis of Nomadesc, remembering is a process full of symbology and ritual that emphasises the obligation to continue the struggle in order to honour the memory of the dead, as articulated by the popular slogan which is heard in social movements events and especially in events to commemorate the victims of political violence, ' *my voice, which is shouting, my dream, which is still unbroken, and you should know, that I only die if you become weak, because those who die in struggle live on in each one of us*!'. In this way, the pain of grief, and the memory of the martyr, are collectivised and become unifying factors - elements which serve to increase the commitment to the cause. The different movements which are part of the pedagogical process remember and honour their martyrs but also those of the other movements involved in the process, hence reinforcing the process of generating common identity, solidarity and unity. As a human rights organisation, Nomadesc since its inception has made collective historical memory central to every aspect of its

work, for example through the annual commemorations of murdered social leaders or massacres committed in the region.

However, the emphasis placed on praxis in the importance of collective historical memory goes beyond carrying the memory of the martyrs of the struggle. There is a very strong emphasis on the importance of discussing, understanding and valuing previous struggles throughout the history of the social movements, in order to harness these histories and draw lessons for current struggles. An important element of the pedagogical praxis here is that of inter-generational dialogue, where discussions and debates are generated between younger and elder activists both within the group and special guests who have been part of the historical struggles. The aim here is to avoid a tendency that exists within the organisational processes of social movements to undervalue and often ignore the accumulated knowledge generated by social movements through their previous struggle, as explained by one facilitator in relation to the example of the trade union movement:

> an atomised trade union movement means that one activist finishes and its another's turn the day after tomorrow, facing the same situation but worse, but they don't build upon the previous experience, because we don't do enough to join things up, I think [the intergenerational dialogues] is something that is very important….there is a very strong component of youth in the UIP, and the component of older adults, although there aren't as many, but it is highly valuable because the younger activists learn to engage with the more experienced activists. (interview with trade unionist who has been involved in the process since early phase of diplomas until present day, 2018)

These inter-generational dialogues were identified by several participants as an important element, both in terms of learning from previous struggles in order to improve praxis, and in also in terms of the process of strengthening identity and generating critical consciousness. It was clear how the emphasis on memory and the importance of collecting and keeping alive the history of movements influenced the actions of students within their own organisations and social movements:

> [something which I took from the process] is the importance of memory and that is why now in almost all of the exercises I do with Macizo youth [youth wing of peasant organisation] I always insist on an activity around the collective memory of our organisation- what we have been, what we have done, what we know, what our predecessors did, right? To recognise the importance of the elders too, and recognise the importance of their knowledge of our territory and the strategies that they have had as leaders, and pay close attention to them, it's a really important exercise. (Activist Macizo youth organisation, graduate of first cohort UIP, interview, 2018)

This phrase from a graduate of the UIP demonstrates the centrality of memory as a theme within the praxis of the process, and how it has influenced the activism and organising within the social movements of the UIP.

In conclusion, this chapter has provided an in-depth discussion of the learning processes which occur within the Nomadesc pedagogical process. As an emancipatory initiative which emerged from and is embedded within the social movement struggles of southwest Colombia, the pedagogical process is itself a constant learning process, shaped by a learning dialectic between the pedagogical initiative and the struggles of the social movements involved. This dialectic, and its embeddedness within social struggles, allow for a dynamic, horizontal process of collective knowledge construction, and the constant renewal and rapid adaptation of the process in order to respond to the ever-changing conjunctures and the requirements of the region's social struggles. The intercultural learning space provides an opportunity for encounter for activists to collectively reflect upon each other's struggles and praxis.

The diversity of the movements is understood as a key source of emancipatory potential, and the initiative seeks to create an intercultural knowledge dialogue between the diverse subjects of struggle. This dialogical interaction seeks to harness the different knowledges, histories, identities and cultures of the diverse individuals and their movements in order to deepen the critical consciousness of participants, but also to facilitate the collective construction of new meanings/understandings and knowledge. Through the interaction with other subjects in struggle a shift in consciousness occurs amongst participants, generating a sense of intercultural, territorial class consciousness which is facilitated through the recognition of the interconnectedness of struggles and the identification of common oppressors. Participants described how the process generated in them a feeling of belonging to a social movement which extended beyond their own movement or territory to regional and national level, made up of very diverse peoples and organisations with very different stories. The pedagogical process represents a deeply prefigurative learning space characterised by alternative (non-capitalist) values and social relations.

The intercultural encounter serves on the one hand to reinforce the different collective identities of the different subjects, and at the same time to also generate a sense of collective identity and belonging which does not collapse or subsume other identities. The coming together of representatives of diverse struggles can also be understood as a praxis of hope, the aggregation of the hope which is contained in the struggles and histories of each of the movements involved. Nomadesc employs *mistica* in order to harness emotion and the collective memories of social movements for the benefit of the movements struggles. Within the intercultural learning space, mistica is used to integrate the group and generate feelings of affection, love and solidarity with each other and with their different struggles and histories. Within the pedagogical processes the collective memories of

aspects such as movements' previous struggles, martyrs are converted into movement resources for diverse types of learning.

5. Epistemological and conceptual learning

This chapter takes the reader on a journey through the rich epistemological and ideational lineages which have converged within and helped to shape the pedagogical process throughout its history. It examines, in the words of the protagonists themselves, the conceptual constructions and ideas which have been particularly influential over the course of the history of the process. We demonstrate how the dialectical relationship between the pedagogical process and the broader struggles of social movements in the southwest region in Colombia have shaped the semiotic processes which occur within the initiative. The chapter also tracks the continuities and ruptures which have occurred within the epistemological and conceptual dimensions of the process.

A decolonial knowledge dialogue

Underlying the pedagogical process discussed in these pages is a historical reading of the epistemological injustices which underpin the epistemological paradigm and thought systems of Western modernity. In order to establish the hegemony of Western modernity in Latin America, as in most of the planet, European conquistadors endeavoured to exterminate, oppress, stigmatize and make invisible other epistemologies, cultures and civilisations. This hegemony is based on the denial of the existence of other ways of understanding the world, other ways of knowing, and other knowledge paradigms (Santos, 2015). The pedagogical approach to education discussed herein implicitly implies the rejection and dismantling of this epistemological hierarchy which has historically characterised Western modernity. Hence the knowledges, experiences, cultures and collective memories of those sectors which have historically been marginalised, discriminated and repressed are not only considered valuable, but are understood as containing the potential for the construction of alternative models and creating social transformations in favour of the majorities.

> Culture underlies all communities, peoples and sectors, it is part of their philosophy and it goes beyond the traditional dance etc, culture is also the way they see the world and it brings with it an identity which allows them to be different. So for example, indigenous cultures which hasn't lost its own languages have a very different way of seeing the world to Western modes of seeing the world, because the ways that they communicate with each other and with nature is completely different from the imposition of a [European language], be it English, Spanish or French, which happened with colonisation. Sometimes people think it is a cliché to keep talking about that, but there is part of the essence of what we are. Where did the black communities arrive from? What was their culture? How did they live? What was their language? Why were they forced to come to another continent? Who resisted? That is part of their culture too, and how that culture of resistance from those particularly violent periods has to do precisely with a strong culture of resistance, and this culture of resistance is rooted in a philosophy and concepts which are part of the

> character of each of these communities. [Culture includes] the issue of protecting territory, for example the indigenous guards or the maroon guards, these are part of a culture of organised community work, in minga to defend a territory. When we talk about interculturality it is about identifying the diversity of these cultures that exist in the territories and seeing each of them as complementary, and as part of our wealth, not as cultures which have to impose themselves over others. (Nomadesc founding member and currently a leading member of the organisation, interview, 2018)

Rooted in such an understanding, it follows that this be a pluralistic, horizontal and dialogical epistemological initiative, containing a wealth of conceptual constructions, values and languages which have been interwoven along the way. In this sense it is an intrinsically decolonial process in its epistemological approach: in bringing together diverse epistemologies which have been historically subjugated, it seeks to overcome the fragmentation and division left by colonialism which continue to underpin hegemonic power structures.

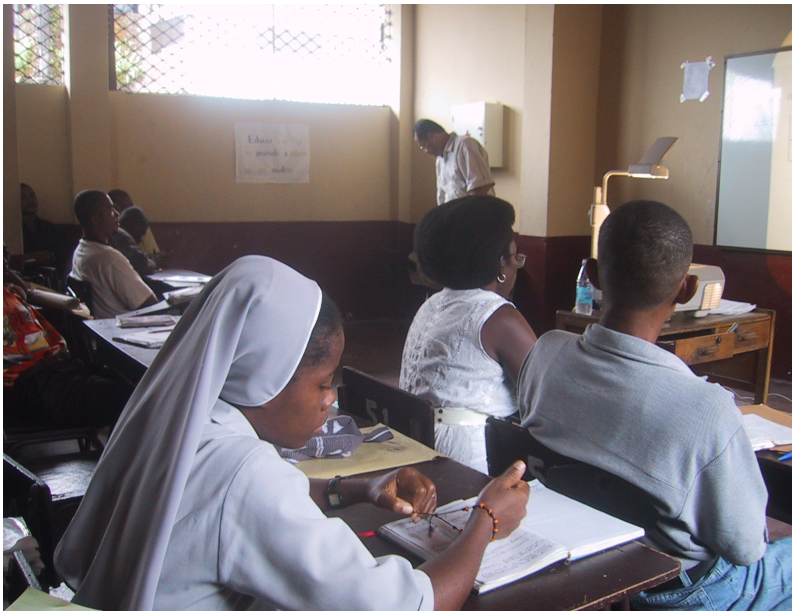

Photo 5.1: Diploma workshop in Buenaventura, 2004. Credit: Nomadesc

As an intercultural pedagogical process, the UIP facilitates a convergence of diverse individual subjects (representing collective subjects); different epistemologies; and different organisational forms and praxis. The process is nourished by what could be understood as a reservoir of epistemologies and knowledges of the diverse actors that make up the process. This reservoir of knowledges includes the alternative epistemologies of indigenous, afro-descendant, and peasant communities; theoretical, academic and 'professional' knowledge (both methodological and ideological); and the knowledge resulting from the accumulation of praxis of the individual and collective subjects which are part of

the pedagogical process. Hence the pedagogical process can be conceived as a patchwork quilt, made up of the different knowledge and learning that has been constructed, woven and circulated over two decades of pedagogical praxis between diverse sectors of the social movement. Through a process of constant learning and adaptation, Nomadesc and the social organisations that form part of the process have developed their own conceptual and pedagogical constructions throughout the history of their praxis.

So how to understand the diverse and multiple knowledges and epistemologies which form part of this intercultural knowledge dialogue? Interviewees emphasised the importance of what is referred to within the process as the 'ancestral' knowledge of the different sectors, which can be understood as knowledge which has been preserved within the communities down through the years, transmitted from generation to generation, principally through oral traditions. For indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants, that knowledge has survived the genocide of the Spanish invasion and slavery, and therefore is part of the history of struggle and resistance of their ancestors. This knowledge can be spiritual, practical, political, organisational etc: for example, alternative medicine using the bushes/herbs; the agricultural knowledge held by a peasant farmer of their seeds; or the rituals of indigenous or afro-descendant spirituality (Kane, ethnographic fieldnotes, 2018). This ancestral knowledge is harnessed within the pedagogical process alongside the 'professional' or academic knowledge, and the accumulated learning which has emerged from the pedagogical process itself. The knowledge which emerges from the daily experience of social movement struggles in the context of the armed conflict, repression and marginalisation by the Colombian state also plays a central role. Simply being part of a political-organisational process within such a context produces unique and supremely valuable knowledge within the movements – be that the experience of being part of a trade union struggle in defence of higher education as in the case of Sintraunicol union, or the struggle for ethnic-territorial rights and dignified living conditions for Afro-descendant communities as in the case of the Proceso de Comunidades Negras, to mention two examples.

The rejection of the colonial hierarchy of knowledge does not imply a rejection of academic or professional knowledge associated with the knowledge institutions of Western rationality - the process has always involved facilitators educated and sometimes employed in local universities who are committed to working with social movements; who share the criticism of the epistemic violence committed historically by these institutions, and who seek to put their own knowledge to the benefit of the UIP . What is sought is to remove academic or 'professional' knowledge from its pedestal in order to put it into dialogue and interaction with the other knowledges within the pedagogical space in order to create a horizontal, collective processes of knowledge construction and weaving. Implicit

in this epistemological horizontality is the prefigurative nature of this emancipatory process, which aims for participants to put into practice in their daily lives, the changes they want to see at the level of society. This means enacting and adopting alternative values in their daily interactions and organising processes, so that the learning process itself becomes a space for building alternative social relations (Dinerstein, 2015).

Clearly, this commitment to epistemological justice implies a huge challenge: the colonial hierarchy of knowledge, and epistemological domination are practices which have lasted several centuries and are deeply embedded within all aspects of mainstream Colombian society, including formal education institutions, and are often reproduced unconsciously by social subjects. Being so immersed in them within broader society, it can be difficult for social movements to create spaces which are completely devoid of such tendencies. For example, in a space where the facilitator of a workshop has academic knowledge and vocabulary, there is a tendency for participants (especially from rural communities often with lower levels of formal education) to return to the traditional schemes of subordination to the teacher's supremacy, or to the participants who have a higher level of formal education. Being able to overcome this trend depends on the facilitator's pedagogical capacity, but also on the dynamic which is created within the pedagogical space which seeks to empower subjects and encourage them to value their own knowledge and experience. At the same time, with the haste to dismantle the hierarchy of knowledge and redress historical injustices, there is also the temptation to fall into romanticism or the reification of ancestral knowledge, without questioning and critically evaluating them in the process, or to re-create an inverted hierarchy of knowledge. This temptation is understandable from the perspective of epistemological justice, given the depth of historical effects related to epistemicide and the need to rescue and preserve surviving ancestral knowledge. These tensions demonstrate the difficulty of building a process based on principles of epistemological justice, in a broader context of continuing epistemological injustice.

Conceptual and discursive constructions of the process

It is important to consider the semiotic processes that occur within the pedagogical process itself as a result of the interaction between these epistemologies and knowledges: how these different ways of understanding the world, different accumulated learning experiences formed through struggle and organising have been interweaved together, transformed and drawn upon throughout the history of the process. How do the subjects of pedagogical process build collective ways of understanding the world, which are more than the sum of the individual discourses? What are the systems of thought, ideas and conceptual constructions in question? And how do these semiotic processes of this pedagogical initiative relate to the struggles of social movements?

Fairclough (CDA book) argues that semiosis is

> an element of the social process, which is dialectically related to other elements of the social process ... social relations, power, institutions, beliefs and cultural values are partly semiotic - internalise semiosis without being able to reduce it ... there are three ways in which semiosis relates to other elements of social practices and social events: as a facet of action; in the interpretation of aspects of the world; and in the constitution of identities. Speeches under certain circumstances can be operationalised, 'put into practice' - a dialectical process with three aspects: they can be implemented as new ways of (inter) acting, they can be instilled as new ways of being (identities), or they can be materialised physically (such as new ways of organising a space) (Fairclough, 1992: p11 & 12)

That is to say: semiosis is an important element of social relations, dialectically related to other elements of the social process, and both semiosis and its manifestation in speeches, have important material impacts, for example in guiding social action and the generation of identities. We have used the term 'patchwork quilt' to describe the construction and collective interweaving of knowledge and ideas that occurs within the pedagogical process. This term describes the way in which the knowledge of all subjects who have historically participated in the pedagogical process (their experiences of organising, of struggle and of the changing conjunctures in the region; epistemological paradigms; conceptual constructions; tacit and practical knowledge; social practices; cultures, spiritualities, and symbology) meet other knowledges (academics, professionals, etc.), and how all are instrumentalized and put into dialogue. This encounter/interaction generates new semiotic processes within the process, which in turn influence the semiotic processes of the collective subjects involved, and hence influences their actions within their social struggles: these semiotic processes end up having material results within organisational processes seeking social transformation.

This is not to suggest that Nomadesc and the organisations participating in the pedagogical process have invented a new language understood only by themselves. It is about how conceptual constructions, ways of understanding and articulating social phenomena, and the terms/ constructions developed in the midst of social struggles to articulate demands and guide social action, are shared, recycled and adopted within a discursive repertoire for the cultivation of common meanings and collective ways of understanding the world from the standpoint of epistemological diversity. These counter-hegemonic semiotic processes are particularly valuable because they emerge from praxis and at the same time are oriented towards praxis - they arise from the direct action and experience of activists, and their instrumentalisation seeks to improve and strengthen the praxis of social movements in their struggles. In this sense, the pedagogy can be understood as a collective mode of wisdom of the activists involved in the process, the accumulation of their varied and extensive experiences of struggle, and it is precisely that which not only provides legitimacy to the pedagogical

process but also makes it a valuable collective resource that emerges from the movement and has been nourished over time with new concepts, realities and experiences.

It is important to note the dynamic nature of the initiative's rich conceptual and discursive repertoire, and how it has been driven by the dialectic which exists between the social struggles in the region and the changing conjunctures that constantly require adaptation and hence and generate new knowledge, new praxis on the part of social movements. That is, the conceptual and discursive constructions that are part of the patchwork quilt of the UIP today are not simply those which have been accumulated throughout the two decades of the process: along the way, new concepts and ways of understanding have been cultivated, whilst others have lost their explanatory power or relevance or have been replaced. Also important in promoting these changes has been the continuous cultural and geographical expansion of the process to include new organisational processes and new territories, which logically bring new concepts and ideas that are woven into the process. For example, when the participation of indigenous and Afro-Colombian sectors increased, the praxis and pedagogy began to reflect that participation and include elements of the epistemologies and social practices of these ethnic groups.

Crucially , the development of this new vocabulary reflects a shift from a top-down knowledge production process that diffuses knowledge products to participants, to a much more bottom-up and dialogical process where teachers and learners, old and young, leaders and activists engage in a collective process of meaning making that transforms both participants and organisers in new, exciting and innovative ways.

Social humanism

In seeking to gain an understanding of the ideas which have influenced and shaped the Nomadesc pedagogical process, a key starting point is that of social humanism. At once a philosophical and epistemological framework and a fairly loose ideological school of thought, social humanism is a rare example of a theoretical framework which has found its definition as much in the praxis and organising of social movements as it has in academic pages. It is a theory which emerges from the very specific violent and repressive context of Colombia during the 1960s, with the coming together of a group of three Colombian intellectuals who had an explicit commitment to social change and social justice, and who would go down as some of Colombia's greatest radical thinkers: Eduardo Umana Luna, Orlando Fals Borda and Camilo Torres Restrepo (the latter a Catholic priest, sociologist and revolutionary activist who would eventually go on join the ELN guerrilla and subsequently be killed in combat). The three, from their different academic disciplinary perspectives, were seeking new ways of

understanding the specific social realities of Colombia which could be useful to the praxis of those engaged in struggles for social change.

> [You could understand social humanism as] an ecosystem of ideas shaped ... in the 60s by several basic problems - the problem of what to do with Marxism and with socialism and its inability ... to see the stories from below, the history from below but also its inability to see beyond the structure, then a series of theories emerge [in Colombia], because [Eduardo Umaña Luna] comes from the discipline of law, and Orlando Fals Borda comes from the world of sociology and Camilo [Torres] also with strong influence of theology, so let's say it was an ecosystem of people concerned about social change and social justice who came together, but also aware that much of the deficiency of social struggles in Colombia had been the failure to propose a strong and solid alternative paradigm based on our reality… so that spurred them to seek to generate ideas on how to understand that reality and in the case of [Eduardo Umaña Luna] there was a very specific problem ... so he said, 'I want a social humanism that intends to think about the centrality of human rights but based on the agenda of the Rights of the Peoples [Algiers Charter], that is, that allows us to see the collective: Human Rights are rights centred on individuals, as understood from a liberal perspective - individuals included in the social pact, included in the forms of social organisation, whilst collective rights are rights geared towards collective social claims of peoples which have been marginalized and who seek inclusion but also transformation, then and that is interesting part about the Rights of Peoples, it was a way of saying 'yes, human rights are very important for those who are included and those who are outside have to look for an inclusion which in itself implies transformation, it is not simply inclusion: it is, include me whilst transforming, so I think that was their concern and the difference. (scholar-activist, facilitator on the UIP, interview, 2018)

That is, social humanism is a theory which emerges from the Colombian context (and the Colombian academy), not from the Eurocentric canon. In the context of violence and state repression, they proposed a human rights framework which necessarily must include civil and political rights, but which is based on the Rights of Peoples contained in the Algiers Charter on the Rights of Peoples and therefore that is more closely linked to the demands and struggles of social movements, particularly those struggling against imperialism in oppressed nations. As the quotation above demonstrated, they were critics of the structuralism of orthodox (Eurocentric Marxism), and intended a paradigm that was able to see beyond the structure, which recognises human agency - which implies the possibility of acting upon reality in order to transform it: that is, a framework based upon a recognition that people are bearers of emancipatory and transformative capacity. But more than simply recognising human agency, social humanism also brings the human subject into the focus of analysis:

> to give a superior focus, or an epistemological pre-eminence to the human subject, to their agency, but also their humanness, their emotions, the things we share…(ibid)

Yet unlike other humanist theories which tend to isolate the human from their social context and relationships with other humans and the physical world, *social* humanism seeks to bring these relationships and contexts into the lens of analysis:

> Social humanism comes from modernist roots...you could ask, does this not fall into being individualism and liberalism? This is where the social comes in, it is where another philosophical dimension emerges which is to focus upon the human being but in relation with the other: that is, you can't understand the human subject outside of its relation with the other which means that you have to read the cultural relationships, but also the relationships with nature and territory…(ibid)

Here we can see the influence of social humanism throughout all of Nomadesc's praxis, including the pedagogical work, in particular in the sensitivity to the social realities, cultures and relationships of the subjects which they work with, and hence with the micro-level essence of movements and organisations: the human building blocks. Nowhere is this better reflected than in the UIP:

> I think the UIP is a good example of social humanism in practice, because it generates a practice of exchange between communities which think as collectives...but which also develop a critical analysis of the systems from the perspective of the social struggles and the trajectories of their communities. These aren't anonymous communities, but communities made up of people who think, who feel, who have expectations...and these ways of thinking, these cosmovisions can't be understood in isolation from a specific place, from a set of social relations, from a territory, and this is why you see in the UIP there is music, they talk about territory, there are seeds, they do the mandala….because there is this frame of social understanding and they understand that communities are made up of and move because of people, and people are the focus...it isn't simply the land for the sake of the land, or the air for the sake of the air, or opposition for the sake of opposition, it is also about living culturally, socially, humanly…(Activist involved in early years of the diploma programme working as part of the Nomadesc team, interview, 2018).

In recent decades indigenous, peasant and black movements have emerged at the vanguard of social movement struggles in Colombia, whilst more orthodox, Marxist Leninist institutions within the revolutionary left have been weakened and lost protagonism. This shift has had important repercussions for the ideological processes and reference points of Colombian social movements, and has arguably led to a decolonial paradigm shift in recent decades within some aspects of social humanism. More orthodox, prescriptive ideological approaches to organising have often struggled to relate to the alternative epistemologies and organising cultures of indigenous, black and peasant movements in Colombia, generally seeking to subsume them into their own ideological model and revolutionary project. However, social humanism's conception of the transformational capacity contained within diverse subaltern knowledges and cultures, its receptivity to subjective dimensions

of the human experience, and its dialogical methodology, have meant that adherents of social humanism amongst Colombian social movements have embraced the culture, knowledge and organisational forms of these movements, particularly as these movements have been at the forefront led emblematic uprisings over recent decades. The interaction with alternative epistemological and conceptual frameworks has hence had a transformative impact for some proponents of social humanism, and transformed social movement semiotic processes and praxis.

Liberation theology

Also influential upon social movement praxis and organising throughout Latin America, particularly within popular education initiatives, was the 'liberation theology' current of the Catholic church. Liberation theology gained particular traction within the Catholic church in Colombia, and is often associated with the 1968 conference of Latin American bishops in Medellin, Colombia. Liberation theology is rooted in ideas of social justice, and argues that the church has a moral responsibility to support the 'preferential option for the poor', and hence should dedicate energy and resources to supporting the cause of social transformation and emancipation for marginalised sections of society, including for the perspective of pedagogy and organising. One interviewee explains that liberation theology forms part of the pool of ideas which have influenced Nomadesc's approach to its work and in particular its pedagogical praxis:

> I think it draws upon all of those schools of thought and thinkers, including popular education, liberation theology which we have always been close to, I think liberation theology provides us with some foundations… (Trade unionist involved during early years of pedagogical process, interviewed, 2018)

Within Colombian social movements, social humanism and liberation theology have historically been connected by the revered figure of Camilo Torres Restrepo. Torres, through his thought and praxis, and his argument that the church had a responsibility to seek liberation for the oppressed, was a forerunner and inspiration of liberation theology. As a priest who made the ultimate sacrifice and laid down his life for his revolutionary belief, Torres continues to inspire generations of Colombian activists. His combination of Christianity and Marxist sociological analysis are recognisable in both social humanism and liberation theology.

An expansive conception of human rights

The conceptual framework of human rights has been perhaps the most important pillar which has underpinned the pedagogical process throughout its history. Human rights has been central throughout its history, and has served as a conceptual foundation upon which new semiotic processes have occurred. In the following discussion we seek unpack how the concept of human rights is understood and articulated within the process; the way in which the concept of human rights is

harnessed within the praxis, and how the process has expanded its focus beyond orthodox human rights.

The educational process was founded on the basis of the urgent need to protect human life in the context of a violent paramilitary onslaught against social movements in the late 1990s. The intention in those early years was to provide tools which could help social movements to counter the violence and its impact on organisational processes and social struggles (a need that has been constant in the context of southwestern Colombia). From the inception of the pedagogical process, the discourse of human rights has been an important tool which allows activists to articulate the reality being experienced by communities and movements, and to act upon this reality in contexts of extreme violence and state terrorism. But the conceptualisation of human rights that has been developed within the work of Nomadesc, and in the pedagogical process itself, goes beyond the institutional framework of international civil and political rights treaties, and the economic, social, cultural and environmental rights associated with liberal democracies to include the Algiers Charter of the Rights of Peoples. It is a conceptualisation which is particular to the Colombian context, and which must be understood in relation to an understanding of social humanism, as set out above.

Put into practice, this expanded framework means a radical praxis of human rights defence that is closely linked to struggles for social justice; which is receptive to and rooted in the reality of peoples and communities, their cultures, stories, knowledge and experiences; and which seeks to empower the social subjects with whom it works, through the generation of critical consciousness:

> It wasn't only about studying the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but about also building towards the construction of the Rights of Peoples…and not just about how many articles you could learn but also that people understand that their rights goes far beyond what national and international institutions and treaties have made acceptable, because people [as collective subjects] also have a series of rights, for example there are rights of rebellion, people are allowed to be critical. (Trade unionist intellectual involved during early years of pedagogical process, interview, 2018)

Unlike the paternalistic praxis which is perhaps common among human rights organisations, Nomadesc's praxis, and the pedagogical process, implies strengthening collective subjects in their organisation and empowering them to demand their own rights; to formulate, articulate, and strengthen the demands upon state institutions, and to generate actions and mobilisations aimed at ensuring their enforceability:

> Because [in my organisation before] we were doing a process more, as a kind of solidarity initiative that really wasn't human rights defence, I realised that the defence of the rights of the community we were working with meant to support

> them to demand the rights that they were being denied, instead of just going and accompanying them and helping out, giving solidarity, [the diploma] was one of the things that allowed me to then go back to our collective and create this discussion , to say really we aren't defending the rights of these children, we are just helping the government, which doesn't give them education, doesn't give them food, housing, do they?...I came to understand that the issue of rights is the responsibility of the government, they signed the international treaties and they are the ones who weren't fulfilling their duties (current leading Nomadesc member, and diploma student during early years, interview, 2018).

In terms of the way it has been constructed within the pedagogical process, the figure of human rights can be considered more of a means than an end: that is, the fulfilment of internationally recognised human rights is not a utopia imagined by the actors which belong to the process. Within the pedagogical process and Nomadesc's work with communities, the discourse of human rights can be understood as a strategic discursive tool used to articulate demands upon state institutions, and to mobilise communities and generate support around those demands. This tool has on the one hand been defensive- put into practice within the repressive context of the Colombian southwest, providing knowledge that throughout the history of the pedagogical process has been key for the social movements involved, and that thanks to their participation, has been used by many of the subjects who have participated in the pedagogical process to defend their community in situations of human rights violations committed by armed actors. A central element of Nomadesc's human rights work involves drawing upon the international human rights architecture in order to seek justice and protect human rights by leveraging pressure upon the Colombian state. This includes pursuing legal action at the Inter-American Human Rights Commission or other international human rights fora, as well as advocacy and coordination with multilateral human rights institutions such as OHCHR and international NGOs such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. On the other hand, the figure of human rights has been an offensive tool with which social movements have formulated and articulated their demands vis-à-vis state institutions in pursuit of making gains and bringing about change within their communities and territories, particularly during moments of mobilisation.

The praxis described above, based on a sensitivity towards the particularities, experiences, epistemologies and cultures of the movements and communities with which it works, has meant that the work with the different and varied social sectors which are part of the pedagogical process has transformed the praxis along the way, creating new semiotic processes. The constant changes in conjuncture, the evolution of the pedagogy, and increase in the participation of indigenous, peasant and Afro-descendant subjects with alternative epistemologies, have influenced and shaped the semiotic processes and conceptual constructions of the pedagogical process. The figure of human rights, and in particular of the rights of peoples, continue to be prominent pillars within the

pedagogical process, but other conceptual constructions concepts of thoughts linked to the sectors that are part of the process, their cultures, experiences and struggles, have also risen to prominence (see below).

Semiotic learning processes and social mobilisation

One element which emerged in the systematisation process was how the upsurges in social mobilisation triggered upsurges in learning amongst social movements, and how these in turn have a ripple effect towards other organisational processes. Social struggles such as the 2008 Minga of Social and Community Resistance led by the indigenous movement; the fight against the privatisation of the state utilities company in Cali and the struggles in the Universidad del Valle at the beginning of the 21st century; and the 2017 Buenaventura civic strike are three examples of large scale, extended mobilisation processes involving collaboration between diverse sectors and movements which have had a demonstrable knock-on impact on other organisational processes and social struggles in the southwestern region and arguably also at the national level in Colombia. Nomadesc and other organisations that are part of the pedagogical process actively participated in each of the three processes mentioned, and as stated above, these processes served as rich learning experiences. These multi-sectoral mobilisation processes, where different individual and collective subjects converge with a common objective in search of social transformations, are fruitful generators of knowledge, conceptual constructions, and strategies for social action, often with high levels of creativity and originality. For example, during the Minga the motto 'walk the word' emerged to prominence, which more than a slogan became a methodological-pedagogical philosophy which guided collective action. When faced with President Uribe's refusal to meet with them in the Indigenous Reservation de la María, Piendamó, Cauca, the protesting communities and social movements decided to march to Bogotá, moving from town to town along the way to hold public meetings in order to dialogue with local people and exchange experiences, discuss the problems they faced, and to call for a collective effort to find solutions. The Minga left a very important legacy in the praxis of many social movements in the southwest and across the country as an attempt to bring together different and diverse sectors and movements to collectively build towards alternative solutions and models through dialogue, and collective learning through broad, horizontal dialogue and physical presence in the territories. Part of the legacy was left within the praxis of the pedagogical process of Nomadesc, which in turn has had influence within the movements and organisations that participate in the pedagogical process. The notion of ‘walking the word’ has similarities to the thinking of the Zapatista movement in Mexico and their ‘asking we walk’ (Holloway, 2005). The two are prefigurative forms of organisation that do not

claim to have all the solutions and answers, but rather seek to build in a democratic, horizontal and participatory manner, across/between different social sectors.

Here, the point we would like to highlight is the key role that the pedagogical process plays in collecting, sustaining, reproducing and harnessing the learning and semiotic processes that occur during upsurges in social mobilisation. It is a role which seeks not only to contribute to the collective memory of the social movements of the region and keep alive the learning of their struggles and the new conceptual and discursive constructions, but also to feed them into the knowledge dialogue which takes place within the pedagogical process; and thus to collectivise and put them at the service of the struggles of other processes and other movements, generating new counter-hegemonic processes.

Change of paradigm and the ancestral epistemologies of the UIP

We have made mention of the alternative epistemologies and systems of thought of the sectors which make up the UIP. But what do we mean by this? And how are they different from hegemonic Western epistemologies? Interviewees described a change of epistemological and conceptual paradigm which occurred within the pedagogical process. At the beginning of the process, when the majority participation was that of trade unions, the epistemological paradigm was heavily influenced by theoretical-academic thinking related to Western rationality, with influences from social humanism (which emerges from the Colombian context, but within the context of Colombian academia which has been highly influenced by Western rationality and epistemologies, and from Marxist theory). This is not to say that those schemes or epistemological ones were the only ones influencing the process in those early years, but rather that this paradigm was predominant thanks to the political and ideological character of the trade union movement, the political and academic experience of the protagonists, and the political conjunctures of the time. As demonstrated in Chapter 3, this is reflected in the content materials from the period (Western and Latin American academic texts, Marxism, social humanism, Foucault, human rights texts). When the demographic of the pedagogical process began to change, and the participation of the indigenous and Afro-descendant sectors began to increase due to the changing circumstances in the region, a process of epistemological transformation and/or rupture begins to be felt within the process:

> It was difficult for many of us at the beginning, or for me particularly, the break that we see very clearly today at the time it was very blurred, very tangled because we were so rooted in Western thought ... epistemologically for me it was very complicated... (interview with trade unionist who has been involved in the process since early phase of diplomas until present day, interview, 2018)

As described above, the epistemologies and knowledges of ethnic populations began to gain prominence within the praxis and pedagogy of both the pedagogical process and Nomadesc's everyday work in defence of human rights. Beyond the question of epistemological justice, the shift was also based on an understanding that these sectors and movements were leading some of the most important social struggles in the country and hence were being heavily targeted for violence by the state and its paramilitary allies; and that other sectors and movements more than stand in solidarity must recognise that general emancipation in Colombia was not possible without the emancipation of these ethnic minorities and the historical reparation of the historical injustices they have suffered. Within the pedagogical process, much emphasis would come to be placed on what is referred to as the ancestral knowledge of the different sectors, especially after the creation of the UIP. Within the pedagogical process, *ancestral* knowledge can refer to the culture, organisational forms, value systems, knowledge practices of (particularly indigenous, afro-descendent and peasant) peoples, and is understood as particularly valuable as knowledges survived genocide, slavery, oppression and racist, violent practices which have been committed upon the peoples: that is, ancestral knowledge is inextricably linked to the historical resistance, in particular of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples.

Given the importance that these thought systems have come to have within the counter-hegemonic semiotic processes of the UIP discussed here, it is important to try to establish some basic tenets of these epistemologies. Below are excerpts from some of the thinkers linked to the pedagogical process, through which we seek to explore and understand in their own words what we are referring to when talking about the alternative epistemologies of the UIP, the different foundations, value systems and life perspectives.

Initially, it is suggested that the rationality of the native peoples of Latin America, long before the arrival of the European conquerors was a socio-environmental rationality, very much in contrast to the European socio-economic rationality:

> ... in Mexico there is a school of thought that ... talks about the existence of several rationalities and says that Western rationality is a socio-economic rationality, but that humanity has gone through other rationalities, and the earliest we had was the socio-environmental rationality, where I had to conserve the environment in order to survive... and the populations retain elements of these rationalities because ... social formations are not homogeneous, a social formation ... can have the presence of previous formations or ways of thinking, and at the same time the next formation is also being built, so when we talk about socialism as an element that is being built now, we must not wait for capitalism to be erased, today there exist other social formations beyond capitalism... today, alternative elements of ideology and

> thought is an important debate that is happening throughout Latin America, but it I linked to the thought that our peoples had before, can you believe that some people question whether we had thought? They think the West brought us language, spirituality and thought? Imagine, the peoples of America existing for twenty thousand years without thinking! (scholar-activist, facilitator on UIP, interview, 2018).

The quotation above argues strongly that elements of this alternative rationality remain latent within the cultures of indigenous peoples and parts of broader Colombian society, and were not lost with the conquest and the extermination of so many indigenous peoples. This rationality is based on an alternative way of understanding the relationship between human beings and nature, a value system not based on the accumulation of wealth, and with a perspective which contrasts dramatically with Western rationality:

> Joseph Stiglitz and Krugman, the 21st century Nobel economists, have said that human civilisations, we are going wrong, so a new epistemology has to take us in a different direction... these have been directors of the World Bank, the IMF ... and these types of powerful institutions, and they've looked and said 'but we are wrong, look at the indigenous peoples', they look at the ancestral knowledge and they look at that tranquillity, look at the approach to life, look at that harmony, look at their world without despair,, not having to rush everything, some economists go to indigenous communities and says 'this tiny community, why don't they get on and construct buildings, bridges, roads, make shopping centres, libraries, universities ... this economist Krugman did a study where he went to a community and stayed a while and he came to grasp the logic, the logic is that they already have everything, all they need is to live in harmony, in balance but they have everything and do not need more ... they have suffered historical catastrophes but they remain...and they understand that all this building, all this rushing is a desperation to accumulate, but our epistemology says that this isn't the logic of life (indigenous activist and university academic, facilitator in UIP, interview, 2018).

The citation above places balance and harmony at the centre of the value system of indigenous epistemology, in this case the Nasa people. It also suggests an alternative notion of well-being and development, very different from the Western-capitalist notion. Within the ideology and praxis of the pedagogical process, the concept of *buenvivir* has come to prominence as a way to articulate alternative visions to extractive capitalist development based upon dignified, community life in harmony with the environment, described as follows by two process facilitators:

> it is only about reaching a state of balance and harmony for buenvivir... harmony and buenvivir among human beings and nature, to live in peace and live in balance, because neither I am going to destroy what's around me or damage it, nor am I going to take more than I need, because I don't have to take more, I don't have to take more or accumulate, all we need is that state of balance and harmony to live in peace: why this desperation to accumulate and to have more

> things, to buy a mansion? (indigenous activist and university academic, facilitator in UIP, interview, 2018).

> I interpret buenvivir as a way out of consumerist, patriarchal, hyper competitive logic that is framed by capitalism ... this Western, European, warmongering, ravenous mode of thinking; towards other perspectives which are based on harmonious relationships, harmonious living, with the territory, the land, and with the people around us, and especially to overcome this competitive logic ... this implies that in order to be recognised, one does not need to dominate or control others, but to cooperate, to include, to accept, and to dialogue is also valid and not only with others but also with nature as well ... buenvivir also forces us to think locally, at territorial level, what is going on? How are we? What are the local conditions? What is our culture? (Activist expert in participatory action research - UIP facilitator, interview, 2018)

A temporality distinct from western temporality is also alluded to, without the haste imposed by the capitalist system: a temporality based on the rhythms of rural life and nature. Central to understanding this alternative epistemology are the values upon which social relations are based:

> Within our thought we hadn't developed anything which is about controlling and excluding, we didn't have private property for example, what is private property? It is about control and exclusion, or money, is another institution of control, you either have money or you don't brother. Now, these days postmodernist thought has assimilated some elements, but I would say with the same vice of exclusion… so now they talk about otherness, in postmodernism otherness is respect for the other, it is recognising the existence of the other, but for us, otherness was much more, it was the reason for being! And that is the big difference, in everything, we could not <u>be</u> without the other, the existence of the other is what allowed us to be… it is saying 'I am equal to you and we are one', we don't exclude, we include, that is why the greatest punishment there was in ancient communities was to banish you from the community, they didn't kill us, we were banished but it was the same because we could not live without each other, those are two really different conceptions ... Carnival, what they call carnival, to the peoples of Europe was to take drink, dance and dress up, the carnival for us, in the Andean villages was where I took out the best produce I had and placed it in front of where I lived so that everyone who came walking by ate and took what they wanted. (scholar-activist, facilitator on UIP, interview, 2018)

The citation above describes a system of social relations based on interdependence, collectivism and reciprocity, and which rejects the exclusion and duality that are central to social relations characterised by Western rationality: an epistemology under the notion of private property could not be conceived. Another element that was identified, by an activist who has been a historic leader in the struggle of black communities in Colombia, was how black communities in the Colombian Pacific carry with them the historic memory of the injustice of slavery, and a sense within their culture and knowledge practices of having been brought from the continent of Africa:

> …there are people who say that the black struggle was invented in 1990 [with the struggle for recognition of black communities] but I believe our people already had their consciousness… I remember so much that my grandmother whenever we had an argument she'd say 'you are white!' and with that she closed the discussion… they were clear on things and what had happened, that is my story but we've picked it up all over the place ... maybe they didn't express it in the same way that we can express it today, it was expressed another way and what we did was understand that that was there… in that sense my generation ... those of us that had the opportunity to go to the university and study, all we are is translators, that was in the language of the people somehow we got some things out of here we translated them into the other language, and other things we translated and took them to the communities…but this consciousness was already there, for example I remember so much a word which they use in the Pacific, the word 'renaciente' for me that what I'm going to tell you is like the holy grail, a conversation we had in Yurumangui [remote Pacific region jungle river community]and we started talking about what the word 'renaciente' meant and the elders told me 'it is as if we were before on one side and now we are here, as if we had an accident and now we are reborn in another place' and I asked the old men, 'and where were we before?' And they said, 'in Africa', and 'what was the accident?'… Blacks have always known what happened... That day, talking to those elders, I came to understand that when they speak of renaciente it has two senses, that we are not from here and that we are here because there was slavery ... it was already there in the memory of the elders, it was there hidden behind the word, of course it is the same as we know now, but they already knew it and what we did is translate it in another way ... we weren't the first to say that we must defend our territories as black communities, our people have been saying that for a long time. (historic leader of black movement at regional and national level, historical ally of Nomadesc and pedagogical process, interview, 2018)

The citation provides an important element, because it identifies the historical resistance which is part of the culture of the black communities and is retained within the collective memory of communities of their struggles throughout history. It shows that even when perhaps older generations within communities were not resisting in a visibly organised manner, there was always a deeply rooted collective memory and resistance within the culture. In the face of the historical aggressions and abuses suffered by afro-Colombians over centuries, their survival as a people is a sign of the centrality of resistance within their cultures and knowledge practices. As the citation shows, the term renaciente, a prominent term in the discourse of the black movement in Colombia, denotes a permanent awareness of the connection with their ancestors and their past on the continent of Africa before slavery. Within these epistemologies, these knowledge systems, through meetings with the holders of that ancestral knowledge, are contained important elements for the construction of the new paradigm sought in the UIP. *(indigenous activist and university academic, facilitator in UIP, interview, 2018)*

An organic, intercultural approach to gender

Despite being a rare example in Colombia of a human rights organisation run exclusively by women, during the early years of the organisation's work in the southwest region there was not an explicit construction of a gender perspective to the organisation's work, perhaps inevitably given that Nomadesc found itself in the context of extreme violence which had spread across the region and was driving social movements into a defensive survival mode.

> I think at the beginning when I came in it was there but it wasn't so prominent or so signposted, it was part of the political focus and the human rights work, and part of the knowledge dialogue...but the theme of gender wasn't so strong (current leading Nomadesc member, and diploma student during early years, interview, 2018)

Yet despite perhaps not being explicitly identified and articulated as a key priority within the work, there was undoubtedly a sensitivity and consciousness of the need to support the development of women leaders, and to increase and deepen the participation of women within social movement struggles and broader society. In fact, the promotion of new women activists was one of the initial aims of the human rights workshops with trade unions at the inception of the pedagogical process:

> Our idea was to form/educate a generation of women trade union leaders (Nomadesc founding member and currently a leading member of the organisation, interviewed, 2018)

And from the beginning of the diploma course through into the Specialisation and the UIP phases, each participation organisation or movement was offered two places on the course, with the requirement that they send one man and one woman, at a time when gender equality really wasn't on the agenda within the broader movement. As table 1 shows (chapter 3), this has meant that over the course of the history of the pedagogical process, the majority of participants of the pedagogical process have been women.

This represents an important contribution to the struggle to overcome patriarchal practices within social movement organising, in promoting the development of a powerful new generation of women leaders in the region. Several former participants of the programme have gone on to become some of the region and the country's most prominent female civil society voices, including Afro-Colombian community leader Francia Marquez from La Toma community in Suarez, who won the 2018 Goldman Environment Prize (also known as the Green Nobel Prize) for her work in defence of her community's territory, and featured on a 2019 list of the world's most 'inspiring and influential women' according to the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). Marquez highlighted the important influence which her participation in the diploma programme in 2008 had upon political development as an activist.

From 2006 onwards, Nomadesc began to develop a more explicit, structured and themed approach to its work with women, initially through beginning two particular bespoke pedagogical-organisational accompaniment processes with communities:

> It was from 2006 onwards that the work around women and gender became a more explicit part [of our work], that year we began the two pedagogical processes in human rights in the Triana and Cisneros communities. In Cisneros the processes was aimed at the wives and mothers etc of the victims of the mass detentions which [the state] had carried out in the community, 64 people in a total of 600 inhabitants, under the 'Democratic Security' policy of Alvaro Uribe's government. The process with Triana was aimed at the mothers, wives, and relatives of victims of the massacres and murders committed by paramilitaries in the rural areas of Buenaventura (the process would later be extended to include men). (current leading Nomadesc member, and diploma student during early years, interview, 2019)

These processes were aimed at raising consciousness and providing organising tools and knowledge for women who were organising in contexts of imminent threat, human rights violations and repression. In 2008, another pedagogical process was begun in support and accompaniment of the Women's Sugar Cane Cutters Committee.

> In 2008, we began another pedagogical process with the women - mothers, daughters etc- of the sugar cane cutter workers in Valle el Cauca and Cauca. This process had a social focus around the economic policies which were being imposed in the country, and it was also specifically about strengthening the role of women within the broader struggle so there was an element of the process which was about women's rights and had a gender focus.(ibid)

The thematic content of this initiative had a strong gender perspective, which included an element of developing self-esteem and self-recognition, and empowering the women- as individuals and also collectively. This included workshops on sewing and handcrafts, as part of an attempt to support the women's economic autonomy and solvency, given the high levels of poverty amongst the participants.

Annual Women's Forum

From 2010, Nomadesc's work with women would become even more prominent within their own organising and pedagogical work, as well as amongst the social movements of southwest Colombia, when it began to organise the Women's Forum for Economic, Social, Cultural and Environmental Rights, an annual event which has become something of an institution on the social movement calendar in the region. The event has been funded since its inception by the Northern Region of the British public services trade union, UNISON. Each year the forum brings together 200-300 women activists from social movements and organisations across the southwest region. The event was initially held at the state university in Cali (Universidad del Valle), but in recent years it has been staged by

installing a large marquee and a sound system in one of Cali's central plazas (Plaza San Francisco), in front of the regional government building.

> [The event] puts into dialogue the experiences and processes of struggle of organised and unorganised women in southwest Colombia. The event has three aims: first, to come together and meet via a dialogue of experiences, struggles, realities, knowledges, and imaginations….second, to advance in the recuperation and respect of the dignity and the rights of women, as well as of the different social sectors and peoples, and strengthen their organisational capacity in the region. Third, to strengthen the links and networks, and seek to create solidarity and a common agenda between women from different sectors, urban and rural, from across the southwest region (current leading Nomadesc member, and diploma student during early years, interview, 2018)

> I think it is a really interesting initiative...because it opens a space where women can build together, can build resistance and alternatives, and also make visible what they are doing (Participant in territorial workshop Cali, 2018)

As the quotes above demonstrate, the event has several deeply political objectives, the first of which is linked to the inherent value of providing a forum for women from diverse struggles, movements and territories to come together and share experiences, learn and build from each other. As with all events organised by Nomadesc, these events are always full of the symbolism of the social movements involved, art and culture, along with the political element in which all of the participating organisations have a chance to make a declaration about the context and realities which they face as women and as members of collectives which are engaged in social struggles against a multitude of injustices. The fact that the event is staged in one of the city centre's busiest plazas is a political statement in itself, an attempt to make visible what has been kept invisible by the state and the mainstream media, both in terms of the realities faced by women in southwest Colombia and also the struggles of their movements. Men are invited to attend the events, but the focus is on giving a voice to women and highlighting their roles within the struggles of the region, and in generating solidarity and collaboration between them.

Learning and intercultural feminism

Nomadesc's experience of working with communities and movements across the territories of southwest Colombia provides them with a unique insight into the intersectional affectations of the violence of the armed conflict. During the past two decades in Colombia, the particularity of the way that women have experienced and suffered the armed conflict has increasingly been recognised and debated within social movements as well as in broader civil society:

> The social and armed conflict in our country leaves deep marks on lives and particularly on generations of women, that is to say that, aside from the fact that women's bodies are used as war trophies, the war also brings about modifications in individuals and collective lives, and since women tend to have the role of caretakers of life (cuidadoras de la vida), they are at the forefront of

> the search [for actions] to prevent the repetition of these violent situations which snatch life away (current leading Nomadesc member, and diploma student during early years, interview, 2019)

As the quote above points out, this debate has finally led some sectors to recognise the role which women have played historically within families, communities and collectives seeking to survive within the context of the armed conflict. In a socially conservative, Catholic society in which female suffrage was only achieved in 1954, Nomadesc's concrete experience of working with communities has confirmed to the organisation that the struggle for women's liberation begins at home:

> On an individual level, we consider that the difficulties derive from the daily lives of women and our own spaces, because historic, structured machismo has been naturalised in its many forms, impeding the effective, active, mass participation of women in organising and mobilisation processes. The struggle begins at home, where the idea that women have absolute responsibility for the home and to raise the children has been naturalised. This is the first barrier that the vast majority of women find (ibid)

Within the internal political organising spaces of social movements, communities and activist collectives in Colombia, the past decade has also seen increasing attention paid to overcoming practices which serve to reproduce patriarchal social relations, in the search for a prefigurative organising praxis which can begin to build social relations in line with the emancipatory visions which are being struggle for. Despite increasing awareness and debate, Nomadesc's organising experience has demonstrated that much work remains to be done in order to achieve equal participation and recognition within struggles for social change of the diverse movements and communities which Nomadesc works with:

> In the collective, political sphere, the barrier which women must overcome is that they are usually given menial tasks and chores which then limit their participation in spaces for debate and decision making within social movements, despite the fact that their collective action are at least equal to that of men. Despite the fact that progress has been made in this respect in recent years, there is still a certain resistance in terms of valuing the importance of the ideas, proposals and contributions of women in the struggles for social transformation (ibid)

As a female-led organisation, Nomadesc was something of an exception during the early 2000s within a broader movement in which the majority of leaders were male, and in which frequently it was male voices which dominated discussions and decision-making processes. One female interviewee who worked as a young member of the Nomadesc team during the early years of the diploma programme was how the female leaders of Nomadesc served as an inspiration and a reference point for her as a young activist

> I think one lesson I learned from the diploma….when I came into the diploma, the only women reference points I had, in political terms, were X and Y, I think they are the most important female references that I had as a female political activist, [they] were examples for me, because there weren't women leaders, women were given other things to do, relegated to other things….so I think it is important is important as a reference point in that historic moment and at a time when the leadership (within social movements and activist circles) was mainly male (Participant in territorial workshop Cali, 2018)

Collectively constructing intercultural feminism

The conception and praxis of gender contained within Nomadesc's work have been forged through two decades of intercultural organising and pedagogical work with diverse social movements across the conflict-affected southwest region of Colombia. As has been discussed extensively elsewhere, the praxis of the pedagogical process is influenced by popular education principles such as 'knowledge dialogue' and learning through doing; and at the same time rooted in the philosophical principles of social humanism, which dictate the importance of recognition of the diversity of social subjects and sensitivity to their different experiences of oppression.

> If we're talking about social humanism, which was a really strong element of the diplomas and even stronger now... in the UIP and the focus on buenvivir...then gender has to be an important element of the work in order to be able to talk about that harmonisation between humans, and with the natural environment and everything that surrounds us (current leading Nomadesc member, and diploma student during early years, interview, 2019)

Nomadesc's work with communities, and indeed with women's collectives, has been based on the recognition that women experience the repressive context of human rights violations and the armed conflict differently, and that women's oppression takes on added and different dimensions than that of men in all spheres of society, including within communities and social movements. Political subjectivities are understood to be defined by this diversity of experience. It is this diversity of experience which provides the fundamental elements for the intercultural knowledge dialogue which occurs within the process. A key aspect of facilitating and developing this dialogue has been the Annual Women's Forum events, which have provided a space in which this intercultural dialogue can take place between women from the diverse movements and territories of the region.

Within Nomadesc's pedagogical work, the starting point for this approach to gender is around recognition of the role and contribution of women to communities, movements and social struggles (including self-recognition of women in order to recognise the role they play within broader struggles and the gender dynamics which operate):

> We start from a key element which is very simple, it is about recognition….the recognition of women, of our struggles, our contributions, our ideas, everything that we have offered and which often isn't recognised, that is the starting point (ibid)

This approach has also determined Nomadesc's approach to working on issues relating to gender, and have seen the gradual development and deepening of an attempt to build an intercultural, class-based feminism which is sensitive to diverse cosmovisions, identities and cultures of the movements involved, and which at the same time is able to empower women and challenge practices which

reproduce patriarchy both within and external to social movements. As set out above, the approach is still an ongoing process of construction:

> We have been elaborating it and debating it, not only in the university…[the debate] has also fed off many other processes... we have a permanent dialogue with the communities, with the black community the with the indigenous, the peasants, what are they all thinking….this has fed into the process, we are building together...so our approach to gender is strongly linked to the territorial characteristics of the areas that Nomadesc works in...[the work]...has suggested the inclusion of certain particularities when thinking of a feminist conception which could respond to the ethno-territorial diversity, the different cultures (current leading Nomadesc member, and diploma student during early years, interview, 2018)

Clearly this approach has potential tensions, given that patriarchal structures and social relations can be even more deeply rooted within rural communities in Colombia, where social conservatism can remain strong. Key here is the dynamic notion of culture discussed in chapter 4: the different cultures of the movements and sectors involved are not viewed as fixed, static phenomena but as social processes which can be transformed and enriched through contact with each other. Hence the potential tensions, which are undoubtedly latent within the process, can at the same time be viewed potential learning and transformation processes within the intercultural dialogue which occurs within the UIP:

> For example with sexual diversities...take the peasant movement, without being disrespectful, within its cultural aspects there has been a lot of conservativism and the university allows this sector to meet with urban spaces and the new identities of new subjects which are emerging, and which have new revindication struggles...and in this process together they start to understand why these perspectives are important...also the question of female leadership which is become stronger and more common [in social movements], before they were less visible and this is, they are making themselves felt in the UIP (Activist, ally of pedagogical process, interview, 2018)

Set within the intercultural pedagogical space, and the broader objective of seeking to build thematic and strategic unity and collective identity between the diverse collective subjects involved, the broader aim of Nomadesc's gender work is around creating more just, harmonious, and equal relations between men and women. Within a repressive context in which generations of both male and female activists have been murdered, disappeared and exiled, concrete experience has taught the organisation that only an intercultural feminism rooted in a class-based analysis of the broader structures which create and sustain patriarchal oppression can be of use in the struggle for emancipation. They are critical of what they perceive to be academic, urban mainstream approaches to feminism which have become influential within Colombian civil society, academia and some social

movements, which are deemed to be too focussed upon public policy, and insensitive to the intersectional dimensions of the diverse female experience across Colombia, as well as the realities of women in poor urban or rural communities and conflict-affected territories (Kane, ethnographic fieldnotes, 2018).

One interesting learning point within Nomadesc's pedagogical praxis has been the central role of women in knowledge processes within communities, for example in the preservation and reproduction of historical memory and 'ancestral knowledge' contained within communities (Kane, fieldnotes). The emphasis upon the revindication and weaving of different knowledges within the UIP, as well as within Nomadesc's broader work, has meant bringing to centre stage this vital knowledge role which is often played by women within communities and social movements. For example, rural communities would historically have a vast knowledge of medicinal plants, which has been gradually lost over recent decades. In many communities, it is women who have retained this knowledge and sought to pass it down to future generations. Within the UIP, the female participants from the Triana Group of Women and Men focussed their participatory action research project upon identifying and documenting the different plants and remedies which women in the community held. The idea is that the product of the investigation become a tool not only for the Triana community but to be shared with others in and beyond the UIP.

The concept *of territory* within the epistemologies of the UIP

One of the most prominent aspects of the indigenous and afro-descendent epistemologies described above is the centrality of the concept of 'territory'. As we established above, for socio-territorial movements (movements that by definition are owners of territory), including in the UIP the indigenous, afro-descendent and peasant sectors), territory is both a means and an end: it is part of the movement's raison d'être, part of its strategy to achieve its objectives , but also a key element of their identities and worldviews (Halvorsen et al, 2019). Within the conceptual and discursive constructions of the process, but also in the pedagogical praxis, the concept of territory (and the struggle for territory) became central to the pedagogical process with the increased participation of peasant, indigenous and Afro-descendent socio-territorial movements (see chapter 6). These movements are fighting processes of accumulation by dispossession in their territories. So how is territory conceived/understood, and how is this concept harnessed and activated within the pedagogical process (and from the perspectives of the movements that are part of the process)?

> For me, territory means everything ...a space that is the territory, not seen as something material that I can sell it and leave it and turn it into a an asset, but as a living space, a space for dignified life, let's say that for me that is the territory, Leila Arroyo says that for others the territory is a space of the

> accumulation of wealth, for us the territory is a life space and not only human life, but of life in the sense of all the beings that there, for me that is the territory, we have risked life itself for our territories, these are where our culture has been reproduced, where we have reproduced life and dignity despite all the systematic and structural violence imparted by the state against us, in spite of the structural racism of the economic, political and legal system, we have lived together as a community, we have made community in our territories. (Rural Afro-Colombian community leader, former student in later phases of diploma, interview, 2018).

The citation above, of a prominent Afro-Colombian leader who was a student in the diploma, provides some foundations of the conception of the territory from the perspective of black communities in Colombia. First, and key for all sectors (and for all socio-territorial movements): the territory is seen as a 'living space', in contrast to the capitalist western conceptualisation of the territory as an economic good and a 'space for the accumulation of wealth'. Second, territory is understood as a space which facilitates communities to live with dignity with the freedom to recreate their culture, despite the systematic violence and exclusion they have faced in society. That is to say: the fact that communities have had their own territories for generations has facilitated the construction of dignity and autonomy, and hence preservation of the culture of black communities. Unlike the capitalist vision, the territory for the movements that are part of the pedagogical process is seen as something collective, both in terms of the organisation of community life and in terms of ownership. For Afro-descendant communities, collective possession of the territory has been an important part of their cultures and their identities:

> then one discovers that in 1852 our communities bought land and the titles were collective titles, and we did not find out about the collective titles until recently ... they discovered that a hundred and something years ago there were black people who said let's buy these lands and they are collective property, not they can be distributed or sold ...so at that time there had to be discussions amongst the people about how to protect that heritage and ensure that the land is always there for our communities (historic leader of black movement at regional and national level, historical ally of Nomadesc and pedagogical process, interview, 2018)

For interviewees, there was a sense that for Afro-descendant communities, the territory also represents a link with the past and the future:

> [The territory] means the history of what slavery meant for our ancestors and I say it means history because I am clear that the territory where we live was not a gift to our people, they didn't bring black people from Africa to give them the land where we now live as a black community, but they had to work the slave farms and work in the mines, and they had to struggle very hard to acquire those lands. But it also means in terms of the future, my ancestors thought of me and our community, so I can't just think about myself- I have to think about the

> renaciente in the next generations and [protecting territory] for my children, my grandchildren. There is a river where I would going to fish with my grandparents as a child, my grandad would catch a sack of fish and share it with the community, our principle of solidarity between peoples is also for future generations because I want my grandchildren also to be able to go to the river ... (Rural Afro-Colombian community leader, former student in later phases of diploma).

The citation above is key because it places the concept of the territory (and the defence thereof) as a central objective of the struggle of the Afro-Colombian people, and also as an achievement of the struggle which has taken place since the time of slavery. According to the interviewee, this historical struggle of their ancestors bestows a collective responsibility for today's black communities to care for defend for territory; this responsibility also derives from the responsibility to protect and preserve the heritage which the territory represents for future generations. But in addition to heritage, territory for black communities can be understood as having an element of reparation for historical injustices:

> territory is patrimony, but it also is a kind of reparation for the enslavement and all of the suffering of our people…so if we they end up losing the territories that we have, it is as if history will end take revenge on us once more, our communities have already historically been victims (historic leader of black movement at regional and national level, historical ally of Nomadesc and pedagogical process, interview, 2018)

In the citation above, today's processes of accumulation by dispossession, and the struggle of the black communities in defence of the territory, is put into the perspective of the enormous historical injustices committed against their ancestors. The sense of ownership of the territory is increased precisely because of the historical debts that the Colombian state has with the Afro-Colombian population, and the current dispossession processes demonstrate, in the eyes of the communities, the continuity of the historical modus operandi of the Colombian political and economic elites. The quotation also demonstrates how territory must be understood not only as an objective of the struggle but also as the patrimony of previous struggles of ancestors throughout the centuries.

Within the Nasa indigenous thought, the concept of territory is rooted within spiritual beliefs in which the human being is seen as a part of the territory and the earth, which come from the earth and is simply another element of Mother Nature:

> Mother Nature is wise, she is a living being, she knows how to cleanse and renew herself, she is a great bosom for the living beings which inhabit the earth. The Earth does not belong to us: we belong to the earth, we are part of it, that is why we bury the umbilical cord when a baby is born, to recognise that we all come from the Earth and there we will return and that is why we must take care of it, we must defend it , we must love it, it is the territory which feeds us, gives us life, gives us a roof. Without a body we cannot live, nor without territory.

> That is why we mustn't contaminate it, destroy it, or appropriate it - we cannot own something that is sacred, we are insignificant alongside the Earth, that is why we do not share the Western conception of private property: for us it belongs to nobody, and we must all take care of it, that is our collective responsibility. Within our thinking we do not understand the need to accumulate - why accumulate? Because we don't live with what is necessary to live well and be in harmony with nature, be happy and grateful to be able to feed ourselves, to have a roof, to have clothes, what we need but without having to accumulate and destroy ... (indigenous activist and university academic, facilitator in UIP).

The territory is conceived as a mother, a provider of life that is synonymous with life itself and that facilitates the possibility of a dignified existence. For indigenous communities, as well as peasant and Afro-descendants, the struggle to defend the territory is an existential struggle that warrants the sacrifice of life itself if necessary. The citation above also makes clear what is at stake in the struggle for the definition of the territory, since the capitalist notion of 'development' stands in stark contrast to the conception of harmony and balance in terms of this conception of territory and the relationship which humans should have with it. Again, the capitalist notions of private property and accumulation of wealth are questioned.

In conclusion, this chapter has presented a discussion of the of the epistemological approach and content of the pedagogical process, which are rooted in notions of epistemological justice and the horizontal, collective construction of knowledge**.** The UIP is an intrinsically decolonial process in its epistemological approach: it brings together diverse epistemologies which have been historically subjugated (as well as so-called expert or professional knowledge) in an intercultural, non-hierarchical knowledge dialogue, thus seeking to collapse knowledge hierarchies which continue to operate within capitalist societies. We have argued that the pedagogical process can be understood as a patchwork quilt of epistemologies, which interact and are interwoven to form part of a broader whole, and through their interaction generate new counter-hegemonic semiotic processes. The different conceptual constructions, experiences, histories, visions etc of the participating movements become pedagogical resources which generate and shape learning processes within the intercultural learning space.

The conceptual and discursive constructions which are produced as a result of this decolonial knowledge dialogue between subjects of struggle emerge from and are geared towards the struggles of the movements. Their embeddedness within struggle make them particularly salient and valuable for the participating subjects. The intellectual, discursive and conceptual production of the pedagogical process is dynamic and is driven by the learning dialectic identified in the previous chapter between the pedagogical process and the struggles of the social movements of the southwest region

of Colombia. Nomadesc's pedagogical approach seeks to harness the rich learning and knowledge processes which occur during peaks in social movement mobilisation, such that these nourish the learning of participants within the pedagogical process, and hence serve to strengthen the collective subjects which they represent, in what can be understood as a kind of cross-pollination learning process.

The process did not simply emerge from an ideological vacuum, but rather is rooted in and influenced by ideological and political lineages of Colombia's social movements. Nomadesc emerges from a particular political lineage within Colombian social movements, and hence the pedagogical process since its inception has been heavily influenced by the Colombian praxis-oriented framework of social humanism, which combines a radical humanist praxis (with a strong emphasis on agency and knowledge of communities), with a Marxist analytical lens. This has meant an expansive conception of human rights and a radical praxis of the defence of human rights which is closely linked to struggles for social justice; which is receptive to and rooted in the reality of peoples and communities, their cultures, stories, knowledge and experiences; and which seeks to empower the social subjects with whom it works.

With the expansion of the pedagogical process to include more social movements and territories (particularly indigenous and Afro-Colombian movements), the knowledge production processes have been transformed by the epistemologies and struggles of these movements and have brought about a deeper paradigm shift, as the demographic character of the participating movements has shifted away from the early predominance of trade unions, with their tendency to adhere to fairly rigid Marxist class politics follow with clearly defined ideological route maps for the struggle, and to reproduce the knowledge hierarchies associated with modernity. With this paradigm shift, the knowledge production processes have shifted from a more top-down knowledge production process to a more bottom-up and dialogical process where teachers and learners, old and young, leaders and activists engage in a collective process of meaning making that transforms both participants and organisers in new, exciting and innovative ways. The alternative 'ancestral' rationalities of indigenous and Afro-Colombian social movements which have become increasingly influential within the pedagogical process and its knowledge production processes are rooted alternative conceptions of social relations (including between humans and nature) based on interdependence; collectivism/communalism; solidarity; and the indigenous concept of *buenvivir.* The central role of territory in the thinking of indigenous, Afro-Colombian and peasant communities has been increasingly influential within the pedagogical process in recent years, and differs from Western notions of territory.

Through its work with diverse social movements, Nomadesc has developed an intercultural, class-based feminism which is sensitive to diverse cosmovisions, identities and cultures of the movements involved, but which at the same time is able to empower women and challenge practices which reproduce patriarchy both within and external to social movements. Within a repressive context in which generations of both male and female activists have been murdered, disappeared and exiled, concrete experience has taught the organisation that only such an intercultural feminism rooted in a class-based analysis of the broader structures which create and sustain patriarchal oppression can be effective in the struggle for emancipation.

6. Geographical and political economy dimensions of learning

This chapter takes an in-depth look at the political economy and geographical dimensions of the situated learning which has emerged through Nomadesc's work with communities and social movements on the frontlines of the Colombian armed conflict. It begins with a discussion of the implications of this work from a political economy perspective and argues that the scope of its work provides Nomadesc with an ongoing, broad-ranging panoramic view of the political economy of the conflict in southwest Colombia, based on the experience of the social movements they work with.

It goes on to examine the geographical dimensions of Nomadesc's pedagogical strategy and broader work, in particular examining how Nomadesc harnesses the geographical dimension of its work in order to link territories of struggle and create geographies of solidarity, as part of a broader strategy of building counter-hegemonic power.

Accumulation by dispossession and imperialism: First-hand lessons about transnational capital in the peripheries

Chapter 2 set out in some detail the political economy of the Colombian conflict, and the way that national and transnational economic interests have historically driven violence. As mentioned above, well-documented cases of collaboration and complicity between economic and political elites are so plentiful as to suggest systematicity. Yet it is one thing to read about such realities, and quite another to experience them first-hand. Nomadesc and the communities and movements they work with have lived and experienced first-hand the violence which underlies the macro-economic processes related to capitalist globalisation and the processes expansion of the capitalist market in the territories of southwest Colombia. In particular, the impacts of the repression, and barbarity of paramilitary groups and state forces, working on behalf of the interests of political and economic elites, particularly national and transnational capital.

The meeting of activists from different territories, facilitated as part of Nomadesc's work (including but not only the pedagogical strategy), has allowed the organisation to maintain an up to date, in-depth political economy analysis of the ever-changing dynamics and impacts of the armed conflict and the implementation of the extractivist neoliberal economic model in the territories of southwest Colombia: the actors which operate in the region and who participate and benefit from violence, and the strategies and dynamics at play. This facilitates, through the local experiences of activists, the tracing of macro-processes, the changing conjunctures, and the inter-connections which exist. It has also allowed Nomadesc to identify the structural factors driving human rights violations and the armed

conflict in the region, and hence to work with movements to develop strategies to counteract these processes.

Activists have been able to verify through their own experience how, invariably, the violence of the state and its paramilitary allies in rural areas has obeyed a capitalist economic logic. In both urban and rural areas, violence often relates to struggles to reconfigure territory and space in the interests of transnational capital, in particular multinational companies. The violence of paramilitary organisations is trained upon communities and activists in order to penetrate those territories and spheres of society which are still beyond the reach of the capitalist system, for example through projects of extraction of natural resources, large-scale-infrastructure projects, through what Harvey has called processes of 'accumulation by dispossession' (Harvey, 2005), or privatisation of public assets and services.

In terminology often heard within the Nomadesc pedagogical process, one Nomadesc team member describes the contrasting visions at stake in the struggle to define territory: a

> death project of this entire development model that goes against this whole community life project'– the death project represents that of the state and its use of violence to enclose the commons and implement their neoliberal development model at all costs, and the vision of the communities represents life, and that seeks to protect, link and expand the commons, and the 'outside' of the capitalist system and its system of values (current leading Nomadesc member, and diploma student during early years, interview, 2018).

Activists who belong to the social movements of the UIP have borne direct witness to the complicity of the Colombian state, national and international capital, and paramilitary groups. The accumulation of lived experience of the movements which belong to the UIP allows them to reveal another face of the global neoliberal economic model, and the violently reality of what capitalist expansion means in the Colombian peripheries. When talking about a 'death model', more than a graphic slogan, it could be understood as a description based on decades of direct experience, in both rural and urban communities. :

> …we met with reality in different areas and those realities meant the massacres that were happening on the Cabal Pombo road between Cali and Buenaventura road, and that is where Nomadesc comes into contact with that reality ... at that time there was this reality of rural black communities that were living the armed and social conflict in their territories… on the other hand, the threat to the trade unions which were gradually being exterminated (Nomadesc founding member and currently a leading member of the organisation, interview, 2018).

The experience of these violent processes takes on a different character in urban spaces, where the state tends to dominate the definition and production of the territory, and where usually there are no socio-territorial movements. Yet urban centres also contain contested territories, where particularly

in recent years there have been increased urban infrastructure and redevelopment projects in Cali and Buenaventura requiring large displacements of poor communities; whilst communities struggle for decent housing, for the right to the city, and in many cases for access to basic public services.

As demonstrated in Chapter 2, the armed conflict and the violence experienced by communities has not remained constant but has passed through different phases characterised by different violent modus operandi by the armed actors and different implications for activists and communities. The dynamic shifted as violence was employed to initially establish and then to consolidate territorial control for paramilitary and state forces, facilitating the implementation and expansion of capital development projects involving local and international capital:

> Javier Giraldo has a hypothesis that the conflict has several moments ... he says there is a period of terror which creates is displacement... and then there is a calmer period, but which involves a systematic persecution of the leaders yes? It is about how they reconfigure territorial control, and he says these are processes that take place, where they enter to control and take possession of the territories (current leading Nomadesc member, and diploma student during early years, interview, 2018).

Through research, campaigning and pedagogical work, a large focus of Nomadesc's work has been the constant effort to establish, verify and reveal the structural causes of this violence and the processes of dispossession occurring in the region. To take two examples, in the city of Buenaventura, where through extensive work with local organisations, it has been possible to demonstrate how the processes of extreme violence against the civilian population, including enforced disappearance, massacres and the infamous casas de pique[7] , are linked to large corporate infrastructure projects which have to do with the expansion of the port facilities and the creation of tourist areas, large-scale projects involving national and transnational capital, and all planned in areas which came to be most affected by violence and displacement (National Memory Commission Historical, 2015).

> the paramilitarism is not isolated from these [corporate development] projects, and Plan Colombia was never isolated from that either, nor is the assassination of the leaders detached from that, nor the road to Buenaventura…if you look at all of capital's development projects, that coincides with the maps of the paramilitarism violence, we can't ignore that (current leading Nomadesc member, and diploma student during early years, interview, 2018).

Hence, violence is employed by both paramilitaries and state forces in the interests of capital, in order to repress and ultimately displace populations which inhabit those territories, and hence forcefully

[7] Term used to denote houses in which victims of armed groups are dismembered. In Buenaventura, this was done by paramilitaries within earshot of neighbours in order to generate terror within communities.

transform the spatial configuration of the territory (i.e. the expansion of port facilities) *(Nomadesc founding member and currently a leading member of the organisation, interview, 2018).* In rural areas, such as north-west Cauca, Nomadesc's work with the indigenous, Afro-Colombian and peasant communities has demonstrated how the presence of paramilitary groups, and murders, attacks and threats against leaders and community members are linked with the interests of multinational mining and logging companies in the area, and the attempt to intimidate and in some cases exterminate the opposition of communities to their presence in their territories. In 2010, The black community of the *consejo comunitario* La Toma, had to struggle against the forced eviction of hundreds of families by an individual acting as an intermediary for the multinational goldmining company AngloGold Ashanti, claiming to have acquired land deeds which gave him ownership of the community's ancestral territory (established over four centuries ago by black men and women who had won their freedom from slavery). The attempted eviction failed; however the community and its leaders became the targets of paramilitary violence and threats as a result of their opposition (Kane, 2012).

Such are the realities which form part of the daily experiences of activists involved in the struggles of the movements of the UIP. For them, terms such as accumulation by dispossession, imperialism, extractivism, and neoliberal globalisation are measured in dead bodies, death threats and enforced displacement. What more transformative, consciousness-raising tutorial on the meaning of imperialism could a member of La Toma community be provided with than a foreign corporation attempting to remove their almost entire community from the land which their ancestors struggled for in order to carry out large-scale goldmining? The Nomadesc pedagogical process simply provides a framework for understanding the drivers of such phenomena (Kane, ethnographic fieldnotes, 2018).

Territories of struggle and geographies of resistance: the geographical dimension

Given the context and geographical dynamics of the pedagogical process described above, the following section considers the geographical dimension of Nomadesc's work, and in particular the pedagogical process. Since its inception, Nomadesc as an organisation has understood the multi-scale nature of the problems experienced by social movements in the territories in the southwest of Colombia, with local, regional and global dimensions, and has understood the importance that any strategy to defend human rights and to build counter-hegemonic power must also be multi-scalar. Geographies of solidarity have been created, linking territories which are spatially distant, and seemingly isolated, with other territories, other organisational processes and networks of organisation and human rights defence at regional, national and international levels. This section will begin with a brief discussion about the geographical context of Nomadesc's work, and the learning that has emerged throughout the two decades of work in the diverse territories of the region. The

discussion then goes on to argue that some of the territories of movements which are part of the UIP can be understood as territories which represent the 'outside' of the capitalism's system of values and social relations. We then examine the geographical aspects of Nomadesc's pedagogical strategy.

Their work facilitates Nomadesc and the movements to be able to develop a broad reading of the ever-changing territorial dimensions and dynamics of the economic development model, and of the different but interconnected processes of territorialisation, de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation which occur in the region. We are referring here to the permanent struggle to produce and define the territory, and the possibilities of collective action. The actions of territorialisation, de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation of socio-territorial movements are often answered and violently repressed by armed actors: for example the exercise of territorial autonomy of indigenous communities in rejecting the presence of armed actors in their territories (territorialisation); or the processes of liberation of the mother earth of the indigenous communities in the north of Cauca, which implies the de-territorialisation of parts of the great extensions of land of the sugar industry in the north of Cauca and the re-territorialisation as collective territory and autonomous indigenous. All these processes of territorialisation, de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation have been targets of systematic violence against them, including crimes against humanity.

Competing territorialities

The production of space is a co-constituted dialectic, and is always a contested process, defined by the economic, social and political social relations between the different social forces that seek to define the space based on their interests and their vision of society (Halvorsen, 2017). In Colombia, the country's unforgiving physical geography has played an important role in the course of the country's political, social and economic history (Fals Borda, 2008, Escobar, 2007). Three Andes mountain range *cordillera*, large rivers, jungles, and the multiple and diverse lands and climates which separate the different regions, have historically served to hinder the efforts of the Colombian state and the ruling classes to project their authority, creating powerful regional centres of power, strong regional identities, and a situation of fragmented sovereignty (Richani;, 2007; Melo, 2017). According to the Colombian sociologist Orlando Fals Borda, this geography and its dramatic landscapes have limited the expansion of the capitalist system and its logic and value system in the remote and peripheral territories of Colombia (Fals Borda, 2008). In turn, the historical struggles of peoples in their territories have achieved the survival of value systems that could be considered part of the 'outside' of the capitalist system - spaces where the value system and the social relations of capitalism do not predominate (ibid). In remote areas in Colombia today affected by the conflict and the presence of

armed groups, and where the state has not established much presence apart from that of its armed forces, that struggle to define and produce the territory manifests itself in competing territorialities which intersect with each other, for example the indigenous, peasant or Afro-Colombian autonomous territorialities; or the territoriality of the plantations or cattle ranchers of large landowners, or the territoriality of the armed actors (Ballvé, 2012). In many of these contested areas, including all the territories of the rural organisations that are part of the pedagogical process, the struggle for the definition of the territory has been characterised by the tendency of all armed groups - state forces, paramilitaries and guerrillas- to commit violence against communities and social movements as a tool in the pursuit of their objectives:

> ... in 2003 the armed conflict began to affect our territories, we started to suffer displacement due to the armed conflict, it was also a strategic area of drug trafficking and during that time our organisation, because anyway there was a lot of weakness due to the presence of an armed guerrilla, paramilitary and state forces, they affected our organisational process, and weak because in the government of Álvaro Uribe, they used to arrest people from our community and accuse them of being terrorists… (participant, territorial workshop, Buenaventura, 2018)

In the rural territories of Colombia there are many social movements that can be defined as socio-territorial movements: socio-territorial movements are those movements for whom holding territory is a defining characteristic, and whose social struggle could not be understood without reference to their struggle for territory (Fernandes, 2005; Halverson 2019):

> First, the territory is mobilised as a strategy to realise the objectives of the movements. Although many social movements appropriate space as a means of struggle (for example, an occupation), for socio-territorial movements the territory is the central object of their struggle and is key to their objectives and goals. Second, the territory informs the identity of socio-territorial movements, generating new political subjectivities in the course of mobilisation. Third, the territory is a site of political socialisation that allows movements to generate new encounters and values, important material and immaterial results of mobilisation. Fourth, through the processes of territorialisation, de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation, socio-territorial movements institutionalise their practices and infrastructure while negotiating with other territorial projects, particularly the state. (Halverson et al; 2019: p1457)

Building counter-hegemonic power on the 'outside'

According to De Angelis (2006), nowhere in the world does capitalism represent the entire system of values and relationships of human society: there are always spheres of relationships and values which fall outside the logic of capital. That is, our world '*is not capitalism: it is much larger and wider than that'* (p34 ibid). That assertion has an important implication: it means that we do not live in capitalism - even in countries where capitalism is most developed and embedded, there is always an outside -

which is the social relations that are determined at least partly outside of the logic of the capitalist system, that is, non-capitalist social relations, which could include acts of mutual aid and solidarity; the act of playing; or even the preparation of food (ibid). For De Angelis, the key question for those who want to see a change in the dominant value system is how do we (re) produce, sustain and extend an outside of capital's value practices? Struggles which seek social change are an:

> Exterior that emerges from within, a social space created through the creation of relational modes / patterns that are not only different but also incompatible with the capital relations practices. That is our exterior, the sphere of value practices outside those of capital, and confronting them. That outside is contingent and contextual because it emerges from concrete struggles ... our outside is the sphere of commons 'production (ibid, p34)

This citation emphasises the role played by all concrete social struggles – be that a fight against the privatisation of a public service, a fight against the entry of a mining multinational into a territory, or a struggle for housing - beyond their principle, explicit objectives (for example, the non-privatisation of the service), as sites of the production and reproduction of non-capitalist values. Understood in this way, the central challenge for social movements and each group or individual interested in social transformation involving the end of capitalism – is the question of how to articulate these '*diverse and interconnected*' struggles around new value practices, so that *'new common meanings arise'* (Ibid, p239), in order to extend and consolidate that exterior.

The 'outside' to which De Angelis refers is, of course, a metaphor for all non-capitalist social relations and value practices. But all social relationships and value practices have a spatio-temporal dimension: that is, all social relationships and value practices occur within a space (or multiple spaces) and time (or multiple times). Pickerill et al have talked about how social movements, in carrying out their social struggles - create 'autonomous geographies' which they define as those '*spaces where people want to constitute forms of political, social and economic organisation that are non-capitalist, egalitarian and welded, through a combination of resistance and creation* '(2006: p1). These spaces may be temporary (such as an occupation), or they may be more fixed as in the case of socio-territorial movements.

In the case of Colombia, the sociologist Orlando Fals Borda, whose ideas have been influential within social humanism, argued that historically the relentless geography of the country, and the resistance of the peoples since the invasion of the European conquerors in 1492, have put limits to the expansion of the logic of capitalist modernity and its value system. Hence in Colombia Fals Borda argues that there exist peoples, cultures, and territories where the logic of capitalist modernity has not been able to penetrate substantially, and where social relations prevail which could be categorised as non-capitalist (Fals Borda, 2008; p55). He argues that it is the values of the 'base' groups in Colombia - the

indigenous, Afro-Colombian and peasant peoples – which preserve a 'pre-capitalist value structure' different from the Colombian elites '*whose north and patron has been demonic Europe* '(ibid: check page number). For Fals Borda, the cultures of indigenous, afro-descendent and peasant peoples in Colombia contain the constitutive elements of an alternative, organic form of socialism. Which he calls '*grassroots,* tropical socialism', and which is characterized by foundational and universal values such as 'solidarity, dignity, freedom, and autonomy' (ibid: p23).

The social movements which are the organisational manifestations of the these *pueblos de base* identified by Fals Borda, can be defined as socio-territorial movements, for whom the struggle for territory, and the fact of continuing to live their traditional subsistence agricultural lifestyles in their territories, is a central part of their social struggles and of their cultural and political identities. Their territories are examples of autonomous geographies, where those values and social practices of the 'outside' to which Fals Borda alludes are produced and reproduced: spaces with a high level of autonomy, little presence and influence of the administrative organs of the state, and with their own forms of organisation and coexistence, based upon reciprocity and solidarity. In the case of indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, many of their territories are officially recognised as collective ethnic territories, where land ownership is held as a collective title, and an extent of autonomous territorial control is exercised over their territory through their own forms of political organisation, and in the case of indigenous people through the administering of alternative, customary justice. As a result of historical indigenous and Afro-Colombian struggles for recognition, the 1991 constitution recognised the ethno-territorial rights of these ethnic communities in their rural territories, allowing the collective ownership of land and returning certain administrative powers to the communities in their indigenous reservations or in their community councils (black communities). A discussion about these faculties and the level of respect and compliance that they are given by the Colombian state is beyond the scope of this chapter: for the purposes of this chapter the important thing to highlight is that indigenous and black rural communities in their territories have achieved degrees of autonomy over the decisions which affect them in the control and administration of their territories. A crucial factor here is that in Colombia in rural territories, many communities still practice small-scale agriculture, which also provides a level of autonomy and sovereignty for social movements engaged in building counter-hegemonic alternative organisational projects by allowing them not to depend entirely on the capitalist market.

According to Halvorsen et al, the territories of socio-territorial movements:

> …generate particularly intensive contexts for political socialisation. The materiality of the appropriation of space provides a demarcated territory to generate new encounters, which can also generate highly affective and performative activism sites… (the territory provides) durability and solidity for transformative collective constructions. (Halvorsen et al, 2019: p1460 & 2467)

Within the pedagogical process, much emphasis has been placed on the experiences and knowledge which arise from the rural territories of the indigenous, Afro-Colombian and peasant communities, which have, at different levels, a certain level of autonomy over their territories. These socio-territorial movements and their territories are key in the pedagogical strategy of Nomadesc: it is important here to examine the way in which the praxis seeks to harness those spaces in order to generate processes of learning and political socialisation and expand the 'outside' of social movements in the southwest of Colombia. The territories of the UIP's organisations are diverse, and spatially stretched. They range, for example, from the headquarters of the Sintraunicol union at the Universidad del Valle in Cali, to the collective territory of the indigenous reserve of Cerro Tijeras, to the collective territory of the Community Council of La Toma. All of these, in different ways, can be considered alternative geographies other synonyms with the social movements of the southwest and their struggles: for example the campus of the public university; or the office of a union, which of course does not have the level of autonomy, but which are undoubtedly also territorial spaces where alternative values and non-capitalist social relations are cultivated and reproduced.

These spaces are the physical manifestation of the great 'outside' that De Angelis speaks of. That is, they are physical spaces where the dominant social relations are not those of the capitalist value system, more accurately identified with non-capitalist values such as solidarity, equality, and reciprocity. Spaces where people gather to share ideas and strategies in the search for social transformation, where the transformations they want to see through their daily activities are already being created and put into practice, and where social movements and struggles are formed and reproduced. Although many of the rural, and sometimes urban, territories of the UIP organisations suffer from the presence of armed groups and the violence of the armed conflict, their territories are spaces of life and hope, where people gather to dream a different world and collaborate to plan how to make it a reality (Kane, ethnographic fieldnotes, 2018). Thus, the Nomadesc pedagogical process intends that social movements not only resist and survive in their territories, but also that they are able to produce and reproduce their territories, and advance their own models based on alternative value systems:

> It is also about going beyond resistance and proposing strategies of buenvivir, or possibilities of buenvivir, as far as possible and within the contexts we are in, I think that is one of the things we insist on and we have endeavoured that they

> can recreate with all the limitations that we know exist, this is about how the territory is constructed- it isn't only built from logics of power, I also remember one of the student's thesis which we about collecting the songs of communities in Buenaventura, like a map of voices and of songs of its territory, recording the old singers and also the new boys who sing their own rhythms, from the communities around the port, and he captured how the music has evolved but also the feeling behind the music, …or the women of Triana who documented their ancestral knowledge of medicinal plants, they are midwives many of them and how they were relating…these are also ways in which territory is constructed, community is constructed, and alternatives are built...(Activist expert in participatory action research - UIP facilitator, interview, 2018).

Here it is important to avoid falling into romanticism about cultures, or to be tempted to see totalities in terms of value systems where there are none. Just as De Angelis argues that capitalism is not a system that encompasses everything, neither could it be said that in these alternative geographies, or the processes and spaces where non-capitalist values prevail, values and social relations are free from capitalist logic. For example, an important debate to be had which is beyond the scope of this discussion is around the level of penetration of capitalist logic in increasingly distant territories through the consumerist and media culture of neoliberalism in the last two decades since Fals Borda wrote his analysis. However, it can be argued that the territories and organisational processes of the social movements involved in the UIP are places where you can say that social relations and practices of value of capital do not prevail, and therefore where the counter-hegemonic struggle is sustained. Our discussion now turns to look at how Nomadesc's pedagogical strategy seeks to harness and engage with these spaces in order to defend human rights, strengthen social movement struggles and build counter-hegemonic projects in the region.

Harnessing territory to create geographies of solidarity

We have already established that Nomadesc's general work, including the pedagogical process, has a strong geographical element. Since its inception, Nomadesc's work has sought to intervene on behalf of communities and social movements in their struggles to define territory, and support their processes of territorialisation, deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation. At the same time, Nomadesc's work seeks to convert these processes into sources of learning and identity formation, which generate alternative prefigurative politics. As with any social process, learning processes associated with the pedagogical initiative in question must occur in some physical space. Nomadesc's strategic work has created geographies of solidarity based on two important geographic elements: on the one hand engaging with 'spaces of engagement' in order to advance social struggles and defend human rights; and on the other hand the expansion of the 'outside' and construction of alternative counter-hegemonic power through the linking of territories in resistance. These two aspects have

been central to Nomadesc's work throughout its history, albeit in a changing and dynamic manner during different phases of the process and local, regional and national conjuncture. In this sense, the pedagogical process must be understood as part of a broader strategy.

Here we can begin to unpack the geographical logic of the Nomadesc pedagogical process: in a country with one of the largest internal refugee populations in the world, a central objective is based upon the aim of counteracting the processes de-territorialisation processes which drive the displacement of communities, and of facilitating their perpetuity within their territories, seeking to avoid the tragedy of having to leave their territory for a rural community:

> ... forced displacement meant abandoning the territories to the control of the armed actors ... so part of the pedagogy, part of the strategy was to organisationally strengthen the communities so that they did not have to leave their territories ... then when there was no other alternative but to leave the territories ... in the midst of the paramilitary wave of violence in the Nineties the aim was always returning to the territories, of returning to what had been lost, of having the possibility of recovering what the armed actors had taken (Nomadesc founding member and currently a leading member of the organisation, interview, 2018).

For socio-territorial movements, the struggle for the definition of the territory often implies having to enact their own de-territorialisation processes in order to confront and dismantle the territorialities of actors seeking to encroach upon their territories. This may mean confronting different actors involved in drug trafficking, the extraction of natural resources, or seeking to exert the military territorial control within the context of the armed conflict. Nomadesc has always sought to advise, accompany and promote/make visible these community/social movement processes. One example of such processes was the community *mingas* organised by the Afro-Colombian communities of the Pacific, when of their own initiative they destroyed the coca crops being cultivated on behalf of drugs traffickers and armed actors for the production of cocaine within their territories:

> I remember the mingas of the eradication of the illicit crops (use contrary to the indigenous communities use of the coca)…the black community said it might be a sacred plant but it is bringing us vulnerability, not because of the plant, but because of the uses and dynamics that the actors who are cultivating it generate, I remember the mingas that took place where the community went and burned the coca ... that was in 2007…it is very interesting because although the conflict was generating vulnerability in the communities, there was also a reconfiguration of the community resistance around these actions (current leading Nomadesc member, and diploma student during early years, interview, 2018).

Hence, socio-territorial movements generate strategies to defend and expand their territorialisation processes, in order to defend their autonomy and territorial control. The territorial civic guards are an

initiative which the socio-territorial movements have developed, and which are oriented to that end. The indigenous guard, like the Cimarron guard in the case of the Afro-Colombian communities, consists of organised community members (unarmed, carrying only symbolic canes of authority within the territory) who monitor, protect, and organise the territory, with the authority and support of the community in general, often having to confront armed actors and sometimes being attacked or killed, risking their lives for the collective protection of the community and the territory:

> the protection and authority in the territories and the indigenous guard the Cimarron guards... is part of the culture of organised community work in defence of territory (Nomadesc founding member and currently a leading member of the organisation, interview, 2018).

As initiatives based upon territorial autonomy, organisation and control in the context of the armed conflict and the presence of multiple armed groups, the organisation of these civic guards can be understood as an alternative community-led peace initiative for self-protection and preservation. Within the pedagogical process and Nomadesc's broader work, it is these civic guards who are invited to provide security in public events and are promoted as an example of what can be achieved in the construction of alternative strategies and models, in a context where state security forces represent a risk to social movements.

The pedagogical process can be understood as a strategy that seeks to link different parts of the great 'outside', employing its territorial pedagogy to generate connect different and varied autonomous geographies/territories. These are geographies of counter-hegemonic knowledge, facilitated by the pedagogical process but also through constant visits to different territories in different aspects of Nomadesc's work. These connections/interactions facilitate cross-fertilisation of knowledge, tools and ideas between movements and territories. The influence of the thinking of Fals Borda, as one of the most important proponents of social humanism, is reflected in the logic described here, based on commitment to the belief in the emancipatory potential of the knowledge, values and organisational forms of the subaltern peoples of southwest Colombia that live, build and resist in different ways, across diverse territories. The work of Fals Borda can help to appreciate the potential for the circulation and production of knowledge contained within the interaction of diverse sectors of the social movement which occurs in the Nomadesc pedagogical process. Over recent years, increasing emphasis has been placed on the experiences and knowledge which arise from the rural territories of indigenous, Afro-Colombian and peasant communities.

These knowledge circulation processes aim to provide practical tools, knowledge and information based on the needs emerging from the conjunctures of the region, as well as the circulation of more

abstract knowledge, for example the strengthening of alternative value systems. The ripple effects of learning processes which occur within the pedagogical process demonstrate a geographical element of the pedagogy, which through the participation of representatives of territories engaged in in different struggles around the region, through the principle of replication, they ensure that necessary tools are provided that strengthen their struggles.

> It is about thinking collectively about what kind of model we want, or what plans of harmony and balance we are fighting for in our territories, so that is where a proposal like this gains strength from some of these strategies, no matter how small they are they are important and they are part of what we are trying to build, for example take the issue of food sovereignty and the dialogical learning exercise between different regions [involved in the pedagogical process], in the Centre of Valle [the peasant movement] have a very high level of food sovereignty, but in the Pacific [rural black communities involved in the process] communities they have a very low level, so in the process they have learned from each other, they share that knowledge and this is part of how resistance is created and sustained (Nomadesc founding member and currently a leading member of the organisation, interview, 2018).

Another example is that of COPDICON, (the Community Council of the Western Cordillera de Nariño), located in a remote territory far from large urban centres, rich in natural resources that have been coveted by different actors, and which has suffered the presence and violence of the different armed groups. A leader explains how her participation in the pedagogical process served to distribute and multiply knowledge within the community about the community's collective right to Free Prior and Informed Consent in relation to any commercial activity in their territory, thus strengthen the community's ability to defend its territoriality in the face of competing territorialities:

> In COPDICONC the training programmes and the diploma caused an the awakening of our community because for example if you go now to our territory to try and do some kind of activity, they will talk to you about prior consultation, they talk to you about the community's rights, the Derecho de Peticion... they stand up for themselves ... that has been because of several things, one is the replica workshops and ... those leaders who have been trained have been interested in that knowledge (Rural Afro-Colombian community leader, ex-student of diploma from early phase, interview, 2018)

This element of the strategy, of providing knowledge and practical tools for communities even in the most remote territories in order to strengthen their particular struggles and increase their capacity to defend their territories, is a manifestation of these geographies of counter-hegemonic knowledge. Indeed, it was one of the elements most valued by the participants in the systematisation process. A broad discussion about the learning processes that occur within the pedagogical process has already been presented. But an important aspect to consider, for any pedagogical process but which is particularly relevant in this case, is the question of the place where the pedagogical process occurs,

and how that *place* relates to the learning processes which occur. The pedagogical process is an itinerant process with a deeply territorial pedagogy: activities are rotated between the different territories of the social movements which are part of the process, and the Nomadesc headquarters in Cali.

For socio-territorial movements, territory is part of their identity, and therefore the process of political socialisation, and the generation of new subjectivities, are highly interwoven with the territory in its political, social, cultural and spiritual dimensions. For these movements, the territory is a '*site of political socialisation which generates new encounters and values'*(Halvorsen et al, p1457): the 'outside' of the social movements in southwestern Colombia

> Being here in the countryside feels calm even though we know this is a context of violence and tension that the communities have to endure, to come to these so called 'liberated' territories of the social movements always offers a lot of peace and a lot of joy, the exercise of being in community/communal living…it is striking…and it helps understand the spiritual aspects of the struggle…it should be noted that the issue of food is always the most concrete aspect of these territorial struggles. (Movement intellectual, allied to the process, interview, 2018)

The citation above provides an important description of that 'outside', and why it is such a fertile terrain for learning processes. An important element is identified: the production of food as a source and guarantee of autonomy and sovereignty for socio-territorial movements. What we want to highlight here is how, through the pedagogy of the process, these territories are harnessed to facilitate and strengthen the processes of learning, the diverse identities, and the critical consciousness of the participants. The territorial pedagogy - of going to the territories, of walking them, of learning 'in the field' and through interaction with the communities and their struggles - was identified as a very important element by the participants in their learning process:

> …a part that I liked a lot in the process was interacting with the territory, of walking the territories and learning about them, and learning about and identifying the problems that were faced within the territory, which one as a young person I was unaware of, it was about 'walking the word'. (youth activist of rural Afro-Colombian community in situation if displacement, graduate of first cohort of UIP, interview)

> The learning for me was about going to Cerro Tijeras or Honduras (indigenous communities) or going to the peasant community in Tulua, being there and seeing it, that is the best learning space there is and that is what the university is all about (Rural Afro-Colombian community leader who was an diploma student in the early years).

The pedagogical process seeks to facilitate the dialogic connection and interaction between various actors and territories outside the capitalist logic and the values and practices that accompany it, thus

expanding and strengthening that 'outside' that is characterized by more equitable, democratic values and organisational forms and humanists. That exterior, in the case of Colombia, is an exterior forged, produced and reproduced on the frontline of the armed and social conflict; but also forged in the autonomous geographies of the same movements, including the territories of the socio-territorial movements mentioned above. Under the logic of the pedagogical initiative, linking territories, processes and struggles of social movements is the way to build counter-hegemonic power.

The territorial pedagogical strategy to link different organisational processes and territories is based on a relational and dynamic concept of how social struggles are constructed and evolve. The organisational processes of social movements are understood as dynamic, changing and the products of multiple interconnected relationships. In this conception, the struggles of each organisation/movement benefits in some way from the individual, collective, formal and informal links, learning and knowledge which exist with other subjects of struggle. That is, social movements and their struggles are altered and shaped through their interaction with other social movements / social struggles. This supports the argument of geographer Featherstone (2003),that much geographical literature has a tendency toward a 'fixed' concept of social struggles, seeing individual territorial organisational processes as particularisms enclosed in a single space and place, ignoring the importance of relational influences. The Nomadesc pedagogical process is based on a belief in the potential contained within the interaction of the different resistance processes, in their different territories, while celebrating and strengthening the different identities, but mutually altering and nourishing each other in the process through interaction with other actors in resistance. The process is another manifestation of a geography of knowledge, interweaving, building and multiplying knowledge among different territories of social movements. Our research shows how as well as generating processes of mutual learning and collaboration, the interaction facilitates a space where subjects of different organisational processes can collectively discuss and imagine alternative futures and build their notions of utopia.

Spaces of engagement

Writing about the struggle against the privatisation of the utility company EMCALI in the city of Cali, during the initial phases of the pedagogical process, Novelli (2004) used Cox's concept of 'dependency and engagement spaces' to demonstrate the multi-scale aspect of that strategy, including the component of human rights defence that was at that time under the charge of Nomadesc, which functioned as the de facto human rights department of the Sintraemcali union. Spaces of dependency are those which social movements in their struggles seek to ‘defend and strengthen’; whilst spaces of engagement are those spaces to which the social actors go in order to “defend their dependency

spaces" - that is, to defend and advance their struggles (Novelli, 2004: p241). Engagement spaces are spaces of social power such as local or national government, institutions of multilateral organisations such as the UN and the OAS, the mass media, or political parties (Cox, 1998, cited in Novelli, 2004) . Since its inception, Nomadesc's work has been based on being able to exert pressure at multiple scales at the same time, in order to leverage the struggles of the social movements with which it works into various centres of influence or 'spaces of engagement' – for instance local authorities and state institutions, different legal forums at local, national and international level; local and national parliamentary forums, and multilateral human rights institutions such as the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. It is important to highlight that Nomadesc's strategy is not about seeking to become part of these spaces, but of harnessing them in order to leverage pressure upon them for the benefit of social struggles and the defence of human rights, and in the meantime maintain a critical distance and posture. Its way of interacting with these spaces is strategic, often through strategic alliances with organisations and individuals that are part of those structures (for example, allied members of parliament, or international human rights organisations); or with intermediate organisations that facilitate contact. As far as possible, Nomadesc plays the role of a bridge between the reality of what is happening in the territories, and the power (real or perceived) of these engagement spaces, wherever possible facilitating that the voices of social movements and communities are heard within these spaces, instead of Nomadesc speaking on their behalf. Due to the experience of being targets of harassment and state repression, any space of engagement shared with state institutions or with representatives of the private sector (such as multinational corporations) is treated with high degree of realism, pragmatism, scepticism and as a potential security risk. (Kane, ethnographic fieldnotes, 2018).

Nodal point

We have established that Nomadesc's work has a strong geographical element based on the creation of solidarity geographies: on the one hand the work of building counter-hegemonic power through the linking of different territories and autonomous spaces, the strengthening of organisational processes through the dialogue of knowledge and cross-fertilisation and interweaving of ideas and knowledge. And on the other hand, the multi-scale work of defence of human rights which seeks to take advantage of different geographies, articulations and networks of power in order to support the struggles of social movements. In this sense, Nomadesc can be considered a nodal point, which facilitates the connection and interaction of different territories, knowledges and individual and collective subjects. In the systematisation process, one of the things most valued by respondents was precisely this role which Nomadesc plays as a connecting node or facilitator of connections with other

different territories, spaces and human rights networks. This was something that people highlighted was particularly important during the worst moments of violence. Generally, the relationship between Nomadesc and individual organisations begins with a crisis caused by violence and repression against members of the organisation, movement or community. The arrival of Nomadesc to the southwestern region meant, for the activists of many social movements, trade unions and NGOs, the connection with national and international networks and with different spaces of engagement which would allow them finally to draw attention to the human rights violations occurring in the region:

> We put out reports but it was as if we were reporting it to each other, it didn't really go anywhere and didn't really make any impact at international level or get support (Nomadesc) began to energize that, in a joint process with all of the organisations, and we began to make visible what was happening at international level, at the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, after we reached other organisations in the world, the Colombia Solidarity Campaign, English trade unions, Swiss, Spanish, French, Italian, German and etc , that allowed, allowed us to make visible, one hundred percent visible, the human rights violations but also the struggles, and the imposition of the [neoliberal] model. (participant in territorial workshop, Cali, 2018)

> [Nomdesc] was that link to national and the international level, that was the link. We had made a criticism of human rights defence in our region regions, that we were stuck in the region and that we needed the information to get out, and Nomadesc facilitated that…and we had also criticised the way that national human rights organisations came to Cali, took information, registered it and then took it off to Bogota and we didn't hear more, but Nomadesc was different. Another thing that I want to highlight is the consolidation at around that time of the human rights network in Valle del Cauca, it was a very important space because we came together, the vast majority of trade unions and human rights organisations across the region, in the year 2000 and that sensitized a lot, and made visible the violence of paramilitarism in Valle del Cauca. (participant in territorial workshop, Cali, 2018)

For rural communities , the fact that members of the Nomadesc work team were present in the region and ready to travel to the area in moments of terror and anxiety or emergency was emphasised by the respondents. But beyond their presence, Nomadesc was seen as a bridge with spaces of engagement, and with other organisational processes, and as an organisation with the capacity to make visible the abuses that were being committed in their rural or urban territories. This way of linking the locality of the most distant and physically isolated territories, with spaces of engagement, and with networks of solidarity and activism, can be understood as a process of counter-hegemonic globalisation.

Canadian sociologist Alan Sears (2014) argues that any counter-hegemonic process needs to have an 'infrastructure of dissent', that is, physical spaces where people from different processes seeking

social transformations, from different territories with different struggles and challenges, can meet, interact, share ideas and intertwine their struggles. The headquarters of Nomadesc is a physical space that is placed at the service of social struggles in the region, a nodal point where the linking of different territories of the organisations participating in the pedagogical process occurs. The pedagogical process can be understood in the same way, fulfilling a function of providing a meeting space for the different organisational processes of the different territories that are part of the 'outside' of the social movements of the southwestern region. Through its territorial pedagogy, the pedagogical process seeks to draw upon the infrastructure of dissent of the social movements of the southwest region, to make it tangible, and thus build collaborative processes between different sectors and different territories. It is in this sense that we can come to understand *Tejiendo Resistencia* events within the pedagogical process:

> because the diploma course was not only the development of that schedule so for example there were those having resistance that were also part of the graduates, they were meeting exercises of the southwest organisations, then the southwest organisations contextualized what was happening in each territory, that it was the moment of the exchange and let's say about readings that were happening in the different territories and it was also the cultural exchange, right? to put that Andean culture in dialogue, with the Afro and those having resistance, they were not made in one place, they were made in Cali, in Buenaventura they were traveling, but there were also meetings of organisations and from there they resumed (current leading Nomadesc member, and diploma student during early years, interview, 2018).

In conclusion, this chapter has presented a discussion of the political economy and geographical dimensions of the learning processes which emerge from Nomadesc's work with communities and social movements on the frontlines of the Colombian armed conflict. The concrete, localised experiences of injustice and violence of the communities and social movements involved in the pedagogical process provide them with an embodied understanding of the violent modus operandi of the capitalist system in southwest Colombia. The pedagogical process draws upon these experiences of the diverse participants in order to illustrate their interconnection and systemic nature. The process provides an opportunity for participants to reflect upon their own and each others' experiences in order understand the macro-economic processes and concepts which shape the violence that affects the participants' territories. Facilitating encounters between activists from diverse territories also allows Nomadesc to maintain and up to date analysis of the panorama for social movements in the region and to trace the macro-processes, the changing conjunctures, and the inter-connections related to the armed conflict and the expansion of the extractivist neoliberal economic model in the southwest region.

Nomadesc has developed a multi-scalar strategy to defend human rights and to build counter-hegemonic power, linking territories of struggle which are spatially distant, and seemingly isolated, to other organisational processes, territories, and networks of organisation and human rights defence at regional, national and international levels. These geographies of solidarity support social movements in their processes of territorialisation, deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation, and at the same time employ a territorial pedagogy in order to harness social movements' territories as learning spaces characterised by alternative value systems and autonomous organisational forms, what De Angelis would term a counter-hegemonic 'outside'. Through linking up these different territories of struggle, Nomadesc creates geographies of counter-hegemonic knowledge which facilitate the circulation of knowledge, tools and information which increase the capacity of social movements to defend human rights, resist displacement, consolidate their organising and build solidarity with other movements. Ingrained in the Nomadesc pedagogical process is the belief in the transformational learning potential contained by the physical encounter and interaction of the different resistance processes, in their different territories, while celebrating and strengthening the different identities, but mutually altering and nourishing each other in the process through interaction with other actors in resistance, interweaving, building and multiplying knowledge among different territories of social movements. Through its human rights work, Nomadesc often plays the role of a bridge between the reality of what is happening in the territories, and spaces of engagement at regional, national and international level, as well as with international solidarity networks, thus seeking to leverage the power and capacity of social movements and make them visible within spaces of hegemonic power. This can be understood as a strategy of counter-hegemonic globalisation. Within this geographical strategy, the headquarters of Nomadesc is a physical space that becomes a nodal point, linking the different territories of the organisations participating in the pedagogical process.

7. Situated learning from a praxis of struggle in a conflict-affected context

This chapter engages with the learning processes identified within our research process in regard to the organising challenges faced by social movements in southwest Colombia. How does the context shape and affect their organising processes, and what learning has emerged? How does the context affect Nomadesc's relationship with the state? And what implications does the constant security threat of violence have upon activists and movements? It also unpacks the learning which emerged for Nomadesc and the social movements of the UIP in terms of the Colombian peace process(es), and what it meant for their own struggles and hopes for social changes, as collective subject directly affected by the conflict.

Relating to the repressive state

The historical constant of state terrorism and repression against the civilian population, and the systematic extermination of social leaders and activists in recent decades, have been the main factors which have defined the relations between Colombian social movements and the state. Nomadesc, through its work as a human rights organisation working closely with social movements, which works directly to support social movements and organisations, has been subjected to periodic surveillance, harassment, threats and even attempted attacks by state and paramilitary forces (often working hand in hand):

> In public administration, these days they talk about the private public alliances, you could say that in Colombia there has been a unity and a public private alliance between paramilitaries, landowners, businessmen, bankers, politicians, the state and so on, against social movements… that alliance has always been strategic, and in some periods it has been more intense, and sometimes aimed more at a particular sector, but it has been constant since the 1970s until today, with the different ups and downs that go with the different conjunctures…and [political] educational processes have gone through all these dynamics as well: social movements' organisational processes are maintained, but the impact that the dirty war achieved was massive and it facilitated the change of the [economic] model, because it was in the 1980s that the neoliberal model and the whole transformation began to take shape. (Trade unionist involved during early years of pedagogical process, interview, 2018)

As the citation demonstrates, the repression and violence perpetrated against Nomadesc and the social movements it works with by state forces and paramilitary groups have been a constant and dominant factor in the lived reality of activists (although with changing dynamics depending on the different moments and conjunctures). The violence has focussed on different sectors and territories at different moments, and with different modus operandi, as discussed in chapter 2. The citation

demonstrates that this violence cannot be understood without appreciating the macro-economic processes and transformations which have been facilitated by that violence. Members of the Nomadesc team, and activist across southwest Colombia, live with the constant threat and risk of physical attack and even murder, and have been victims on different occasions of repressive and violent tools and strategies. The director of Nomadesc was the victim of a failed plan of extermination by the Colombian army to kill them and another 78 activists, in the aforementioned Operation Dragon, which was discovered in 2004. The left-wing senator Alexander Lopez (who before becoming a senator had been president of Sintraemcali) and former president of Sintraemcali Luis Hernández, both involved in the design of the initial phases of the diploma program, were also the targeted in the plan. As demonstrated in Chapter 2, the Colombian state has been characterized by criminal and corrupt behaviours, and practices of state terrorism against civil society, and it is this reality above all others which determines the way in which social movements relate to state organs:

> *This is a paramilitary state and in the regions paramilitarism has acted and has had results in one way or another, and continues to operate and to influence, also drug trafficking continues to exist in Valle del Cauca and across Colombia, and still has a relationship with politicians, right? .. We talk about the threat of paramilitarism because it is a reality that has not disappeared, likewise drug trafficking, and corruption, they are the three central aspects of the crisis of the Rule of Law [in Colombia]. (Trade unionist involved during early years of pedagogical process, interview, 2018)*

In this context, the work that human rights organisations or different parts of civil society do often has to do with investigating and demonstrating the criminal practices and alliances that exist within the various organs of the state. The following citation is from a human rights defence lawyer allied with Nomadesc and facilitator of the pedagogical process, who has worked on investigations of the links between multinational extractivist companies with paramilitary groups in Colombia, and demonstrates the serious consequences for individual and collective security to be involved in this type of work:

> … modesty apart we say that very rarely organisations like ours have undertaken the work of investigating and testing the evidence point by point, to find out exactly what was going on, right? And obviously the result of that is that we carried out a very good investigation, but we also have 8 assassination attempts, three bombings, two kidnappings, an attempted kidnapping of my colleague's son, five temporary exiles from the country, etc. etc. (trade unionist, lawyer & investigator, founding member of Nomadesc, interview, 2017)

The same pedagogical process itself has not been exempt of the repressive practices of the state and its security and intelligence organs:

> that period, although it was a fruitful period, it also marked us out and meant we had many people sent to do intelligence on us, it is impossible to know what consequences that had or what information they took, but we know that we had many infiltrators in the movements, and including in our educational processes, and that allowed the state and paramilitaries and intelligence agencies to gather a lot of information ... the state uses all the instruments it can to infiltrate social movements and we were no exception. (Trade unionist intellectual involved during early years of pedagogical process, interview, 2018)

Hence, the factor that has defined and oriented the relationship that Nomadesc and the social movements it works with have with the state has been the violent and repressive nature of the Colombian state's actions towards those who work for social change. In the territories of the rural conflict-affected communities involved in the Nomadesc pedagogical process, the population's experience of the state can often be almost exclusively limited to the presence of armed forces in their area. An example of the reality faced by communities in their territories affected by the conflict is the case of a 21-year-old student, Viviana Trochez Dagua, of the Nasa indigenous community who graduated with the first cohort of the Intercultural University of the Peoples on 7 December 2018, and was subsequently killed the next day in a massacre perpetrated by an unidentified armed group in the territory of the Cerro Tijeras indigenous region, Cauca.

Based on accumulated lived experience, as in most of the social movements in Colombia, great caution has been exercised within Nomadesc towards the state, and dealings with state agencies are characterised by mistrust, suspicion and scepticism. However, at the same time, as a human rights organisation, Nomadesc is obliged to deal with multiple state institutions and must operate on the basis of national and international legislation and the existing institution as spaces of engagement. Therefore, the organisation maintains the perspective that, despite anti-democratic and often corrupt state policies and actions, it is also a disputed site of social relations and, therefore, its character is variable and often contradictory, with multiple faces and institutions that cannot be easily typified or categorized. The relationship is also, therefore, in a state of permanent contention. As a human rights organisation, most of Nomadesc's demands are focussed on the state as the sole entity responsible for the protection of human rights, which means that they must constantly seek to influence the state's action through various tactics that they include social mobilisation, legal action both at an international level and for example, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, as well as participation in a variety of local, national and international networks, etc. As indicated above, rather than speaking on behalf of social movements and communities, a central aim of Nomadesc's

organisational pedagogical work is to develop the capacity and empower the social sectors so that they can challenge the state and seek changes in public policy for the benefit of the social sectors and the transformations they seek.

Mechanisms and strategies for struggle in the context of repression

Any social movement organisational initiative in a context of repression must take account of the issue of security and be prepared for the possibility of being targeted by state security organs (or in the case of Colombia their paramilitary allies). In such a context, social movements are often required to be creative and strategic in their actions:

> there were several political and pedagogical legal tools that came together and a very important one was a creative initiative that we set up to protect life called the Forbidden to Forget Campaign, which was around the raising awareness about leaders threatened, killed or in exile and the historical memory of what was happening, also with very strong components of international solidarity, and that component of international solidarity allowed a certain protective shield to the activity of the most threatened and most vulnerable activists, the campaign had several other components, there was the communication theme which produced materials, there were activities around diplomatic and political action, international delegations with visits by international organisation, but also activists travelled from here to other countries to denounce what was happening, and the campaign brought together workers from Colombia, England, Canada, Spain…. (Nomadesc founding member and currently a leading member of the organisation, interview, 2018)

The Nomadesc pedagogical process began in response to one of the most acute moments of violence in southwest Colombia at the end of the 21st century. In the context of the widespread paramilitary violence against communities and social movements of the region, for activists simply to stage a meeting meant risk to their lives. The decision to stage the diploma course at the site of Cali's Universidad Libre, and for the course to be certified by the university, provided an element of security and the opportunity to securely gather activists from various sectors and parts of the region together:

> …that was the way to be able to start to meet again because the armed conflict was so acute, the repression was so heavy that any more than 2 people gathered was seen as subversive and a meeting of three or four people could be attacked and threatened, even massacres were committed against this type of meetings of people who got together to think about what was happening in terms of the violence and talk about how it related to economics or politics, so the diploma on the being coordinated with the public and private universities, allowed us some leeway and also allowed us to deepen our work, and be working on developing prevention mechanisms (Nomadesc founding member and currently a leading member of the organisation, interview, 2018).

An impact identified by respondents as a result of the repression and violence was the weakening and breaking of the social fabric, both of communities and of the social movements themselves, which can bring about the atomisation between different movements and social sectors. However, several participants pointed out that the repression also served to spark processes of unity between different sectors in order to develop joint solutions to counteract violence:

> … [ex-President] Uribe Vélez, when he arrived to the presidency, said all human rights defenders are guerrillas and so he made everyone a target, and from there that was a message that in that sentence, there are a number of readings that came from the social movement in that moment, his period was just beginning, and people said 'ah ok, is that right, we are all the same? Ah well let's get together because that's how they see us…I think that is the first great lesson [from that period], the stigma that is imposed on the different sectors, the different forms of mobilisation and of resistance, where all of us were categorised as being insurgents, and it got the social movement thinking well we had better unite then because they are coming for all of us, it's logical, we have to unite to defend ourselves, let's agree on a minimum common agenda, a process…and we can continue to maintain our differences. (interview with trade unionist involved in the process since early phase of diplomas until present day, interview, 2018)

An important conclusion which emerged from interviews with activists was the importance of social mobilisation as part of any strategy that seeks to defend or extend rights, and to achieve social transformations, as a complement to the interlocution with the state or legal strategies. This learning has been a central element throughout the history of the pedagogical process:

> I believe a constant in the history of social movements in Colombia is that no rights, no victories have been achieved without mobilisation, that is, all the collective rights of the communities, and this is a key part of our pedagogy…[even] the defence of human rights has been achieved through social struggle, the mobilisation of protest, the peaceful occupation of state institutions, mobilisations and marches on the roads, that kind of thing has also been a historical constant since the eighties, at least that we have lived directly or that I have lived directly (Nomadesc founding member and currently a leading member of the organisation, interview, 2018).

'The right to joy': the importance of human relationships

The constant threat of violence has deep, constant impacts upon the everyday activities of social movements, and the everyday lives of activists and leaders. It affects the forms of organisation, modes of communication, daily routines, family relationships and even organisational cultures. It requires permanent precaution, and one way in which the violent and repressive context affects the work of Nomadesc (and social movements) is that it often forces the organisation to be reactive to the conjunctures and events within the region. For example, when a massacre occurs, or a death threat arrives, or a social leader is arrested, these events force an immediate response, and can require over

the organisation's time and resources. The changing and dynamic context also generates a sense of permanent urgency in organisation activities, which requires a high level of creativity from activists, to be able to read a situation and respond accordingly, in often fraught circumstances. It often requires a broad repertoire of action and the ability to quickly mobilize and instrumentalize different networks and spaces of engagement.

Activists highlighted the importance of human relationships when operating in the context of high repression and violence, particularly during the early 2000s, when the paramilitary expansion in the region was at its peak. Above, the praxis of hope was already identified within the pedagogical process, and participants explained that the intercultural encounter with other subjects of struggle increased their sense of hope. Beyond the pedagogical process, the coordination between different activists (human rights defenders, trade unionists, lawyers, community leaders) involved in the defence of human rights and the social struggles described in Chapter 3, underlined the importance of the human connection which developed between a core of activists from different movements and organisations involved in human rights defence during that period. These human connections, operating in such extreme circumstances, for the activists involved generated hope and represented acts of resistance. Meetings and other organising activities were imbued with camaraderie, bonds of friendship, humour, fun, mockery, and joy. Participants described how even in the most acute and tense moments, humour was rarely lacking: often morbid humour about the situation of danger and risk, as a way to vocalize fear and thus collectivize it, and at the same time to mock it:

> … an important element, we came together and connected and we really made possible the fight to joy even in the midst of conflict…we knew that we were living in the midst of a terrible conflict, and when we got down to work we worked very seriously and for hours on end, but the horseplay was vital. (participant, territorial workshop, Cali, 2018)

> …there was chemistry, a lot of fraternity, we started celebrating birthdays together, and in December we always got together… I think that was the fundamental factor (participant, territorial workshop, Cali, 2018)

> As an anecdote of that time, when we used to go to get the bus to go to Cauca [to a territory acutely affected by the conflict], before we took the bus before we always went to get a sandwich from Sandwich Cubano, and we would always ask for the most expensive sandwich and say 'screw it, the English [funders] are paying, and if we get killed at least we ate well! (participant, territorial workshop, Cali, 2018)

Participants described how these human connections, the closeness of the activists and the situation they were experiencing together, as well as their deep political commitment, gave a strong sense of collective power and almost invincibility:

> We all believed ourselves superheroes, we weren't afraid, we were young and we dreamed of socialism, of a different society…and it was a coincidence of life a special group emerged at the same time and came together, people from different organisations, we joined forces, and I thank life that it gave me that opportunity to be part of it (participant, territorial workshop, Cali, 2018)

In a context where violence is employed to generate division, fear and distrust, Nomadesc's experience has shown that an important element for emancipatory organisational processes is the construction of solidarity, trust, reciprocity and affection. In particular, activists highlighted the issue of trust, and the importance of being able to trust each other knowing that information is often a matter of life and death for activists (Kane, ethnographic fieldnotes, 2018). That is why, within the pedagogical praxis and discourse of Nomadesc, the reconstruction of the social fabric, which has been so damaged by the effects of the conflict, begins with a focus on human relationships and building interpersonal connections.

Knowledge processes in the context of repression

Another strategy that facilitates the survival and reproduction of social movements which emerged in the systematisation was the way in which historical/collective memory, in the context of repression, becomes even more important for social movements as a process which preserves the knowledge of the movement in a situation where they are under threat. As already established, historical memory plays a central role in the praxis of Nomadesc and fulfils several functions within work/pedagogical strategies. Here we want to highlight the importance of historical memory in the violent context of the Colombian southwest. The exercise of collectively remembering the martyrs of social movements and of commemorating the anniversaries of their murders, in addition to keeping alive the memory of those victims, also serves to collectivize the pain, fear, and trauma, in order to facilitate a collective response to emotions within the framework of resistance and struggle. But there is also a sense in which the experience of acts of repression and violence - imprisonment, murder, threat - are understood as a collective matter – as an attack on the collective, the organisation, the process, the union and so on , and that in that sense the preservation of the collective and its organisational process, its struggle, is more important than the individual.

Often, there is tendency to discuss the impacts upon social movements of repressive methods including assassination, enforced disappearance, incarceration or enforced exile, to focus upon the emotional level, and the unbearable loss and trauma of such a situation . But it is also important here to consider the impact which such events have at the collective level, upon social movements, their struggles and their knowledge processes . The impact of the enforced and sudden physical removal of an activist from a social movement can have a devastating impact on knowledge processes, and

therefore on the capacity of their organisational process. A leader may hold different types of knowledge: they may hold/know valuable information relating to the organisation and its struggle which others may not (which very often is not written down either for security reasons or through oversight); but the biggest impact often comes from the loss of other types of knowledge related to their characteristics as a leader, such as analytical capacity to evaluate the conjunctures and make strategic decisions; or the tacit knowledge which comes with accumulated experience of struggle; or motivational and organising skills (Kane, ethnographic fieldnotes, 2018). One that occurred during the course of our research was the murder of Don Temistocles Machado, a recognised leader of the Isla de la Paz neighbourhood in Buenaventura (one of the communities which forms part of the UIP, and where Nomadesc has accompanied the community in its struggle against attempts to evict which have made them the target of paramilitary violence). Don Temis, as he was known by the community, was a leader who almost obsessively investigated, documented and gathered information relating to his community and their struggle, and was fighting several legal cases on behalf of the community in an attempt to show that there would be evictors were using fraudulent means to appropriate the community's land. He accumulated a physical filing system which contained over 90,000 pages in 94 folders. Yet people recognised him more for his mental capacity to memorize, store and recount information relating to the community, his meticulous eye for detail, and his obsessive and fearless commitment to the cause of his community (Comision Intereclesial Justicia y Paz, 2019). In a context of tension and insecurity, community members followed the guidance of Don Temis, relying upon his experience and knowledge, and were reassured by his positive and spirited demeanour. That is, the impact of the murder of Don Temistocles Machado on the capacity of his community in their struggle, and on their knowledge processes, was a monumental blow to the organisational process which cannot be overstated (Kane, ethnographical fieldnotes, 2018). Beyond the emotional impact of intimidating and generating fear within social movements, we must engage with and recognise the political objectives of such political violence, which are often calculated in order remove key individuals and hence dismantle the organisational processes of social movements.

Building peace in the midst of conflict

What has been learned from the experience of Nomadesc and the social movements of the UIP in relation to the peace processes in Colombia? As civil society subjects, some of whom inhabit the territories directly affected by the conflict and experience the impacts of the armed conflict every day; or as Nomadesc which accompanies organisational processes in multiple territories affected by the conflict; their knowledge and learning on the issue of the conflict, and peace initiatives, should be of value and interest to the involved in official efforts for the construction of peace. As already described,

Nomadesc has been able, through its work within the conflict-affected territories of southwest Colombia, to develop a deep and ongoing analysis of the Colombian conflict and its ever-changing dynamics, always seeking to locate the structural causes, and working with communities and movements to be able to unveil what's behind the violence. Through their work, Nomadesc have been able to identify through first-hand experience how the armed conflict is linked to the economic model, and the neoliberal economic transformations that have occurred in recent decades. From observation at local level they have been able to identify the importance of factors such as the role of the United States and multinational companies in driving the conflict, and show how as well as historical characteristic of the conflict, these elements are still driving factors of the territorial conflicts today.

> I believe that this logic of the war in our country in the last 20 years or 25 years ... has coincided on the one hand with the rupture of paradigms , of having a different reference point in the world from the capitalist [the collapse of the Soviet Union], the fall of those ideologies, and if you look at the social movement, then came the madness of war and human rights violations [targeted at us]., it was such a complex situation where we weren't prepared for the situation we suddenly found ourselves in, the war stopped being mainly a rural phenomenon and came to the cities, and we got the whole package, enforced disappearances, human rights violations of all kinds, death all around…but it came along with a predatory model- the neoliberal model, we had to face neoliberal globalisation… (Trade involved during early years of pedagogical process, interview, 2018)

The armed conflict has claimed the lives of tens of thousands social movement activists in Colombia. For the socio-territorial movements, the defence of their territory is also a struggle for survival in the midst of the Colombian conflict, as they dispute their territories with the competing territorialities of the parties to the armed conflict. Communities in their everyday lives have to deal with the presence and pressure of armed groups, and develop strategies to mitigate the risk, deal with emergencies, and to engage with armed actors in order to demand respect for life and territory.

> we had to always had to engage [with the guerrilla forces], we did it with dialogue and respect, respect us: we are respectful but you must recognise that the territory is ours, we have our struggle and it is not the same as your struggle , it is a peaceful struggle, so we had to engage with them (participant, territorial workshop, Buenaventura , 2018)

Something that emerged strongly in the systematisation process was the disconnect which exists between the discourse of the protagonists of the peace process, and the reality that is lived in the territories of the movements that are part of the UIP. In many territories in the southwest, the armed conflict continues due to the presence of new armed actors, and in some cases it could even be said that the situation in terms of security and the effects upon to civil life is worse than before (Kane, ethnographic fieldnotes, 2018). Participants in our systematisation process had a deep sense of

pessimism and distrust regarding the prospects for the future of the peace process, given the ongoing situation in the territories and the election of President Iván Duque for the Centro Democratic party, which is led by ex-President Alvaro Uribe:

> How can it be that us communities [in rural areas affected by conflict] only contribute the corpses, or the bad news to have abandoned our territories and to have lost our belongings, and then we have to be contented with what they give us in the victims programme, what we need above all is to know the truth about what happened and the guarantee of no repetition, we need to know these things won't happen again, but we are seeing in this country that the way things are going, rather than non-repetition we seem to be heading for more repetition, in a country where supposedly they signed a peace agreement with one of the guerrillas but look at the government the country has just elected, you can ser the country doesn't want peace it must want more war because he was elected, so now they are cutting the education budget but they increased the budget to buy weapons (participant, territorial workshop, Buenaventura, 2018)

In Buenaventura, participants spoke of the high level of military control that paramilitary groups still exercise over civilian life. The following excerpt provides a window of the ongoing reality being experienced by many urban and rural communities throughout the national territory, and indicates the difficulty and danger for social movements to be able to organise within these contexts:

> Despite everything we always resist in our territory, but we have lost so much space to those people because they are in charge, at least in our area; let's be honest, here in Buenaventura the paramilitaries are the ones who control for example the market, our whole area…they are the ones who impose the order if two people fight, they fine people if they fight, they are even intervening in family disputes, they go to the schools and tell the children how they must behave and they ask the teachers which kids are behaving badly so that they can impose punishment… (participant, territorial workshop, Buenaventura, 2018)

The impossibility of being neutral: social movements in situations of armed conflict

In the context of armed conflict, the fact that Nomadesc and the social movements of the UIP do not participate in the armed conflict or belong to any of the armed actors 'taking sides' does not imply a 'neutral' stance with regards to the conflict.

> we are not neutral because in a situation of conflict like the one in our country you cannot be neutral, inevitably you end up being forced to take a position (Trade unionist involved during early years of pedagogical process, interview, 2018)

All organisations and individuals will have their own and varied postures and analysis regarding the guerrillas and their armed struggle, however within the pedagogical process the dominantly held analysis, based upon the analysis of accumulated experiences, and of the structural causes conflict,

holds the Colombian state and the political and economic elites responsible as the hegemonic power which has promoted war and violence throughout the country's history, including against the civilian population. For Nomadesc, the point of departure for any analysis of the conflict (and the peace process) has to be the repressive and violent character of the Colombian state, and the recognition that the Colombian conflict cannot be understood without reference to the class struggle that exists in the country (Kane, ethnographic fieldnotes, 2018). This analysis is not about supporting the actions of the guerrilla insurgencies in Colombia, but about understanding that their existence is due to the structural causes and historical violence (outlined in chapter 2), and to recognise the legitimacy of the option of armed struggle for peoples in contexts of oppression and state terrorism. Over recent decades, and in particular since the presidency of Alvaro Uribe (2002-2010), much effort has been made from state institutions and the mass media to stigmatize and delegitimize the existence of guerrillas in Colombia, and to characterize their struggles as 'criminal' or 'terrorist'; and organisations that are critical of the government (for example human rights organisations), or engaged in any type of social protest are routinely associated are associated with guerrilla movements by state functionaries. Such accusations serve to endanger the lives of the activists involved, identifying the social movements as legitimate targets for paramilitary violence. The territorialities of the socio-territorial movements often coincide with those of the guerrillas, and in these encounters of different territorialities, with different conceptions of struggle and revolution, and has on many occasions led to guerrilla violence against community activists. In the case of indigenous communities in northern Cauca region, tensions with FARC guerrillas has at times led to collective direct action in defence of their territories on the part of the communities.

Some interviewees described how in their view, the peace process between the government and the FARC guerrilla had been a way of deepening and extending the neoliberal model, of being able to open up the territories that had been affected by the conflict to the economic activities of national and international capital , eliminating the risk of attack by FARC forces. It was also argued that the change of government from President Uribe to President Santos (2010), with the beginning of the peace process and the modification of discourse from Uribe's handline rhetoric to the Santos' discourse of peace and defence of human rights, served to diminish the militancy of the social movements and the level of social mobilisation, and hence to facilitate the deepening and expansion of the extractivist neoliberal model, which became less dependent on paramilitary violence during those years:

> The Uribe government acted with up front, with absolute regularity, a paramilitary government, with a clear intentionality, they wanted to do away with communities, they had a totally militaristic discourse, it was about the demolition of rights and living conditions for communities…then comes Santos

> with a different discourse of peace but with the same interests: Uribe's government promoted resources extraction, the economic model of his government was exactly the same as that of Santos – Santos continued with the same economic policy which was just as terrible for communities, but with a political discourse of peace…and I think that ended up clouding the analysis of communities, people were taken in by the peace negotiations, they were 8 years of peace dialogues and they served as a distraction – the Santos government managed to use the peace negotiations to atomise and disperse the social movements, in my opinion that wasn't a coincidence, I don't think the logic of that change in discourse was because Santos betrayed Uribe [Santos had been Uribe's Defence Minister], I think there was a calculation by transnational capital where they said 'hang on, we couldn't manage [to open up the territories] through war, let's try a different approach…so for the movements, that togetherness we had gained to defend ourselves against a common enemy was dispersed and stretched. So we have to recognise there was a decrease in the paramilitary presence, in the murders of trade unionists, but the logic of extractivism and of plunder and invasion of territories continued…I think it had a terrible impact on communities…Also because within the social movement there were ideological points in common with the insurgency or at least with some of them- the principles being anti-imperialist and confronting the regime are valid positions for social movements in their struggles [so the peace talks] gave some to understand that this discourse was no longer valid, and that it was no longer necessary to struggle against the enemy if those who were raised up in arms weren't going to do it anymore, and this ended up influencing the social movements (interview with trade unionist who has been involved in the process since early phase of diplomas until present day, interview, 2018)

Victimhood as a spur to activism

Within the work and conception of Nomadesc, the category of 'victim' is converted into a political category**.** Hence, within a context of widespread human rights violations, the status of being a victim of the armed conflict (of having lost relatives at the hands of the paramilitaries and the state), becomes a political identity in and of itself, rejecting the oft-attached connotations of passivity or even pity. For many activists both within the pedagogical process of Nomadesc and in the social movement in general, the experience of an act of violence represents the beginning of their conscientisation process.

Nomadesc's work with groups of relatives of victims of human rights violations such as the Association of Women and Men of Triana, is based on the principles of the National Movement of Victims of State Crimes which organises around the demands for truth , justice, comprehensive reparation, and guarantees of non-repetition. This work with victims always has a pedagogical element, as demonstrated by the participation of victims in the pedagogical process. In the case of several activists involved in the process, the violent murder of a loved one served as a trigger for them to become involved in activism as a result of arriving at a political understanding of the violent action of the state.

For Nomadesc, the accompaniment of the victims' next of kin after an act of violence (for example, an extrajudicial execution) implies not only the humanitarian aspect, but also a pedagogical process in helping the family to understand the systematic criminal behaviour of the state, and how these crimes are part of the modus operandi of the security forces. In many cases reality ends up turning relatives of victims into active political subjects, who recognise that the fight for justice for these crimes is the collective struggle of the victims in Colombia. Here, an activist of the National Movement of Victims of State Crimes describes her meeting with a human rights defender was on the day her father was murdered:

> you appeared the night my dad was killed ... you came to tell me a lot of things that I didn't understand before and if you hadn't then I would not be here [as an activist] today, 12 years later …if you had not arrived that night and had done all those things, little by little I was able to process and understand what had happened, and gradually to speak about it…'but hang on, all these things are connected as that is connected with the other, it was so important and every time I have the opportunity to thank him, I do ... because you did a great job accompaniment to me and my family and that was fundamental and key at that painful and tragic time ... we did not even understand what was happening, we did not know why the army had come to kill our father, ... it is essential, for the family and the victims that accompaniment is vital in all aspects, in the political, in the human, in the social (participant, territorial workshop, Cali, 2018)

In the midst of the grief of having lost their relatives to massacres in their communities in the early 2000s, the victims' group of Men and Women of Triana community in the Colombian Pacific have organised, with the accompaniment of Nomadesc and MOVICE in to demand justice, truth and integral reparation. But they have also come together to develop their own collective processes of memory and reconstruction, in order to keep alive the truth of what happened to their loved ones, and to collectivize the grief:

> ... Doña Carmen, her case is a tremendously painful case ... [she said] to me 'every time this date [of the anniversary of the massacre of her family by paramilitaries] arrives and I tell this story it hurts a lot, it hurts a lot, but I believe that if I survived and am still alive it is so that I can tell the story, because the only way that it won't be repeated is if the future generations know what happened'…but something beautiful happened with the women (of Triana), a moment arrived where they said 'ok, enough crying, we are going to rebuild, and how are we going to rebuild'? By recuperating the ancestral practices which are being lost, which have been taken from them, and they have embarked on that process (current leading Nomadesc member, and diploma student during early years, interview, 2018).

Who's truth?

The long history of repression and state terrorism in Colombia has generated many (hi)stories that will never be told in the 'official' version. The 'truth' of the armed conflict, and who has the right to tell that truth, is a controversial issue, particularly in recent years since the signing of the peace agreement. In Colombia, social movements have historically struggled to keep alive the memory of state terrorism, which state institutions have often wanted to minimize and even erase. The National Centre for Historical Memory's efforts to reconstruct the history of the conflict have been questioned:

> because for example you look at the book that came out about the paramilitarism in the Valle del Cauca by the historical memory commission, yes it says that the paramilitaries came and massacred and they even ate from the corpses, but it does not name who were the beneficiaries, and who were their financiers, it doesn't look at that…(current leading Nomadesc member, and diploma student during early years, interview, 2018).

In February 2019, Dario Acevedo, a historian who denies that an armed conflict has even existed in Colombia, was appointed by President Iván Duque as director of the National Centre for Historical Memory (El Tiempo newspaper, 2019). The appointment of Acevedo was perceived as a clear message for social movements that the government has a clear agenda with regards to the official truth which will be told about the Colombian conflict, and hence that they cannot count on the state institution in charge of building the official historical memory of the conflict. Hence the commitment of Nomadesc, MOVICE, and the other social movements with which they work, is to continue with the alternative construction of the history of the conflict, and the histories which form part of the collective memory of each of the organisations, communities and their struggles:

> …the fact that we have elders and leaders who have an accumulated experience, who carry with the ancestral heritage and knowledge, they are the ones who are the historians, but they carry a history that hasn't been told by official accounts because history is told by those who write it, and the popular classes haven't had the possibility to write ours, we have this resource which is the contact with the territories, with the movements, with the people who have constructed their territories and who have lived the war…. (interview with trade unionist who has been involved in the process since early phase of diplomas until present day, interview, 2018)

The above is not only referring to the importance of a social movement or subaltern version of the history of the conflict or of the struggles of social movements but refers to a crucial social movement knowledge process. Within Nomadesc's conception, collective memory is a living process that must serve to influence the present and future of social movements and their struggles. Commemorating somebody who was part of the struggle for social transformation and was killed is a collective way to keep alive that person's example, and the memories, emotions and knowledge associated with their

life and death. In this conception, the processes of collective memory must serve to rebuild social fabric in communities and movements which has been affected by the conflict, through the sustenance and recovery of histories, knowledges and cultural practices:

> The UIP is also about valuing that which a lot of the time we take for granted, our games, our songs, our foods, our subsistence crops…when we did one of the replica workshops the kids were saying they didn't know what any of the plants were for, [the women explained] some help with stomach cramps, some help with headache,…this knowledge if it is lost, if it is forgotten, then that is the end for our communities…these are processes of collective memory…keeping it live in our communities…I think they want to convert collective memory into something that is in a museum, but I don't believe that memory is something that we put in a museum (current leading Nomadesc member, and diploma student during early years, interview, 2018).

Alternative visions of peace

Nomadesc's work with respect to the peace processes between the Colombian state and the FARC and ELN guerrilla movements has focused upon the demand that there be the possibility of genuine, meaningful civil society participation. In particular that the voices and testimonies of those civil society subjects who suffer the conflict in their territories on a daily basis are not only heard, but that there is also the possibility of influencing the proposals which emerge with regards to the end of the conflict, since it directly affects their territories (and territorialities).

Unlike the narrow concept of peace on which the agreement between the FARC and the government is based, Nomadesc and the movements that are part of the UIP have developed a broad concept of what peace would mean for them: 'transformative and territorial peace'. This conception of peace envisages a process which includes civil society as protagonists in the process of building peace alongside the parties to the conflict; and conceives a process which not only seeks to silence the guns, but also has the scope to radically transform the existing historical injustices which serve as drivers and structural causes of the conflict. Transformative and territorial peace also means that peace should become a reality in the territories which have suffered the war, and that those territories should experience positive changes in their living conditions which allow socio-territorial movements to advance in the implementation of their life plans and the construction of *buenvivir*. Within this conception, peace is not a piece of paper to be negotiated by leaders of the government and the guerrilla, but rather it is that which communities are building in their territories every day, through small and large actions to survive and build their communities in the midst of the conflict. Talking about territorial peace highlights the gap which exists between the peace agreement and official talk of the initiation of the 'post-conflict' phase; and the reality which is experienced daily in territories across Colombia (Kane, ethnographic fieldnotes, 2018). In this sense, the UIP, with its intercultural

character, its horizontal knowledge dialogue for the collective construction of solutions, and the provision of tools and learning processes which strengthen communities and movements in their organising processes in order to facilitate their remaining in their territories, can be considered as an social movement-led grassroots peace initiative.

For Afro-descendant and indigenous communities, the issue of the reparation of victims of the armed conflict, with respect to their communities must take a broad historical perspective. This means it must recognise that many of the perpetrators within the armed conflict, and the economic and political elites behind the violence against their peoples, form part of a historic continuity of genocide, domination, submission and slavery that runs since the invasion of the conquistadores more than five centuries ago:

> …in the North of Cauca and Buenaventura, you can't talk about the reparation of the victims of the armed conflict without talking about how the conflict arrived, and what were the factors behind it…[for example] an infrastructure project, so you can talk about the events within the conflict as isolated, as separated from everything else, or you can look beyond, like what we saw in North of Cauca when the paramilitaries arrived and they would stay in places belonging to the families who are the descendants of slave owners, so you have the present linked to the same past, so when we talk about collective reparations for black communities how can we limit ourselves to only what happened in the conflict when we are still living the same history and the conditions of inequality that have accumulated over 400 years, we think these things must be looked at with their broader relationships and develop solutions from there, our logic is that you can't resolve the present without speaking about the past and how the consequences of things that happened a long time ago are still being felt. (historic leader of black movement at regional and national level, historical ally of Nomadesc and pedagogical process, interview, 2018)

In conclusion, this chapter has explored the ways that the learning and knowledge processes of Nomadesc and the social movements they work with are shaped by the conflict-affected, repressive context of southwest Colombia, and identified some of the learning processes which emerges from organising in such a context. The historical constant of state terrorism and repression against the civilian population, and the systematic extermination of social leaders and activists in recent decades, have been the main factors which have defined the relations between Colombian social movements and the state. In this context, social movements are often required to be innovative and strategic in their actions, and social mobilisation has historically been an important element of any strategy that seeks to defend or extend rights and achieve social transformations. Activists highlighted the importance of human relationships and close bonds of trust and friendship, along with morbid

humour, joy and camaraderie. These elements generate hope and resilience in the face of the fear generated by the constant threat of violence.

In contexts of repression, the strong emphasis given to maintenance and reproduction of collective historical memory can be understood as a mechanism for preservation of social movement knowledge (and hence as an act of resistance) in a situation where it is threatened. As well as the emotional impact, the enforced and sudden physical removal of an activist (through murder, exile, incarceration etc) can have a devastating impact on social movement knowledge processes, and therefore on the capacity of their organisational process. The pain of acts of repression and violence is experienced and processed collectively, and understood as an attack on the collective organisational process as well as the individual, allowing for a collective response in defence of the organisational process, and at the same time providing emotional solidarity and resilience.

There exists a disconnect between the discourse of the protagonists of the peace process, and the reality of ongoing violence that is lived in the territories of the movements that are part of the UIP. The fact that Nomadesc and the social movements of the UIP do not participate in the armed conflict or belong to any of the armed actors 'taking sides' does not imply a 'neutral' stance with regards to the conflict. Rather, for them the point of departure for any analysis of the conflict (and the peace process) has to be the repressive and violent character of the Colombian state, and the recognition that the Colombian conflict cannot be understood without reference to the class struggle that exists in the country. For Nomadesc, the accompaniment of the victims of human rights violations' next of kin after an act of violence (for example, an extrajudicial execution) implies not only the humanitarian aspect, but also a pedagogical process in helping relatives to understand the systematic criminal behaviour of the state, and how these crimes are part of the modus operandi of the security forces. In this way, the category of victim is transformed from one of passivity to a political category and spur to activism. Nomadesc and the social movements they work with have campaigned for civil society actors to be given a central role in the construction of peace, and have developed the concept of transformative and territorial peace which implies radically transforming the existing historical injustices which serve as drivers and structural causes of the conflict.

8. On the question of impact

To some extent, throughout our discussion the question of the impact which the pedagogical has had upon individuals and their learning processes has been implicit, in terms of discussions around how the pedagogical process shaped the learning process and hence political development of participants. We have also established that the objective of this pedagogical initiative does not relate to the individual transformations which may occur, welcome as they may be. That is to say: if the learning processes and transformations of individual participants do not have effects at the collective level of their organisation and their struggle, then the pedagogical process, by its own measure, would have failed. Hence the pedagogical strategy seeks to have an impact on the collective subjects which are part of the process: on their actions, their organisation, and especially on their struggles. These objectives are pursued *through* pedagogical work with individual representatives of these collectives. This chapter seeks to track the impacts of these learning processes at each of these levels: beginning with the individual, before going on to discuss the impact at the level of the collective subjects which are part of the process, their praxis and their broader struggles.

The chapter seeks to address this question of the impact of Nomadesc's pedagogical initiative at collective level by presenting a case study of the Proceso de Comunidades Negras- Palenque el Congal (Black Communities Process, PCN forthwith). Through interviews with key activists, the case study traces the impact at the collective, organisational level of the PCN's participation in Nomadesc's diploma programme, identifying a shift in collective consciousness with significant implications for the movement's organising, and by extension the struggle of social movements in Buenaventura. Rather than a statistical attempt to construct causality in the name of demonstrating impact, this section is concerned with identifying the qualitative and to an extent intangible impacts which the process had had.

Impacts at individual level

Whilst the primary concern of the initiative is not the impact which it has at individual level, clearly it is still an important dimension, given that the process is based upon individual subjects, and any learning or transformation process which occurs at collective level must necessarily begin with impacts at the individual level. To an extent, the discussion in previous chapters has demonstrated the way that individual subjects articulate the impacts that they experienced in their own activism. One indicator of the impact which the process has had at individual level are the examples of activists who have passed through the diploma programme and have gone on to take up leadership roles within their organisation, community or movement, and in some cases to play important roles in

emblematic struggles across the southwest region which have had national and international prominence including the Social and Communitarian Minga (Araujo, 2015). In the case of the Buenaventura civic strike, several activists who had participated in the pedagogical process played prominent roles either at neighbourhood level or at the municipal level, including one graduate of the Nomadesc diploma and subsequent workshop facilitator in the UIP who was involved in coordinating the civic strike committee's human rights monitoring team.

One prominent graduate of the diploma programme is Francia Marquez, an Afro-Colombian community leader and activist from the La Toma community in a mountainous area to the North of of the Cauca region. Francia participated in the Nomadesc diploma in 2008, and identified it as an important aspect of her political development as an activist. She would go on to play a leading role in her community's struggle against a multinational gold mining corporation and attempts to have them evicted from their ancestral territory in 2010; subsequently in 2014 she led a 10 day march of 80 women to the capital, Bogota, in protest over government inaction on the presence of armed groups carrying out illegal mining in the territory. Marquez has won national and international acclaim for her work, and in 2018 she won the prestigious Goldman Environmental Prize, sometimes also known as the Green Nobel prize. In 2019 she was named by the BBC as one of the 100 most 'influential and inspiring' women in the world (BBC new website, 2019). The point here is not to claim a direct causal relationship between her participation in the diploma programme, and her development into one of Colombia's most renowned activists, but rather to demonstrate that the diploma without doubt played some (intangible) part in her political development: alongside of course the formative experiences of being active in her community and their struggle; and alongside her participation in activities and pedagogical processes of the Afro-Colombian movement, particularly the Black Communities Process.

Another impact which could be identified at the individual level relates to how activists reported that their praxis of organising was altered as a result of their participation in the diploma programme, for example in increasing their focus upon historical collective memory within their own organisation or movement. This is an example of a mechanism through which the learning processes at individual level can go on to lead to a transformation in the praxis at the collective level (organisation, movement, community).

Collective/institutional level

It is important to highlight initially that the learning processes which occur in the Nomadesc pedagogical initiative are located within and relevant to the experiences and reality of the participants and the collectives which they represent; and hence they should therefore be of benefit to the

movements and their struggles. That is, they should *strengthen* these processes. For that to occur, learning and knowledge must to be put to the benefit of their groups (organisation, community, etc.): that is, they should to transcend the individual representative who participates in the pedagogical process in order to affect and influence the collective subject which they belong to in some way. An example of this emphasis within the pedagogical strategy are the *replication workshops,* which can be understood as a direct way to multiply the learning and knowledge acquired in the process, and to ensure that they find their way to the broader organisations. Another example is the research element where participants carry out research processes on issues and problems that affect their organisation or community in some way: these processes follow the principles of the IAP, and are oriented towards the generation of knowledge and information which strengthens some aspect of the organisational process, in order that the knowledge produced be a source of learning for the entire movement or community.

An important dimension in which the impact of the pedagogical process at the collective level can be identified is in the implementation of the acquired human rights knowledge and tools and in the praxis of the movements involved. As has been demonstrated in this document, there was a strong sense from activists that the knowledge acquired had been applied in the struggles of their own organisations, particularly in cases relating to human rights violations or threats to territorial autonomy such as attempts by multinational corporations to gain licenses to extract natural resources. The example of COPDICONC, discussed above, is one example of a rural community who's leaders argue that the impact of having participated in the Nomades pedagogical process has been an increase in the community's organisational ability to defend its territory:

> if you go now to our territory to try and do some kind of activity...they [will] talk to you about the community's rights...they stand up for themselves (Rural Afro-Colombian community leader, ex-student of diploma from early phase, interview, 2018)

Similar arguments could be made in the cases of almost all of the movements which have participated in the initiative. A community leader from a remote Afro-Colombian river community in the Pacific jungle region described how participation in the diploma programme provided her community with the capacity and confidence to engage with armed groups and demand respect for international humanitarian law within their territory, as well as putting it into practice in order to organise creatively in order to demand respect for the civilian population:

> [what I learned from the diploma course] has served me a lot as a person, because I learned to be a critical leader and also because when you know what your rights are you learn to demand them rather than beg for them, and you

> learn how to demand them in the context of the conflict. For example, knowing about human rights and international humanitarian law…[was really useful]…that was what we always referred to in our conversations with the armed groups [in our territory]…one time, we put banners up all over the territory saying 'we are not part of the conflict, we are civilian population'…it was a really tough period. So, [the diploma] was really useful to all of us…. if we hadn't done it, things would have been worse *(participant, territorial workshop, Buenaventura, 2018)*

Another example which is mentioned above is the case of La Toma Afro-Colombian community and its historical struggle against eviction in 2010. Several of the key leaders of this process of resistance, against the community's physical removal from the lands which its ancestors have inhabited for over four centuries, were graduates of the diploma programme and recognised the important role which their participation had in providing them with the skills, knowledge and confidence required to organise and lead such a struggle (Participant in territorial workshop, Cauca, 2018). One community leader highlighted how the pedagogical initiative chimed with the community's own strategic priorities:

> For us in La Toma, this [pedagogical] process has been like the spinal column because we have three strategic areas that we had identified, one was to make visible our struggle; second, education; and third, was collective memory. All three were touched on in the diploma and the UIP. (Rural Afro-Colombian community leader who was an diploma student in the early years, interview, 2018)

What of the impact of the intercultural focus of the pedagogical process, and the two decades of encounters between representatives of diverse collective subjects? The discussion in chapter 4 dealt extensively with the impact which the intercultural encounter has upon activists at the individual level, particularly in terms of a deepening of critical consciousness and the strengthening of identity (or identities). At collective level, this aspect is more difficult to trace and evidence. However it is clear from our research that the cumulative impact of the intercultural drive of Nomadesc's work to bring together different sectors and movements - particularly but not exclusively through the pedagogical process - has had a deep impact upon the praxis at the collective/institutional level of the participating organisations. This has also served to increase solidarity between the movements and organisations and their different struggles. As discussed above, the process makes tangible the sense of a subaltern social movement, made up of movements struggling in different ways and different territories across the southwest region.

> I think that [the pedagogical process] contributed to the consolidation of the social movement in the region...as well as the diplomas in the regions - Cali, Buenaventura etc, there were also spaces for reading and analysing the context at a regional level ([the Tejiendo Resistencias annual events], that contributed

> to helping us understand the problems on a regional scale, and it has been a sustainable process because up until today we continue thinking in terms of the southwest region...so in this sense there was an integration in our thinking in terms of the southwest, it is an important contribution which is sustained in the present. (leading activist, Black Communities Process, facilitator and ally throughout history of the pedagogical process, interview, 2018)

Following their participation in the pedagogical initiative and their broader work with Nomadesc, many of the collective subjects come to be involved in broader social movement unity processes such as the National Movement of Victims of State Crimes (MOVICE) or the *Congreso de los Pueblos* (Peoples' Congress), and have also participated in broader conjunctural uprisings such as the 2008 Social and Communitarian Minga or the national agrarian strike of 2013. The salient point here, rather than trying to argue that this participation was a causal effect of their participation in the pedagogical process, is to point to a deepening in the collective consciousness of the movements involved of their role in a broader, deeper struggle for social transformation, and a shift in their praxis as a result. This shift has also generated an increase in strategic collaboration and action, such as in the case of the indigenous, peasant and Afro-Colombian communities in Cauca region that have come together to mobilise for justice over the impacts they have suffered as a result of the enormous Salvajina hydroelectric reservoir in their territory (participant, territorial workshop, Cauca, 2018).

A case study on impact: the Proceso de Comunidades Negras in Buenaventura

In order to benefit the organisational processes of the participating movements, the learning which occurs within pedagogical initiative, the pedagogical content and the knowledge that are built and circulated, must be relevant and useful for the concrete reality of the participants in the daily life of their organisations and their struggles. The dynamic and collaborative way in which the content of the process is built based on the realities of the movements, and the proximity of Nomadesc with those realities and the struggles of the collectives, as well as the cultures and organisational forms of the organisations, seeks to ensure that the content remains relevant and useful for the participants and their movements in order to provide practical and applicable tools, and to deepen the critical consciousness of participants . So how has the process impacted and influenced the social movements process and their struggles? To unpack this question, we will present a brief case study of the PCN in Buenaventura in order to examine the impacts of the learning processes in question upon the movement's praxis and broader struggle. This discussion does not seek to establish causality, but rather to demonstrate what could be described as ripple effect learning processes through which the pedagogical process influences the social movements involved.

Ripple-effect learning processes

The Black Communities Process (PCN) in Buenaventura , in its role of coordinating organisation for the diploma programmes that took place in Buenaventura from 2002 onwards, and today as a participant of the UIP, has played a central role throughout history and the collective construction of the pedagogical process, as a grassroots social movement which represents the voice of black communities in the territory of Buenaventura, Colombian Pacific region. When the participation of the PCN and its activists in the diploma began, the communities of Buenaventura in both urban and rural areas were experiencing a situation of acute violence, caused by the arrival of armed groups in the territory, in particular paramilitary groups which were committing massacres, enforced disappearances, and triggering large-scale enforced displacement. As a result of previous struggles for territorial ethnic rights of black communities in rural areas, the PCN's organisational and strategic approach had been more focussed upon rural communities, where organisational processes were strongest. An element that was described by interviewees from different organisations which had experienced the sudden arrival of such paramilitary violence to their territory is the confusion caused by the concrete experience of fear and anxiety that it creates in communities and organisations, which can often prevent an immediate analysis of the factors driving the violence.

This is even more the case in an urban context like Buenaventura, where paramilitary and guerrilla violence has been camouflaged behind the mask of social violence, for example being dismissed by state authorities as gang violence. According to several veteran PCN activists, it was the participation of key PCN activists in the diploma programme which spurred PCN as an organisation to develop an analysis of the structural causes that were driving the wave of violence, and the responsibility of national and international macro-economic processes as drivers of that violence , but also to develop an understanding the actions of the armed forces and paramilitary groups, and how the two worked together as part of a single strategy:

> The whole situation of violence began - all the massacres, displacements, assassinations… and the human rights situation in Buenaventura became very complex... we hadn't made an association in terms of what it meant and what was really going on, the link between violence and territory, or violence and capitalism - those relations of capital that were driving the violence, yes? In every meeting ... there was the issue of violence, but it hadn't clicked that it could be... a war strategy based on trying to empty the territories, and then appropriate those territories, I came to hear that analysis on the Nomadesc diploma ... because those of us who did the diploma were the core of our PCN activists, very qualified activists with a lot of experience ... it had a very big impact …especially the sections when the teacher talked about the whole topic of capital and development, but in the context of what Buenaventura meant for the world economy at that time as a key international port, when he explains

> all that and then explains that the violence that is happening in Buenaventura is not a coincidence but actually part of a strategy, we were all stunned…and he told us to get ready ... I do feel that the diploma served to help us to locate ourselves and give us a different perspective on what was happening in Buenaventura, and that analysis is just as relevant today. (Activist of the Black Communities Process, former student of diploma programme during early years, current facilitator for UIP)

> ... the diploma I think helped us collectively to fundamentally understand the interests and relationships that were woven between the different actors involved in the war, and who created this complex situation of death in our communities ... It provided many elements to help us understand how the state, the armed forces and the paramilitaries operated jointly, to understand the cruelty of the perpetual war by the paramilitaries but also the responsibility and actions of the insurgency in the Pacific region. (participant, territorial workshop, 2018)

The citations above help us to understand how the participation of the PCN in the diploma course had an impact at the organisational level, in terms of how the movement came to understand the violence which was so affecting communities in Buenaventura. They state that as a result of this participation, the PCN as an organisation began to understand that the violence that was being experienced was simply a strategy for the appropriation of territory. It is important to note that in the view of the interviewee, this change was not something temporary: it was something more profound than a change in they viewed the situation: it was a shift in collective consciousness which manifested in terms of the way the organisation collectively analysed the context and conjunctures . This learning would later be verified in his experience of reality:

> I don't think that in practice it had properly dawned on us just how linked everything was… unfortunately it would become real as we experienced it, seeing the dynamics of capital within the city, in the neighbourhoods where the violence was worse, next thing we knew they closed off access to the sea, privatising the area, with large gates and in that sense privatising the use of the street, but also privatising the estuaries and mangroves, and privileging the drug trafficking routes. (Activist of the Black Communities Process, former student of diploma programme during early years, current facilitator for UIP)

> …we started to see what we discussed in the diploma become a reality, what the teacher predicted became true and we would see how they were driving the people away from their areas, it became clearer every day that the violence was just a strategy, everything they had told us we were saying yes, yes, yes that is happening…(leading activist, Black Communities Process, facilitator and ally throughout history of the pedagogical process, interview, 2018)

The previous quotations show a process of situated collective learning, where the reality and everyday experience within the territory verifies in practice what had already been learned within the diploma. This shows how the learning and tools obtained within the pedagogical process were not

only relevant and useful for the struggle of the PCN , but also how the learning deepens through the concrete experience of the community. So how was the praxis of PCN influenced as a result of participation in the diploma and the learning processes experienced by the PCN activists? According to one of the respondents, the PCN's participation led to a big change in how the organisation responded to acts of violence, thanks to the change it had caused in how the violence was understood:

> I think that divided it into before and after in terms of the PCN's approach, at least in Buenaventura, because we began to see a more political and organised approach to the violence, not just about picking up the dead bodies that were left in each massacre, but for example we started to make a more serious and accurate documentation and make our own reports because the state reports always underestimated and under-reported(...) for me that diploma marked the turning point for the PCN to begin to understanding and transcend what was happening with the violence and how it related to a much larger strategy great strategy linked to the megaproject... (Activist of the Black Communities Process, former student of diploma programme during early years, current facilitator for UIP)

This citation makes it clear that participation within the diploma course not only helped generate a deeper and more political analysis of the factors which were driving the violence, but also provided tools for the defence of human rights to respond to the immediate and urgent situation they were facing, and how these tools were implemented by PCN.

Another example of the influence of participation in the pedagogical process identified by one of the PCN interviewees was the impact it had on the organisation's own pedagogical processes. The organisation developed its own diploma programme, with a methodology similar to the diploma that it had coordinated with Nomadesc, and with participants from diverse organisations and organisational processes in Buenaventura, with the aim of generating consciousness and unity in local sister organisations, both urban and rural:

> [we set it up as] an initiative of our own, based on the experience we had already gained with Nomadesc, and from there the PCN began to run many diploma programmes with other organssations, and I think in turn this also served as an example or guide for others to begin their own processes (ibid)

The citation shows how in turn, the educational process of the PCN inspired new pedagogical processes in the PCN's sister organisations, replicating aspects of the methodology. One element which emerged in our research was how the Nomadesc educational process methodologically philosophically and pedagogically influenced the pedagogical approach and activities of the participating organisations. Again, the point here is not to establish causality- that the PCN created its pedagogical process as a direct cause of its participation in this pedagogical process. But it is possible to argue the case that participation in the Nomadesc pedagogical process had an important influence

on the PCN and its key activists, and is it possible to track the learning and knowledge processes which flow and create ripple effects within the communities and their praxis.

Beyond the specific changes mentioned above, the interviewees also described other ways in which the organisational level actions of PCN were influenced by this participation in the diploma: changes in organisational and political strategies as a result of the change in the organisation's way of understanding the context and the issues they faced. According to an interviewee, beginning to understand violence as a strategy to move communities aside spurred the development of a new urban organisational strategy by the PCN in defence of urban territories, under the same banner of the defence of territory which they used when organising in rural territories. Hence, the urban situation in Buenaventura began to be articulated as a struggle for territory, and an organisational-pedagogical process began to raise awareness of urban communities and organise them in the defence of their territory. Another aspect which followed on from the participation in the diploma programme was that the PCN began organising an annual event similar to Nomadesc's annual '*Tejendo Resistencia*' event, which historically would be held every year to mark the end of the diploma programmes. The PCN event was called 'Marking Territory', and the concept is described by a member of the PCN:

> PCN initially began to organise some events based on joy, and on the freedom of the peoples of the south west of Colombia, in those events, activists from across the south west were invited ... and at those events we would use them to analyse the regional context, in particular the human rights situation…that is also a product of [our involvement in] this whole education process, and starting to read what the structural causes of the conflict were (leading activist, Black Communities Process, facilitator and ally throughout history of the pedagogical process, interview, 2018)

The 'Marking Territory' events functioned as an opportunity for social movements, human rights organisations, trade unions and communities to come together to weave joy and unity, but also to collectively analyse the political context and conjunctures in the region, and to collectively generate strategies together, based on the recognition of the interdependence of their different struggles. One of the initiatives which emerged from one of these events was a march against violence in Buenaventura that took place in February 2014:

> the march committee came out of a Marking Territory event ... I think it was the third one we had done ... the violence was at its peak, and we [PCN] were the ones putting forward a structural analysis of what is happening -Hey, listen up, there is not only a problem of violence, they are also taking away our land... so at the meeting people said we have to do something, they are taking Buenaventura away from us...so we left the forum ... and I think that in the same afternoon we decided to meet in the PCN office with the organisations that

> were there and other organssations that weren't part of the committee but arrived anyway and we all said no, is time to meet and decide what can be done…after that we called another larger meeting … The word began to spread, and more and more sectors joined and from there the march committee for Buenaventura was set up. (Activist of the Black Communities Process, former student of diploma programme during early years, current facilitator for UIP, interview, 2018)

The organisers of the march estimated that more than forty thousand people participated. The success of the march, and the coordination between such diverse organisations in Buenaventura, generated a momentum between various social, community and union organisations in the city, with the PCN playing a leading role. That organisational initiative would lead in 2017 to the unprecedented civic movement which would lead the Civic Strike to Live with Dignity in the Territory of Buenaventura, when more than 120 different civil society organisations paralysed the city for 22 days, achieving massive and almost generalised levels of participation amongst the city's population and paralysing the most important port city in Colombia. The strike was based on a list of requests to improve the miserable living conditions experienced by the majority of residents in Buenaventura due to the exceptional levels of poverty, violence, and the lack of basic public services.

> …the accumulation that led Buenaventura to the great strike didn't happen overnight because a leader appeared saying that it was a good idea to have a civic strike: it was an accumulation of organising and education in which these processes that we are talking about played an important role, we had an influence in Buenaventura, we worked with the leaders and they were part of this pedagogical process ... and gradually this started to have a cumulative effect… I am not saying that it is the only factor or that somehow the civic strike is the direct heritage of this process, but it plays a part... we are talking about an entire city that is fed up and angry, but why does it get fed up and angry? [the situation that caused the strike] ... did not appear here in the 21st century, that has been a historical issue, so why then? ... It was achieved by creating an understanding amongst the population that they are just as valid citizens as those in the capital, they are bearers of rights and above all that they stand on a treasure chest, when people in Buenaventura understand the importance of the city's port strategically not only for the country, but for the world economy…that is part of the accumulated impact of the diploma, of the UIP, of all the organising, working with the leaders all that travelling back and forth, taking international delegations to meet activists there… it has been quite a process. (interview with trade unionist who has been involved in the process since early phase of diplomas until present day, interview, 2018)

The citation above gives a sense of a chain of influence of the pedagogical process, as a learning ripple effect which, through the participation of individual subjects representing the PCN, had a large impact at the collective level upon the political consciousness of one of Southwest Colombia's most prominent social movements, and by extension upon PCN's sister organisations in Buenaventura. It

demonstrates how it can be argued that the pedagogical process contributed to one of Latin America's most emblematic social struggles of the 21st century, without arguing the causality nor ignoring the multiple factors and complexities involved in bringing about such a generalised uprising. It is important to highlight the temporality of this influence: it begins at the beginning of the 2000s with the start of the diplomas in Buenaventura, and continues right through until the 2017 civic strike: the participation of the PCN in the pedagogical process has been permanent, and some UIP participants even played important roles during civic strike. Throughout those two decades, the pedagogical process was only part of a broader Nomadesc strategy of strengthening social movements in Buenaventura in their struggles in defence of human rights and to improve the living conditions of the population of Buenaventura. It would be impossible to understand the learning process described above, without taking into account that it has gone hand in hand with close strategic collaboration between Nomadesc and PCN , and that Nomadesc has also played an active role in the struggle of social movements in Buenaventura, which has included mobilisations, research, and publicly denouncing human rights violations, and developing legal strategies, amongst other mechanisms.

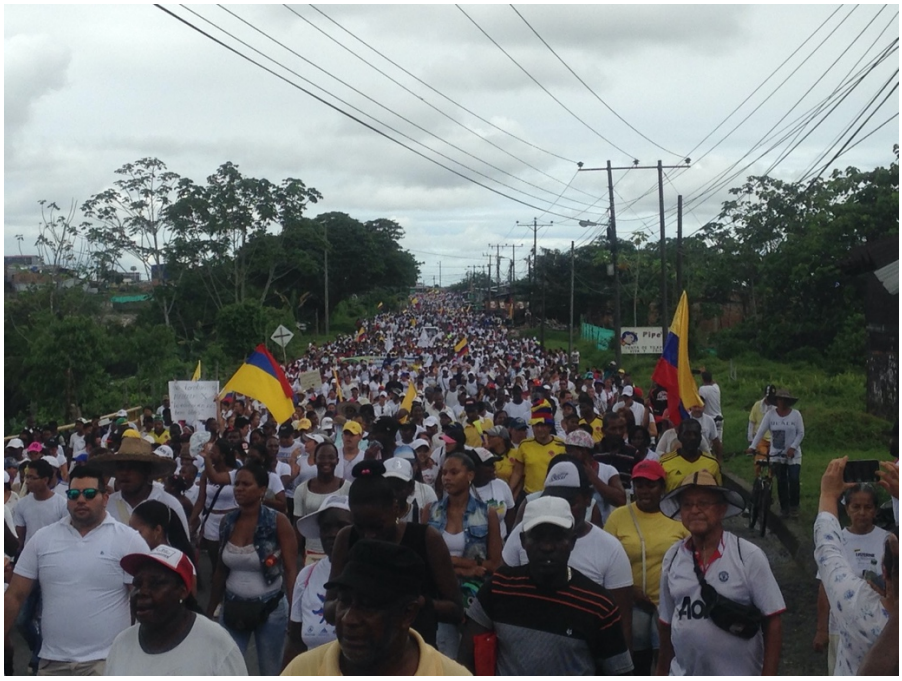

Photo 8.1: A huge, historic march during the civic strike in Buenaventura, 21st May 2017. Credit: Patrick Kane

The process described above shows how the organisational process was strengthened and changes in the actions of the PCN were generated through its participation in this pedagogical process, and how it played an important role in the conscientisation process of individuals who were already prominent activists, or who would later become leading activists. In most of the organisations participating in the

process, we were able to identify emblematic key leaders who acknowledged their participation in the Nomadesc pedagogical process as an important moment in their own political development as a leader, some of whom would later lead important social struggles in the southwestern region. Despite its intangible character and the difficulty of measuring such impacts scientifically, for an emancipatory pedagogical process there can be no more important indicator than the impacts we have identified here at the level of collectives and of social struggle.

In conclusion, this chapter has sought to trace the impacts which the Nomadesc's pedagogical process has had upon the social movements involved and their struggles. The process seeks to strengthen the collective subjects, through work with individual representatives of these collectives. Through the replication workshops and participatory action research components, the pedagogy seeks to ensure that the learning processes are oriented towards the broader collective subjects . Activists reported shifts in their own praxis as a result of their participation in the process, with a deepening of critical consciousness. Activists who have participated in the pedagogical process have in many cases gone on to take up leadership roles in their movements and in some cases to lead emblematic struggles in the region. Participants described how their communities and movements were better able to stand up for their rights as a result of their participation in the pedagogical process, for example in dealings with armed groups or multinational corporations seeking to encroach their territories. Their participation in the project has also generated an increase generated an increase in solidarity, strategic collaboration and action between the social movements and their struggles.

Whilst impacts are qualitative and often intangible, through our case study of the PCN in Buenaventura we identified 'learning ripple effects' in order to demonstrate the transformative impact which one social movement's participation had upon its praxis, and subsequently upon its struggle. PCN activists described how their participation created a shift in the collective consciousness of their movements in the way that they understood the structural causes of the violent context they were experiencing, as well as gaining practical tools to be able to respond to the human rights crisis and provided examples of how the shift transformed the movement's praxis and organising strategy. Another ripple learning effect was reflected in the generation of new pedagogical processes run by the movements themselves and using similar pedagogical models and strategies. These impacts are facilitated by Nomadesc's long-term approach to working with social movements, in which the pedagogical process is often just part of a broader collaboration with the movements to support their struggles in defence of human rights and dignity. In our PCN case study, we argue these ripple learning effects can be traced from the beginning of the diploma programme in the early 2000s through to the historic civic strike in Buenaventura in 2017.

9. Conclusion

This concluding chapter brings together and summarises the main findings of this case study in order to answer the core research questions. It goes on to make some final observations. All of the conclusions contained in this chapter emerged from a comprehensive systematisation of experiences process in which activists from the main social movement research subject were co-researchers, involved in each stage of the design and implementation of the research process. In order to address the research questions, our case study has focussed specifically upon the Nomadesc pedagogical process as a social movement initiative which seeks to harness learning and knowledge production processes for the benefit of social movement struggles in southwest Colombia.

Research question 1: How do social movements, located in complex conflict affected situations, learn and produce knowledge, and how does this process of learning and knowledge production assist in the development of strategy to achieve the demands of their constituencies?

In response to the first research question on the subject of how Nomadesc and the social movements it works with learn and produce knowledge, our systematisation of experiences research process has demonstrated that as an emancipatory initiative which emerged from and is embedded within the social movement struggles of southwest Colombia, the Nomadesc pedagogical process is itself a continuous learning process. Throughout its two decades of existence the process has been shaped by a learning dialectic which exists between the pedagogical initiative and the struggles of the social movements involved. This dialectic, and its embeddedness within social struggles, allow for a dynamic, horizontal process of collective knowledge construction, as well as the constant renewal and rapid adaptation of the process in order to respond to the ever-changing conjunctures and the requirements of the region's social struggles.

Central to understanding the learning processes associated with the pedagogical process is the way that it seeks to create an intercultural knowledge dialogue between the diverse subjects of struggle.

Within this intercultural knowledge dialogue, the diversity of the movements is understood as a key source of emancipatory potential. Through the interaction with other subjects in struggle, participants experience a shift in consciousness, developing a sense of intercultural, territorial class consciousness which is facilitated through the recognition of the interconnectedness of struggles and the identification of common oppressors. Participants described how the process generated in them a feeling of belonging to a social movement which extended beyond their own movement or territory to regional and national level, made up of very diverse peoples and organisations with very different stories.

The pedagogical process can be understood as a patchwork quilt of epistemologies, which interact and are interwoven to form part of a broader whole, and through their interaction generate new counter-hegemonic semiotic processes. This dialogical interaction serves not only to deepen the critical consciousness of participants, but also to facilitate the collective construction of new meanings/understandings . The different conceptual constructions, experiences, histories, cultures, symbols etc of the participating movements become collective pedagogical resources which generate and shape learning processes within the intercultural learning space and the knowledge dialogue of the UIP.

This process does not mean that participants replicate the thinking or values of another movement and begin to think in the same way, but rather that all knowledge and ways of thinking are valued, celebrated, and seen as important elements, and alongside other cultures and knowledges, they feed into the semiotic processes which occur for the collective construction and circulation of counter-hegemonic knowledge for the strengthening of social struggles. This cross-pollination of ideas and culture which occurs within the pedagogical process has been particularly notable with regards to the impact of epistemologies of socio-territorial movements upon other movements involved in the process whose struggles may not be directly related to the defence of the territory, but which nevertheless have been influenced, inspired and affected by interacting to these counter-hegemonic epistemologies.

The UIP is an intrinsically decolonial process in its epistemological approach, in the way that it brings together diverse epistemologies which have been historically subjugated (as well as so-called expert or professional knowledge) in an intercultural, non-hierarchical knowledge dialogue, thus collapsing the knowledge hierarchies which continue to operate within capitalist societies. The pedagogical process creates a deeply prefigurative learning space characterised by alternative (non-capitalist) values and social relations, yet at the same time focussed upon urgent, immediate task of confronting the violent and power structures responsible for oppression in southwest Colombia.

As an emancipatory social movement pedagogical process, the initiative seeks ensure that the learning and knowledge construction processes which occur serve to benefit and strengthen collective subjects (via the individual participants) through pedagogical strategies such as replication workshops and participatory action research. Through a participatory action research component, a strong emphasis is placed on the importance of research within social movements struggles, so as to ‘awaken the spirit of the researcher’ in participants. The process seeks to provide activists with skills so that the movements they represent are able to actively gather information and generate knowledge about the issues which they face in order to struggles and develop structural solutions.

The intercultural encounter which takes place within the pedagogical process generates learning processes relating to identity. It serves on the one hand to reinforce the different collective identities of the different subjects, and at the same time to also generate a sense of collective, intercultural class identity and belonging which does not collapse or subsume other identities. The pedagogical praxis is rooted in the belief that the route to social emancipation is contained within the peoples and their knowledges, cultures and histories; but which recognises that this process must begin with repairing, recovering, strengthening and valuing that which has been so violently subjugated for centuries. This is why a key element of the pedagogical process is the aim that participants recognise the value of the collective identities that they carry, and that they are aware of the history of struggle and sacrifice that is part of each of those identities.

Participants emphasised how the intercultural learning space provided them with a strong sense of hope. The coming together of representatives of diverse struggles can be understood as a praxis of hope, the aggregation of the hope which is contained in the struggles and histories of each of the movements involved. Nomadesc employs the praxis of *mistica* in order to harness emotion (including hope) and the collective memories and histories of social movements for the benefit of the movements struggles. In the intercultural learning space characterised by different identities and histories, the praxis of *mistica* is used to integrate the group and generate feelings of affection, love and solidarity with each other and with their different struggles and histories.

The concrete, localised experiences of injustice and violence of the communities and social movements involved in the pedagogical process provide them with an embodied understanding of the violent modus operandi of the capitalist system in southwest Colombia. The intercultural encounter provides an opportunity for activists to collectively reflect upon each other's experiences, struggles and praxis. The process draws upon the experiences of the diverse participants in order to illustrate their interconnection and systemic nature. By reflecting upon and engaging with their own and each others' experiences, participants learn about the macro-economic processes and concepts which shape the violence that affects the participants' territories. Through facilitating these encounters between activists from diverse territories Nomadesc is also able to maintain an ongoing, panoramic analysis of the conjunctures for social movements in territories across the region and to trace the macro-processes, the changing conjunctures, and the inter-connections related to the armed conflict and the expansion of the extractivist neoliberal economic model in the southwest region.

Nomadesc has developed a multi-scalar strategy to defend human rights and to build counter-hegemonic power, linking territories of struggle which are spatially distant and seemingly isolated, with other organisational processes, territories, and networks of organisation and human rights

defence at regional, national and international levels. This involves supporting social movements in their processes of territorialisation, deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation, and at the same time implementing a territorial pedagogy which harnesses social movements' territories as learning spaces characterised by alternative value systems and autonomous organisational forms, what De Angelis would term a counter-hegemonic 'outside'. Through linking up these different territories of struggle, Nomadesc creates *geographies of counter-hegemonic knowledge* which facilitate the circulation of knowledge, tools and information which increase the capacity of social movements to defend human rights, resist displacement, consolidate their organising and build solidarity with other movements.

Along with the emphasis on the interaction between diverse actors in resistance, the process also employs a territorial pedagogy which places emphasises on the transformational potential of participants travelling to the different territories of the movements of the process to learn directly about their struggles, interweaving, building and multiplying knowledge among different territories of social movements. Participants particularly valued the varied incidental and embodied learning processes which arise from collectively travelling to social movement territories.

Through its human rights work, Nomadesc often plays the role of a bridge between the reality of what is happening in the territories, and spaces of engagement at regional, national and international level, as well as with international solidarity networks, thus seeking to leverage the power and capacity of social movements and make them visible within spaces of hegemonic power. This can be understood as a strategy of counter-hegemonic globalisation. Within this geographical strategy, the headquarters of Nomadesc is a physical space that becomes a nodal point, linking the different territories of the organisations participating in the pedagogical process.

RQ 2) What knowledge have the movements developed and what have they learned in relation to key thematic areas?

Our case study examined two distinct yet interlinked dimensions in response to the research question about what knowledge Nomadesc and the social movements it works with have developed and what they have learned in relation to certain thematic areas. Chapter 5 characterised the rich epistemological and conceptual dimensions of the pedagogical process, and showed how they have developed and shifted throughout its history in relation to the movements' struggles and the broader contexts of the region. Chapter 7 discussed the situated learning which emerges from Nomadesc's work in relation to thematic areas.

The intellectual, discursive and conceptual production of the pedagogical process is dynamic and is driven by the learning dialectic identified in the chapter 4 between the pedagogical process and the

struggles of the social movements of the southwest region of Colombia. Nomadesc's pedagogical approach also seeks to harness the rich learning and knowledge processes which occur during peaks in social movement mobilisation, such that these nourish the learning of participants within the pedagogical process, and hence serve to strengthen the collective subjects which they represent, in what can be understood as a kind of cross-pollination learning process. At the same time, participants emphasised value of the practical tools and knowledge which they gained and which were directly useful in their social movement praxis, for example in relation to the defence of human rights or community-level participatory action research.

Social movements (and by extension their pedagogical processes) do not emerge from a political and ideological vacuum. Nomadesc, and the pedagogical process, is rooted in and influenced by ideological and political lineages and struggles of Colombia's social movements. Nomadesc emerges from a particular political lineage within Colombian social movements, and hence the pedagogical process since its inception has been heavily influenced by the Colombian praxis-oriented ideological framework of social humanism, which combines a radical humanist praxis (with a strong emphasis on agency and knowledge of communities), with a broader class analysis influenced by Marxism. This has meant an expansive conception of human rights and a radical praxis of the defence of human rights which is closely linked to struggles for social justice; which is receptive to and rooted in the reality of peoples and communities, their cultures, stories, knowledge and experiences; and which seeks to empower the social subjects with whom it works.

With the expansion of the pedagogical process to include more social movements and territories (particularly indigenous and Afro-Colombian movements), the knowledge production processes have been transformed by the epistemologies and struggles of these movements and have brought about a deeper paradigm shift, as the demographic character of the participating movements has shifted away from the early predominance of trade unions, with their tendency to adhere to fairly rigid Marxist class politics with clearly defined ideological route maps for the struggle, and to reproduce the knowledge hierarchies associated with modernity. With this paradigm shift, the knowledge production processes have shifted from a more top-down knowledge production process to a more bottom-up and dialogical process where teachers and learners, old and young, leaders and activists engage in a collective process of meaning making that transforms both participants and organisers in new, exciting and innovative ways.

The alternative 'ancestral' rationalities of indigenous and Afro-Colombian social movements which have become increasingly influential within the pedagogical process and its knowledge production processes are rooted in alternative conceptions of social relations (including between humans and

nature) based upon interdependence; collectivism; solidarity; and the indigenous concept of *buenvivir.* The central role of territory in the thinking of indigenous, Afro-Colombian and peasant communities has been increasingly influential within the pedagogical process in recent years, and differs from Western notions of territory.

Through its work with diverse social movements, Nomadesc has developed an intercultural, class-based feminism which is sensitive to diverse cosmovisions, identities and cultures of the movements involved, and which at the same time is able to empower women and challenge practices which reproduce patriarchy both within and external to social movements. Within a repressive context in which generations of both male and female activists have been murdered, disappeared and exiled, concrete experience has taught the organisation that only such an intercultural feminism rooted in a class-based analysis of the broader structures which create and sustain patriarchal oppression can be effective in the struggle for emancipation.

In terms of the ways that the learning and knowledge processes of Nomadesc and the social movements they work with are shaped by the conflict-affected, repressive context of southwest Colombia, the historical constant of state terrorism and repression against the civilian population, and the systematic extermination of social leaders and activists in recent decades, have been the main factors which have defined the relations between Colombian social movements and the state, and Nomadesc and the movements it works with are no exception to this rule. Such a context often requires social movements to be innovative and strategic in their actions, and social mobilisation has historically been an important element of any strategy that seeks to not only to achieve social transformations but also to defend basic rights. Activists highlighted the importance of human relationships and close bonds of trust and friendship, along with morbid humour, joy and camaraderie. These elements generate hope and resilience in the face of the fear generated by the constant threat of violence.

For Nomadesc and the social movements it works with, the strong emphasis given to the maintenance and reproduction of collective historical memory can be understood as a mechanism for preservation of social movement knowledge (and hence as an act of resistance) in a situation where it is threatened. Our case study also demonstrated that as well as the emotional impact, the enforced and sudden physical removal of an activist (through murder, exile, incarceration etc) can also have a devastating impact on social movement knowledge processes, and therefore on the capacity of their organisational process. This is an area in which more research is required. Within its pedagogical praxis and broader work in defence of human rights, Nomadesc treats the trauma and pain caused by acts of violence and repression against social movements as a collective issue concerning all of the

movements involved, not only the individual or organisation which has been the direct victim of the action. In this way, such an issue is experienced and processed collectively, and understood as an attack on the collective organisational process as well as the individual, allowing for a collective response in defence of the organisational process, and at the same time providing emotional solidarity and resilience. This approach is not unique to Nomadesc, but is fairly common for social movements in a country where repression and violence are everyday occurrences for social movements.

The experience of the rural social movements which Nomadesc works with demonstrated that there exists a disconnect between the discourse of the protagonists of the peace process, and the reality of ongoing violence that is lived in the territories of the movements that are part of the UIP. The fact that Nomadesc and the social movements of the UIP do not participate in the armed conflict or belong to any of the armed actors does not imply a 'neutral' stance with regards to the conflict. Rather, for them the point of departure for any analysis of the conflict (and the peace process) has to be the repressive and violent character of the Colombian state, and the recognition that the Colombian conflict cannot be understood without reference to the class struggle that exists in the country. Nomadesc and the social movements they work with have campaigned for civil society actors to be given a central role in the construction of peace, and have developed the concept of transformative and territorial peace which implies radically transforming the existing historical injustices which serve as drivers and structural causes of the conflict.

For Nomadesc, the accompaniment of the victims of human rights violations' next of kin after an act of violence (for example, an extrajudicial execution) implies not only the human rights and humanitarian aspect, but also a pedagogical process in helping relatives to understand the systematic criminal behaviour of the state, and how these crimes are part of the modus operandi of the security forces. In this way, the category of victim is transformed from one of passivity to a political category and spur to activism.

RQ 3) What have been the effects of these movements on the promotion and realisation of peace with social justice within their country context?

For the purposes of our Colombia case study, in our collective research design we reinterpreted this research question, to ask what have been the impacts of the pedagogical process and the related learning and knowledge production processes upon the social movements involved and their struggles for social justice. The Nomadesc pedagogical process is a long-term collaborative initiative whose impact must be examined beyond the immediate participation of a particular cohort in the diploma or the UIP and to the collective subjects which have participated in the process over the past two

decades. The process seeks to strengthen the collective subjects, through work with individual representatives of these collectives.

Whilst impacts are qualitative and often intangible, through our case study of the PCN in Buenaventura we identified 'learning ripple effects' in order to demonstrate the transformative impact which one social movement's participation had upon its praxis, and subsequently upon its struggle. PCN activists described how their participation created a shift in the collective consciousness of their movements in the way that they understood the structural causes of the violent context they were experiencing, as well as gaining practical tools to be able to respond to the human rights crisis and provided examples of how the shift transformed the movement's praxis and organising strategy. Activists reported shifts in their own praxis as a result of their participation in the process, with a deepening of critical consciousness, which was subsequently reflected in the praxis of their collectives. Activists also reported an increase in solidarity, strategic collaboration and action between the social movements and their struggles as a result of their participation in the pedagogical process. Another ripple learning effect was reflected in the generation of new pedagogical processes run by the movements themselves and using similar pedagogical models and strategies.

These impacts are facilitated by Nomadesc's long-term approach to working with social movements, in which the pedagogical process is often just part of a broader collaboration with the movements to support their struggles in defence of human rights and dignity. In our PCN case study, we argue that these ripple learning effects can be traced from the beginning of the diploma programme in the early 2000s through to the historic civic strike in Buenaventura in 2017.

Activists who have participated in the pedagogical process have in many cases gone on to take up leadership roles in their movements and in some cases to lead emblematic struggles in the region. Participants described how their communities and movements were better able to stand up for their rights as a result of their participation in the pedagogical process, for example in dealings with armed groups or multinational corporations seeking to encroach their territories.

Overall, our case study of the Nomadesc pedagogical process demonstrates the transformative potential of social movement education for those engaged in struggles for social change. At a time when far-right political forces are seeking to fuel division and hatred around the world, the Nomadesc pedagogical process demonstrates that cultural, political and organisational diversity can be converted into a resource for social movements through intercultural organising and political education. In order to fully grasp this approach, it is necessary to overcome the tendency to replicate knowledge hierarchies, both within activist organising as well as within academia: to prioritise

academic, expert, professional, theoretical knowledges over organic, praxis-based, ancestral, non-codified knowledges (and knowledge practices). Rather than inverting the knowledge hierarchy to create a new order, the value of Nomadesc's pedagogical approach is in abolishing the hierarchy in order to create a process which is able to value and draw upon a range of different knowledges, epistemologies and knowledge practices. This case study has demonstrated the immense potential of such an approach, not only in terms of the ethical value of the process itself, but also in terms of the search for alternatives knowledge and forms of organising at this time of multiple crises for humanity.

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Annex 1

Profile of a range of the organisations, movements and struggles which form part of the pedagogical process

In order to arrive at an understanding of Nomadesc's pedagogical process , it is important to provide readers with a brief overview of the types of struggles and movements which converge within the pedagogical process. The aim here is not to provide an exhaustive list, but rather to give the reader a sense of the political character and cultural diversity of the political subjects involved.

Struggles for collective territorial-ethnic rights and territorial autonomy

Indigenous, Afro-Colombian and peasant social movements and communities can be described as socio-territorial movements (Halvorsen et al, 2019). This means that obtaining, holding and defending territory are central to the movements' identities and struggles.

Black Communities Process: Palenque el Congal (Proceso de Comunidades Negras): The Black Communities Process (PCN) is the most prominent national Afro-Colombian social movement in Colombia. It led the struggle for the recognition of the collective ethnic territorial rights of Afro-Colombian communities in the 1991 constitution. Its regional branch in Buenaventura, Palenque el Congal (referred to in this thesis as PCN-BN), has been involved in the pedagogical process since the beginning of the diploma programme in 2003. Nomadesc has worked closely with PCN-BN since collaborating to document large-scale human rights violations being perpetrated by paramilitaries in rural and urban communities around Buenaventura and the Pacific region during the early 2000s. Palenque el Congal has worked to organise both rural and urban black communities in Buenaventura in defence of territory, in contexts where they are threatened with displacement by armed groups in order to make way for corporate projects such as resource extraction or infrastructure expansion.

La Toma Afro-Colombian community council: La Toma community has lived in the mountainous rural area above Suarez, Cauca for over 400 years. The community was set up by people of African descent who won their freedom having been forcibly brought to Colombia as enslaved people. It was one of the first black communities to achieve their freedom in what is now Colombia. Located in a fertile area which is rich in natural resources such as gold, the population has survived from artisanal mining and subsistence agriculture and fishing. The territory's gold reserves have allegedly been coveted for a long time by AngloGold Ashanti, one of the world's largest multinational mining companies. In 2010, an individual allegedly working on behalf of AngloGold Ashanti attempted to have riot police forcibly evict hundreds of families from the territory after the government granted mining exploration licenses. The community led a historic struggle, and eventually the government was forced to back

down. The community and its territory remain targets for powerful economic interests, and leaders and community members are regularly targetted for violence and threats by the armed groups operating in the territory.

Isla de la Paz neighbourhood, Buenaventura- in recent years the PCN-BN expanded its work organising Afro-Colombian communities in defence of collective ethnic and territorial rights to include urban communities in Buenaventura which are being threatened by corporate projects such as the expansion of port facilities in the city. Isla de la Paz neighbourhood is one such community which has been engaged in a collective struggle against being displaced, and as a result has been targetted by paramilitaries working on behalf of powerful economic interests. Community leader Temistocles Machado was murdered by unidentified gunmen January 2018.

Afro-Colombian Community Council of the Western Cordillera of Nariño and Cauca (COPDICONC): Representing a collection of Afro-Colombian communities spread over a mountainous, inaccessible area which is a strategic geographical corridor and hence has been a conflict zone with presence of all of the parties to the conflict, with devastating results for the local population and in particular for community activists and leaders. Many community members have been killed, and many more displaced to the city of Cali. Nomadesc has worked to support the struggle for human rights of those who remain in the territory, as well as to support the organising process of the large displaced population in Cali. The community's organising is aimed at avoiding further displacement, preventing further human rights abuses, and facilitating the return of the displaced population.

Cerro Tijeras Nasa indigenous community and Honduras Nasa indigenous community: In the mountainous area above the town of Suarez, Cauca, the Nasa indigenous reserves of Honduras and Cerro Tijeras have been targetted by armed groups because of the strategic location of their territories and the natural resources they contain. Honduras community leader Robert de Jesus Guacheta was murdered by unidentified gunmen in 2009. Nomadesc has worked with the community to highlight human rights abuses committed against community leaders and the general population, as well as to support its struggle for the fulfilment of promises made to communities affected by the large Salvajina hydroelectric dam constructed in the 1980s. Part of Nomadesc's role in the struggle involved initiating a cross-ethnic alliance between indigenous, Afro-Colombian and peasant communities in the area.

CRIC and ACIN

Indigenous communities are networked in democratic structures which form powerful social movements at sub-regional, regional and national level. These organisations are involved in supporting communities in the delivery of some public services. It is through these organisations that

indigenous struggles are coordinated, and mobilisations organised. Nomadesc coordinates closely with these movements, and the participating indigenous communities each belong to such coordinations. In Northern Cauca, the ACIN (Association of Indigenous Councils of the North-Asociacion de Cabildos Indigenas del Norte) brings together predominantly Nasa communities, and is a recognised as a particularly well-organised and militant movement. The Cauca Regional Indigenous Council (CRIC) is a Cauca-wide organisation, formed by Nasa and Misak communities to further the indigenous struggle in 1973.

ASOAGROS: A highly organised, political peasant community living in the mountainous, rural area close to the town of La Marina, centre of Valle, this was the first community to suffer a massacre at the hands of the paramilitaries upon their arrival to the area in 1998. Many leaders were killed or displaced. Nomadesc supported the community from its arrival to the southwest region at the time of the massacre in order to document the crimes and support the community's organising. ASOAGROS is an agricultural collective founded by surviving members years later as they sought to salvage the organising process. The community's struggle is around the defence of territory, the defence of food sovereignty, and the implementation of agro-ecological agricultural methods.

Committee for the Integration of the Colombian Macizo (CIMA): A social movement made up of the peasant communities in the mountainous area in the Colombian macizo region between Cauca and Huila departments. Communities in this area have led historic, coordinated struggles which have achieved high levels of political autonomy and local political influence for social movements which organise for in defence of territory, the environment and food sovereignty, and have also been heavily targetted for paramilitary violence, threats and harassment.

National Agrarian Coordination (CNA): a nationally coordinated peasant social movement bringing together communities from across the country to coordinate their struggle across the country. CIMA is the regional branch of CNA in the southwest region.

Organised labour struggles

Sintraunicol Valle- union of workers of the University of Valle campuses in Cali. Sintraunicol has led historic struggles against the privatisation of the university campuses, services, and higher education in general. It has also developed a social movement trade unionism organising approach, working closely with Nomadesc to support social movement struggles across the region.

Sintraemcali- union of municipal workers of EMCALI, the publicly-owned Cali energy and telecommunications company. During the 1990s and first half of the 2000s, Sintraemcali led a historic struggle against the privatisation of EMCALI, and through an expansive, pedagogical organising

strategy broad together a broad-based civic coalition of trade unions, social movements and urban communities which was successful in preventing the company's privatisation. Nomadesc worked closely with Sintraemcali upon arrival to the southwest region and played an important role in developing the aforementioned strategy, as well as documenting human rights abuses against Sintraemcali and other unions, which were being heavily targetted at the time. The union has been gradually weakened in recent years through a range of mechanisms including systematic violence, infiltration and the establishment of parallel 'boss-friendly' unions.

Victims' organisations

National Movement for Victims of State Crimes- Valle del Cauca branch (MOVICE): MOVICE was created in 2005 as a national movement made up of victims groups from across the country. The movement includes civilian victims of violence by state forces and paramilitaries. The movement campaigns for the demands of truth, justice, comprehensive reparation, and guarantees of non-repetition. Within Valle del Cauca, Nomadesc works closely with the regional branch of MOVICE to support the organising of local victims' groups, document and highlight human rights violations in the region, and to agitate for an end to impunity.

The Association of Women and Men of Triana- a group of relatives of victims of the massacres committed by paramilitaries during the early 2000s along route of the Cabal Pombo road in the Pacific jungle region (rural area of Buenaventura, Valle del Cauca). The paramilitary violence caused mass displacement of the local (majority Afro-Colombian) population. When the communities started to move back to the area in the middle of the decade, Nomadesc began to accompany the organising of some of the victims' relatives in their struggle for justice, truth, comprehensive reparations, and guarantees of non-repetition (2006-present). Nomadesc provided a bridge for the collective to the broader victims' movement and regional and national level, allowing them to connect with others and the broader struggle of victims in Colombia.

FUNDESCODES – NGO working with communities and human rights victims in Buenaventura, with a strong focus on collective memory. Has worked to document cases of enforced disappearance in the city.

Procesos sociales urbanos- barrial, estudiantes, sindical

Red Proyecto Sur- a youth activist collective operating in several municipalities of the Nariño region, working to develop political organising initiatives in collaboration with peasant communities, around issues including food sovereignty, the defence of territory, and anti-fracking.

Identidad Estudantil- a student activist collective from the site of the National University in Palmira, organising on various issues including in support of food sovereignty for rural communities.

Women's collectives:

Women's Sugar Cane Cutters Committee -committee of women- mothers, daughters, sisters etc- who began to organise at the time of the (almost entirely male) sugar cane cutters' historic two-month strike in 2008 at the sugar refineries of Valle del Cauca and Cauca. The strike was a response to the aggressive government employment reforms favouring local oligarchies which control the sugar cane industry, as well as against the poverty wages received by the more than fourteen thousand sugar cane cutters in the region. The women began to mobilise and organise during the strike, and played a key role in collecting solidarity donations, cooking food at the picket lines, and leading protests and marches (including being violently attacked by riot police on more than one occasion). Many of the women became politicised during the strike, and they decided to continue to meet and organise after it finished. Nomadesc worked to support the women in their organising.

Annex 2

Example of curricular and thematic structure of diploma course

Modules	***Thematic content***
Conceptual axis	*Concepts of state, democracy and the people*
	History of human rights
	Colombian conflict: history, causes and current situation
	Conception and classification of human rights
	Preparation of replica workshops
Contextual axis	*Strategic interests in Colombia and the region*
	Plan Colombia and the Free Trade Agreement (with the US)
	National development plan
	Preparation of replica workshops

Procedural axis	*Legal mechanisms for defence of human rights*	
	Alternative mechanisms for defence of human rights	
	Social subjects and social movements	
	Popular education and ethno-education	
Research axis	*Knowledge and perception*	
	Investigation as a form of knowledge	
	Profile of the popular researcher (in relation to human rights)	
	The research process	
	Framing the research problem	
	Objectives of human rights research	

Reference frameworks	*Theoretical and conceptual frameworks*	
	Contextual frameworks	
Research methodologies	*Methods, techniques and tools*	
	Human rights and research	
	Data collection techniques (social mapping, interviews, focus groups, interactive techniques)	
Module 5: Analysis and results	*Systematisation of information*	
	Sharing of results	
Module 6: Research today	*Challenges for human rights research today*	
	The subject and the construction of popular power through research	

Source: Nomadesc archive, 2006, taken form Araujo, 2015