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'Making' the Territory: The Spatial Politics of Peasant Communities

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Sylvain Lefebvre holds a PhD in International Politics from Aberystwyth University and a masters degree in International History and Politics from the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva. This working paper is adapted from a chapter of his PhD thesis which looks at the role of peasant communities in peacebuilding in Colombia. Previously, Sylvain worked for Peace Brigades International in Colombia for four years. He is currently working for Protection International, delivering workshops on security and protection for human rights defenders. His research and professional interests revolve around resistance and peacebuilding strategies developed by human rights defenders, activists and social organisations against state-led violence, neoliberalism and armed conflict.

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Executive summary

This paper is interested in the peacebuilding strategies used by human rights defenders (HRDs) in Colombia. In particular, it looks at those strategies used by three peasant communities to establish control over their territory. These communities were created by internally displaced peasants to protect civilians, to challenge the power structures that sustain the conflict, and eventually, to build peace. The paper argues that the spatial dimension is key to accounting for the success of peasant communities in protecting their territory, claiming their rights and growing as a community. Within this spatial dimension, there are four distinct components to note: territory, place, space and scale. First, I claim that the capacity of peasant communities to assert their control over a specific territory is crucial for their autonomy and capacity to build peace. Second, to control the place peasant communities' members occupy within society, they therefore have to control the territory in which their communities are located. Third, the peasant communities' ability to produce autonomous spaces that break with the capitalist and neoliberal mode of production is a necessary pre-condition of their capacity to contribute to peacebuilding and the post-conflict setting in relation to challenges at the regional and national scales.

To support this argument, I pay attention to the spatial politics of peasant communities. I deploy Gramsci's concept of war of position – the slow conquest of centres of power and influence within civil society to gain predominance over political society – which I combine with Jessop et al.'s (2008) theorisation of socio-spatial relations. My contention is that a war of position involves the strategic use and combination of places, scales, networks, and territories. The ability of peasant communities to assert their control over a territory is based on how well they move across scales, mobilise networks, and create and sustain places with which to fill their territory. All four components of space interact with each other in the peasant communities' strategies of appropriation, protection and production.

Implications for practice

- Protection is not only political or legal but also social and, sometimes, spiritual. All these aspects should be taken into account in order to guarantee communities' human rights and give them substance.

- It logically follows that protecting communities not only implies the design of security plans for improving security, or protection measures which aim to increase the political space for communities and their members; it also involves the design of measures supporting communities' appropriation and production of their territory. Communities' economic and social projects should not be seen as subsidiary to their strategies for protection, but as part of and complementary to these strategies. Indeed, the strategic use of appropriation and production is key to the resilience of these communities.

- As shown in this paper, networks for the protection of HRDs, and in rural communities in particular, are of paramount importance. In this regard, support should not only focus on strengthening individual organisations or

communities, but also on integrating isolated organisations or communities into existing networks. Protection strategies should not only target states, companies or illegal armed actors, but should also aim to support HRDs to gain key positions within civil society institutions and groups. Structural obstacles to improving the protection of communities relate to how they are perceived within their own societies, and to their personal social and political positions as subaltern groups within these societies; gaining key positions at different scales can aid HRDs in overcoming these obstacles, change perceptions within society and build bridges with other sectors or groups.

■ Further exploration is needed to understand how space can be strategically integrated within HRDs' practices. This could be done by studying those HRDs who defend their rights to stay on their land in the face of economic projects aimed at the exploitation of natural resources. Likewise, the study of struggles led by urban movements in Western societies could also provide useful insights into how to counter the spatial impact of neoliberalism.

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Introduction

This paper[1] looks at the peacebuilding strategies used by three peasant communities in Colombia to control their territory. The Peace Community of San José de Apartado (CdPSJA), the Cimitarra River Valley Peasant Association (ACVC) and the Carare Workers and Peasants Association (ATCC)[2] were created by internally displaced peasants who decided to join forces in the face of extreme violence. They are an expression of the many land-related conflicts at the heart of Colombia's problems. Born of the violence imposed by the armed conflict, the state and neoliberalism, their efforts represent an attempt to protect civilians, to challenge the power structures that sustain the conflict and to eventually build peace.

This paper aims to feed into a growing body of research on the role of human rights defenders in building peace. As such, the themes I address in this paper touch on key topical issues related to the protection of communities within conflict or authoritarian settings, the turn to the 'local', and the relationship between human rights and peacebuilding. New concepts and approaches have emerged to highlight local peacebuilding capacities such as community-based approaches (Haider 2009), 'zones of peace' (Mitchell and Hancock 2012; 2004) and 'local peace committees' (Odendaal 2013; Odendaal 2010). Within the mainstream liberal strand of the peacebuilding literature, a growing number of studies have focused on how to integrate the contribution of local actors and institutions into peacebuilding, so as to make the latter more effective. These studies have focused particularly on civil society's contribution to the different phases of peacebuilding processes (Paffenholz 2010; 2009). The critical peacebuilding literature has identified local actors and issues as key for building a sustainable peace (Richmond 2011; 2013; 2007). Finally, NGOs, peacebuilding practitioners and policymakers have relied heavily on these studies to justify their programmes and support human rights defenders (Leonardsson and Rudd 2015). Protecting HRDs and strengthening their capacities has therefore become a key aspect of these programmes (Nah 2017). However, the question that remains is how to scale up local, community-based initiatives to have an impact at the national level. My assumption in this paper is that a close look at how communities achieve control over space could offer insights into this problem.

This paper represents an effort to understand how the CdPSJA, the ACVC and the ATCC 'make' spaces upon which their consciousness or conception of the world can be enacted and put into practice to establish more peaceful social relations. Indeed, to understand the contribution to peacebuilding by these three peasant communities, I argue that the spatial dimension is key to accounting for the success of the peasant communities in protecting their territory, claiming their rights and growing as a community. My argument is threefold. First, I claim that the capacity of peasant communities to assert control over a specific territory is crucial for their autonomy and efforts to build peace. Second, to control the place peasant communities' members occupy within society, communities must also control the territory in which their members are located. Third, the peasant communities' abilities to produce autonomous spaces that break with the capitalist and neoliberal mode of

[1] This paper is based on field research conducted for my PhD thesis. I spent three months in Colombia, with two-week visits to three peasant communities. The rest of my time I spent in the cities of Apartadó, Medellín, Barrracabermeja, Bucaramanga and Bogotá. I carried out 84 semi-structured interviews, the majority of which with members of peasant communities. I also interviewed state officials, army and police officers, NGO workers, a member of the Constitutional Court, and Church members in all these cities. Additionally, I collected a great number of primary sources about the three communities, in the form of internal documents, archives and newspapers. The ATCC archives proved an extraordinary source of information, as did the Tierra newspapers published by the Cimitarra River Valley Peasant Association (ACVC). Although I do not claim to use ethnographic methods, my analysis has inevitably been influenced by participant observation conducted both during my fieldwork and from experience while working with Peace Brigades International in Colombia.

[2] Throughout this paper, I have translated the names of the three peasant communities, but I have kept their abbreviated forms in Spanish.

production are a necessary pre-condition of their capacity to contribute to peacebuilding. This is particularly key in relation to challenges at the regional and national scales within the current post-conflict setting.

To support this argument, I pay attention to the 'spatial politics' of peasant communities, by which I mean the range of practices, strategies and tactics used by peasant communities to stay on – or return to – their land, protect their territory, build counter-hegemonic networks and produce alternative spaces. I deploy Gramsci's (1971) concept of 'war of position' – the slow conquest of centres of power and influence within civil society to gain predominance over political society, which I combine with Jessop et al's (2008) theorisation of socio-spatial relations. To begin, I provide some background information on the CdPSJA, ACVC and ATCC, and their position amid the Colombian conflict. I then present a review of the existing relevant literature about human rights, peacebuilding and civil resistance. This leads to the presentation of my theoretical framework based on Gramsci's political theory, which constitutes the basis for the empirical analysis of the peasant communities' efforts to 'make' space through strategies of production, protection and appropriation to counter the impact of both the armed conflict, state violence and neoliberalism.

Background to the case studies

The subject of this paper could not be timelier. In September 2016, the Colombian government signed a peace agreement with what was until then, the oldest guerrilla activity on the Latin American continent. The Colombian government argues that rural communities will be instrumental in implementing the agreement; this is illustrated by the government's use of the concept of territorial peace, which places rural issues and communities at the heart of the peace process and serves as the basis for the implementation of the agreement.

The agreement marks the end of a 60-year civil conflict that has left an indelible imprint on Colombia and on its people. The beginning of the current conflict dates to the mid-1960s, when the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)[3] and the National Liberation Army (ELN) were born. In addition to the armed conflict, other types of violence linked to the drug trade, common crime and paramilitary groups intensified in the 1980s. This intensification of the conflict added to the suffering of Colombian people and to the complexity of the situation. The different kinds of violence have become interrelated and the contemporary dynamics of the conflict cannot easily be explained by looking at its root causes (Pécaut 2001). It is now estimated that 7.2 million people have been internally displaced, more than 50 000 have disappeared and more than 200 000 have died as a result of the armed conflict (UNHCR 2016; Grupo de Memoria Histórica 2013: 58). Paradoxically, despite all this violence, Colombian civil society and human rights organisations are among the most dynamic in Latin America, if not the most vibrant. Local resistance has grown and spread all over the country within indigenous, Afro-Colombian, peasant and urban grassroots communities, from the Caribbean coast to the Amazon, and from the plains bordering Venezuela to the Pacific.

[3] While FARC-EP is the full name of the FARC since 1982, for the sake of simplicity I have used 'FARC' throughout this paper.

Of the three peasant communities considered here, the civil resistance initiated by the ATCC, founded in 1987, is often considered as pioneering. The visibility of the organisation gradually increased, peaking in 1990 when it was awarded the Right Livelihood Award. The ATCC's origins lie in efforts to find a solution to the bloody dynamic of confrontation between the state's armed forces, paramilitary groups and guerrillas (Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación and Grupo de Memoria Histórica 2011). In May 1987, several leaders belonging to villages of the Carare River Valley secretly gathered. The armed groups had issued an ultimatum for the local population: to be displaced, to join them or to be killed. Rejecting all of these options, the ATCC leaders decided to engage in dialogue with the armed actors and organise non-violently for peace and development. The ATCC was born with the aim of guaranteeing the rights of its members to life, peace and work. Its area of influence spans the south of the Magdalena Medio (Figure 1).

The second community, the ACVC, was created in 1996 after several peasant protests took place between September and October 1996 in San Pablo and Barrancabermeja. It is composed of 120 Community Action

Figure 1. The Magdalena Medio region

Councils (Juntas de Acción Comunal) belonging to the municipalities of Yondó, Cantagallo, San Pablo and Remedios in the Magdalena Medio (Figure 1). According to the organisation, the ACVC was created to resist against the prevailing development model in the Magdalena Medio,

promote an authentic and definitive agrarian reform, and defend the dignity, rights and solidarity of the peasants (Equipo técnico Asociación Campesina del Valle del Río Cimitarra 2009).

Lastly, the CdPSJA was created on 23 March 1997 in the small township of San José de Apartadó (Figure 2). The birth of this peasant community symbolised the convergence and confluence of several processes. As shown by Aparicio (2012), the experience of tenant farmers fleeing from paramilitary groups, the activism of political parties and organisations, and the action of national and international NGOs based on international humanitarian and human rights norms all fed into the creation of the CdPSJA. It is now one of the best-known peasant communities in Colombia.

Figure 2. Location of the settlements of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó within the municipality of Apartadó

These communities all represent instances of resistance to the same context of interrelated dynamics of violence caused by the armed conflict, the exploitation of natural resources, the drug-trafficking business and the socio-political conflict. All these conflicts are linked, their separation is to some extent artificial, but they can all be reduced down to one common element: control over land. The CdPSJA, ACVC and ATCC all claim to contribute to building peace in their own settings, and to be the bearers of alternative models of development, political and social order, and peace. They seek to promote a positive social change, or even construct their own alternative social order outside of the state's sphere of influence. But they also call upon the state to protect their physical integrity and provide basic services. They were

all constituted in regions that have only recently been colonised and settled, and have previously been considered as havens or zones of refuge, where the state and its institutions have historically been weak, if not absent.

HRDs: Between peacebuilding and civil resistance

Research into the strategies of these communities, both in protecting themselves and in building peace, can greatly benefit our understanding of the outcome of peacebuilding processes. There have been many interesting claims about the contributions of human rights defenders to peacebuilding. However, many of these claims have come from a liberal frame of analysis that looks at civil society's contribution in strengthening a Western and liberal model of democracy, and which often fails to address the root causes of conflicts (Paffenholz 2009; Barnes 2009; Bell and O'Rourke 2007). Nevertheless, grassroots and bottom-up initiatives which challenge the power structures that sustain violence and armed conflicts have also failed (so far) to achieve impact at the national scale. Different strands of the peacebuilding literature have tried to find solutions to these problems. In its attempts to save liberal peacebuilding, the mainstream literature has sought to develop a cosmopolitan model of global governance within which a cosmopolitan human rights agenda is consistent with the communitarian defence of political autonomy and cultural diversity. Critical literature alternatively offers a new conceptualisation of 'the local' and argues that the concepts of hybridity and the everyday should be used as the basis of a more sustainable and just peace.

With the exception of the 'boomerang effect' (Keck and Sikkink 1998), the human rights literature offers few additional tools with which to study the protection strategies and tactics of HRDs. Nah et al (2013) identify that research on strategies and tactics for the protection of HRDs is scarce, and define tactics and strategies employed by HRDs as one of several keys areas for further research. More recent research has started to fill this gap (Nah et al 2017), but most studies or reports on initiatives by local communities make normative claims about their role in building peace (Burnyeat 2013; Belalcázar Valencia 2011; Diéz Gómez 2009; Alther 2006; Arbeláez Rudas 2001), and in-depth studies of the role of local communities in building peace, and in challenging power structures that sustain violence and armed conflict, are lacking.[4]

In this regard, the literature on civil resistance and non-violence provides useful insights into the concept of power, the autonomy and agency of resistance movements, and their strategies. In particular, this literature emphasises the nature of power – which ultimately relies on consent – with regard to the dynamics of non-violent strategies (Sharp and Paulson 2005; Sharp 1985; 1973a; 1973b) and the effectiveness of these strategies (Ackerman and Kruegler 1993). But the study of non-violent strategies can also be linked to peacebuilding. Indeed, some studies have shown that outcomes achieved through non-violent means are more likely to lead to peaceful settlements (Chenoweth et al 2010; Dudouet 2008; Schell 2003). Thus, the literature on civil resistance and non-violence can usefully inform studies of the capacity of peasant communities to challenge power structures and bring about peace.

[4] Gwen Burnyeat (2015) and Juan Ricardo Aparicio (2012) have written two of the most, if not the most, interesting accounts of the CdPSJA, but neither directly address its role in building peace.

However, three problems remain. First, the human rights literature does not adequately deal with power, as it often assumes that the application or inclusion of human rights norms will lead to peace. Second, the literature on the strategies and tactics of HRDs does not sufficiently consider the territorial dimension, both of power and of resistance to it. Third, the link between local initiatives and national processes remains unexplored. These are the gaps I seek to address by looking at the spatial strategies developed by peasant communities in Colombia to challenge the power structures from which violence and conflict originate.

A spatial war of position

Space as an object of study has made its appearance within several academic fields (Brenner et al 2003; Featherstone 2008; Leitner et al 2008).[5] Within these fields, the concepts of place, scale, network, and territory appear as central to the geographical and spatial analysis of social phenomena. These fields of study have built on the reassertion of space within critical social science and the "socio-spatial dialectic" (Soja 1989). The need to emphasise the multiple dimensions of space and to question the privileging of any spatiality of a given social phenomenon is considered crucial for a complete analysis of the said phenomenon. Indeed, a consensus seems to have emerged which affirms that space is constituted through social relations, but also plays a key role in shaping them (Soja 1989: 78). The relational nature of these spatialities has also been emphasised (Leitner et al 2008: 158; Jessop et al 2008: 389).

This paper combines these insights with Gramsci's (1971) concept of "war of position".[6] Gramsci himself was sensitive to issues of place, scale, networks and territory, and his attention to space was rooted in a deep awareness that the strategies of subaltern groups must be spatial as hegemony is not only social but spatial as well (Joseph 2002: 435). Joseph argues that hegemony plays a role in reproducing the social space of society and ensuring its cohesion. He distinguishes between three distinct conceptions of space: as a field of action, as representations and as a basis of action. As such,

> " Space and ideology are inextricably bound in a basic material sense... Space is both necessary to the reproduction of ideology and the terrain for its application... Hegemonic projects and practices involve the articulation of ideology in conjunction with control over space. (Ibid: 174)

The connection between ideology and control over space means that ideological location as identity is reinforced by physical location. In this regard, spaces of importance to peasant communities are "not merely [a] physical location but [an] ideological location as identity" (ibid). In the case of peasant communities, this means that their place within society, both in terms of political power and legal rights, is linked to their ability to assert their control over the territory they occupy, which is in turn achieved through a war of position.

Space is key to the design of resistance strategies. Without place, social movements or individuals are bound to use tactics as a means of finding their own spaces within structures of power (Pile and Keith 1997; De Certeau

[5] See also Brenner 1999; Brenner et al 2003; Featherstone 2003; 2008; García de la Torre and Aramburo Siegert 2011; González 2014; Jessop 2006; Jessop et al 2008; Leitner et al 2008; Bieler and Morton 2003; Hesketh 2014; Hesketh and Morton 2014; Swyngedouw 2004; Oslender 2004; González et al 2012.

[6] It might seem contradictory to use a concept using the word 'war' within a paper about HRDs and peacebuilding. However, while Gramsci's use of this concept comes from an analogy with military strategy, it is by nature a non-violent strategy aimed at gaining positions within society.

Dimensions of space

PLACE

"Sites where people live, work and move, and where they form attachments, practice their relations with each other, and relate to the rest of the world" (Jessop 2006: 424).

Places can also be conceptualised as spaces outside the reach of power structures, where people can safely design strategies of resistance to hegemonic practices, or as "cultural arenas" (Kappler 2012) where people develop alternative visions of society to the ones imposed by the power of hegemonic or dominant actors.

SCALE

The boundaries or levels created by the organisation of social relations.

Scales are the product of political and social struggles over space and across time (Brenner 1997; Hesketh 2010; Leitner et al 2008; Pile and Keith 1997; Smith 2003; Swyngedouw 2000; 2004).

TERRITORY

Any bounded land united by political, social, economic or cultural activities.

NETWORK

"The overlapping and contested material, cultural and political flows and circuits that bind different places together through differentiated relations of power" (Featherstone 2008: 4).
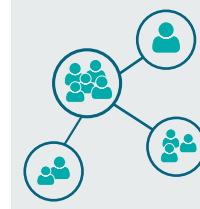
Networks have been described as a key strategy used by social movements to challenge structures of power.

1984); everyday resistance has no space of its own. Within the everyday, people find their way through networks of power relations through ruse, tricks, appropriation of rules, principles and norms imposed from above, but they do not pose a challenge to these networks of power. For this to happen, resistance strategies have to produce autonomous spaces from which to design alternatives. This is where Gramsci's concept of war of position is most useful, as it is predicated upon building conditions that will allow a social group to achieve control over space.

By linking these insights to the framework of territory, place, scale and network, and to the concepts of the space of representation and spatialities, I contend that a war of position involves the strategic use and combination of places, scales, networks and territories. The ability of peasant communities to assert their control over a given territory is based on how well they move between scales, mobilise networks and create and sustain places with which to fill their territory. All four dimensions of space interact with each other in the strategies of peasant communities. The following sections analyse the application of these strategies in practice, considering the approaches taken by the three Colombian peasant community associations.

The spatial and territorial strategies of peasant communities: Territory, place, scale, and networks

Analysis of the strategies employed by the CdPSJA, ACVC and ATCC reveals the crucial role that space plays in the success of their initiatives; the resistance of the peasant communities is intimately tied to space. Resisting means staying on the land, and working and cultivating it. One of the leaders of the ACVC interviewed, used the Spanish verb *ejercer* – which inspired the title of this paper – to explain the significance of the relationship between peasants and the land. Peasants have a very practical, affirmative and active attitude regarding their territory. The use of the verb 'ejercer' conveys this meaning. Literally, ejercer means practising, making, exercising or exerting, as in making a manufactured product, practising a profession, exercising a right, or exerting influence or pressure. Peasants do something with the territory. They shape and mould it according to their cultural, social, economic and political needs. 'Making' the territory involves the promotion of their principles at different scales and their association with different places, the connection of these places within wider networks of power, and the gaining of positions within these same networks, to protect and appropriate territory and produce on it. Territory is the space where power relations are challenged through spatial strategies of appropriation, protection and production. These strategies characterise the war of position led by the peasant communities.

Strategies of appropriation

Appropriation refers here to the strategies employed by peasant communities in order to gain legitimate control over the land and establish an organic connection with their territory. To assert control over their territories, the CdPSJA and the ACVC have sought to ground their claims both legally and politically. While the CdPSJA has relied on international norms and owns the land at the same time, the ACVC has used a national legal norm, the Peasant Reserve Zone (Zona de Reserva Campesina – ZRC), which guarantees the collective rights of peasants to manage their own territory and their individual rights to own land through the Family Farming Unit. In addition to these legal strategies, all three communities have sought to strengthen the link between their members and the territory by developing practices engaging collective memory and the communities' narratives of their resistance, leading to what can be termed an 'organic appropriation' of the territory.

The CdPSJA began to acquire land as a means of appropriating territory to resist economic projects promoted by multinational companies and aimed at exploiting natural resources, and instead to implement its own solidary economy. Burnyeat (2015) estimates that the community now collectively owns around a thousand hectares. Members of the community who individually own pieces of land also put them at the disposal of the community for collective work and production.

This connection between strategies of appropriation and production is also clear in the case of the ACVC, which has managed to obtain legal recognition of its collective rights over the land through the legal norm of the ZRC. According to ACVC members, the objective of the ZRC is the "strengthening

of peasants in the territory"[7] (ACVC#5; ACVC#13). The use of the ZRC was conceived as a means to "claim the right to land, and the right to live on [the land]" (ACVC#11; ACVC#10), given that "the land belongs to peasants" (ACVC#14). The ZRC is also meant to ensure that peasants' basic needs are fulfilled, affording them a "decent life" (ACVC#3). In the words of one of the ACVC leaders, it is a "territorial proposal" offering solutions to peasants' problems, such as "access to land within the territory, the formalisation of property, development [and] a peasant subject [granted] rights" (ACVC#1). The ZRC is a tool to disrupt land accumulation and social relations based on domination, clientelism and paternalism, and to promote agrarian reform (ACVC#1).

The ZRC is the key element of the ACVC's war of position. It allows the association to appropriate territory through the mobilisation of networks, the raising of resources, and the establishment of connections between local, regional and international scales. The ACVC has used the ZRC as an advocacy tool at the international scale and gained the support of members of parliament and international NGOs (Tierra 2010a). The ZRC has allowed the ACVC to raise resources for the development and implementation of economic projects which favour peasants' needs and a peasant-based economy. Finally, it can also be understood as part of the cultural appropriation of the territory by the community. The ACVC has produced a CD entitled *Short Musical Stories for Historical Memory* (ACVC 2012), which illustrates this cultural appropriation. The inside cover of the CD states: "This project seeks to contribute to the process of remembrance through short musical stories". It is argued that the musical stories, thanks to their "great testimonial value, contribute to the construction of collective memory and the denunciation of serious human rights violations that occur in rural areas". But the songs also "provide an account of the vitality of resistance processes and cultural movements within peasant communities" (Tierra 2010b).

This cultural appropriation of the territory is related to the establishment of an organic connection between the peasants and the land. It points to the fact that resistance, territory and autonomy are connected in the discourse used by members of peasant communities (CdPSJA#11). This is the result of the material relationship that exists between the land, and the practices and associated discourse of peasants and peace communities aiming at appropriating it as territory. At the time of my visit, the then president of the ATCC explained this link between resistance, territory and autonomy, and discussed the connection between territory and the identity of the community members (ATCC#3); the values, norms and principles promoted by peasant communities, such as life, dignity, labour, neutrality and non-violence, are all linked to the land in an organic way.

Many different places fill and define territory and associated resistance at different times. A link between memories of the resistance and place is quite striking in all three cases, and contributes to the appropriation of the territory through collective memory-building initiatives. In all three peasant communities, memorials in honour of members of the communities who have been killed can be seen across their territories. One of these memorials is located in the centre of the ACVC hamlet of La Cooperativa; it reminds the settlers of the reasons why they resist and fight to stay on their land. It

[7] All translations from Spanish are the author's own.

places memory at the centre of the peasants' struggle, both geographically and symbolically. Similarly, the CdPSJA frequently organises processions to commemorate symbolic events such as the anniversary of its creation or the massacre of eight of its members in February 2005. I attended one of these commemorations which takes place each year on Easter Sunday. The community members walk from the town of Apartadó to the community's main settlement ten kilometres away. On this road, many peasants have been killed or disappeared, both before and since the creation of the CdPSJA. Father Giraldo usually leads the procession, a crucifix in his hand, stopping at each place where a violation has been committed. He retells the events as they happened and reminds everybody of who was killed. In this way, initiatives to celebrate and keep alive the memory of victims are closely linked to the territory; they assign meanings to places and strengthen the feeling of belonging between peasants and their territory.

The internal cohesion of peasant communities and their organic relationship to the territory and land, although based on material needs, is not spontaneous. Structures change and as consequence, influence the political consciousness of the peace communities' members. This ultimately has an impact on their appropriation of the territory. Although still very present, current violence, both in the regions where the communities are settled and against their members, does not reach the level it used to; younger generations have not had to experience the atrocities suffered by older members. State policies offering legal reparation, often through the reward of material compensation and which require gaining consent, have pushed some members to leave their communities.[8] This is why collective memory and education are so important in ensuring the cohesion of the peace communities and the appropriation of their territory as the context changes; the longevity of the movements and their efforts to create lasting peace depend on it. In this regard, the ATCC has developed a textbook to be used in all schools within its territory (ATCC 2014). The CdPSJA has inscribed the names of several of its members who were killed or disappeared on stones and has built a memorial around them in the centre of the main settlement. It has also developed its own schools and recruited teachers in several hamlets. Likewise, the ACVC frequently delivers workshops about culture, education, human rights, and even the economy, with the help of regional NGOs.

Strategies of protection

The protection strategies developed by the CdPSJA, ACVC and ATCC all combine place, scales and networks to achieve some control over their territory and protect peasants. The normative aspect of these strategies – the principles of neutrality and non-violence – have often been highlighted to explain how their protective function works (Anrup and Español 2011). However, in this section I show that effective protection also depends on political relations of power at the national and international scales, as well as on peasants' ability to rebuild the social fabric of their community. Indeed, while the success of these strategies depends on peasant communities' ability to control how they are portrayed, both in relation to illegal armed actors and institutional actors, it also relies on their capacity to use scales, mobilise networks and create safe places for the growth and strengthening of social

[8] All three communities have adopted different attitudes towards these policies, but they each emphasise the fact they are not in themselves enough to provide a full reparation to communities' members, as they typically only offer financial compensation to victims.

bonds within their community. The concepts of scales, places and networks therefore allow me to go beyond a simply normative and legal analysis of the protection strategies employed by peasant communities, to explore the way in which their strategies are able to effectively challenge power relations and structures. These strategies require gaining positions at local, national and international scales, and connecting these positions through networks to achieve the protection of specific places and territories.

Neutrality and non-violence

The first task the ATCC, CdPSJA and ACVC were confronted with was to protect themselves from the actions of armed actors, both legal and illegal. All three communities have positioned non-violence and neutrality regarding the conflict at the core of their values as the most effective way to distinguish themselves from combatants. In all three cases, these principles have allowed peasant communities to undermine armed actors' control over both their territory and their members by breaking the dynamics and logics of their domination, which ultimately relied on the peasants' cooperation. However, the form of these mechanisms differed between the three associations, leading to different meanings and practices of neutrality and non-violence. While the ATCC put in place mechanisms of direct dialogue and confrontation with armed actors, the CdPSJA aimed to mitigate violence by relying on actors and networks at the international scale. The ACVC combined both of these aspects in its approach.

The ATCC developed four specific mechanisms to put into practice the principles of neutrality and non-violence. The best known of these mechanisms took the form of dialogues that the ATCC engaged in with all armed actors. However, intra-community dialogues, denunciations and conflict management have also contributed to the implementation and success of the principles of neutrality and non-violence. In May 1987, after receiving an ultimatum issued by the army and paramilitary groups, giving peasants the choice to be displaced, join one of the armed groups or be killed, around 50 peasants decided to hold a meeting with the FARC units present in the region (Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación and Grupo de Memoria Histórica 2011: 334). The leader of the group, Josué Vargas, directly confronted the FARC and presented the conditions formulated by the peasants of La India. The ATCC members asked that the FARC not kill any more peasants, and insisted that they would no longer help or support the FARC (Sanz de Santamaría 1998). About two weeks later, the FARC agreed to the ATCC's demands and the peasants of La India committed to withdrawing help and support from the guerrillas, army and paramilitary groups. The FARC agreed not to intervene in peasants' internal affairs and to stop managing conflicts between peasants. Instead, the peasants themselves committed to solving their internal conflicts, be they social, economic or political (Archivo ATCC 1). In parallel, the peasants of La India also started talks with the army, which committed to not violating the peasants' rights (Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación and Grupo de Memoria Histórica 2011: 336). Paramilitary groups also withdrew their (previously permanent) presence from La India. Through this process, the link between the army and paramilitary groups was made obvious, and the ATCC kept up dialogue with the army if it wanted something from the paramilitary groups. For its part, the ATCC stepped in to deal with the community's internal

conflicts, previously handled by the FARC, and to monitor the behaviour of its members.

Further, and most importantly for the good functioning of the dialogues, the ATCC committed to "inform the army, the guerrilla and paramilitary groups of all meetings and agreements reached with any one of them" (Archivo ATCC 2). The president of the ATCC serving at the time of my interviews asserted that, rather than generating power, these dialogues allowed the ATCC to achieve "equal status" with the armed groups. He argued that "from the moment when there was the need for dialogue, armed force was not imposed upon us" (ATCC#3). By breaking the expected outcome of all actions undertaken by armed groups, and convincing armed groups that they could also benefit from respecting civilians, the ATCC managed to break with the cycle of violence. These dialogues were successful in considerably reducing violence between 1987 and 2000 (Kaplan 2013). However, my contention is that the dialogues did not allow the ATCC to solidly establish control over its territory; the ATCC lacked the ability to use scale and was unable to effectively mobilise networks beyond the regional level.

In fact, the success of the ATCC relied heavily on two other mechanisms, namely the intra-community dialogue and the organisation's investigatory capacity in both dealing with accusations and threats from armed actors with regard to perceived deception by community members and in resolving internal conflicts. The first of these mechanisms allowed ATCC members to break the law of silence which prevented peasants from denouncing abuses committed by armed groups for fear of retaliation; to organise resistance to armed actors; and to agree on principles to guide their behaviour. The second transformed the ATCC into a true conflict resolution body and an institution charged with controlling social order, solving conflicts between peasants and dealing with threats issued by armed actors against members of the ATCC (Kaplan 2013: 355-56). It is these mechanisms which gave the ATCC its social and political power over its territory, and prevented armed actors from taking advantage of conflicts between peasants to assert their control and domination (Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación and Grupo de Memoria Histórica 2011: 356-61). However, as demands on the ATCC increased beyond its capacity, and adhesion to the ATCC's principles decreased, the ATCC was weakened and proved less able to control armed actors' activities within its territory (Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación and Grupo de Memoria Histórica 2011: 408-09; Archivo ATCC 3; Archivo ATCC 4; Archivo ATCC 5; Archivo ATCC 6; Archivo ATCC 7).

The limits of the ATCC's protection strategies were illustrated by the massacre of its founding leaders on the 26 February 1990. Dialogue with armed actors proved insufficient to prevent these killings, or to mitigate the negative impact of the ATCC's strategies of open denunciation and confrontation (Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación and Grupo de Memoria Histórica 2011: 353-55; ATCC#11). In no uncertain terms, the strategy of political confrontation towards paramilitary groups and their supporters represented a threat to these actors interests, which the armed groups addressed by killing the leaders of the ATCC. Despite the fact that the ATCC had received institutional support from local authorities and gained international recognition in December 1990 when it was awarded

the Right Livelihood Award, its lack of connections and influence at national and international scale meant that the political cost of such attacks was not high enough to prevent them. The aggressors were indeed both willing and able to resist the political and social pressure that followed the attacks, and the crimes remain largely unpunished (Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación and Grupo de Memoria Histórica 2011: 288).

Protection networks

More encouragingly, the cases of the CdPSJA and the ACVC illustrate how peasant communities can generate coercion (as a component of power, following Gramsci's conception (1971)) using scales and the mobilisation of protection networks. Power relationships at national and international scales, and opportunities to connect with wider networks operating at the same scale, impacted how the peasant communities in these cases were able to protect their territory and members. The power relationships they established increased the political cost to paramilitary groups and the state of using violence to coerce the peasant communities, despite not offering a guarantee that violence would not be used. Both these organisations have developed strong protection networks at the regional, national and international scales, and have made strategic use of the discourse of human rights and international law. This has allowed them to carry on speaking up in public and vocalising their denunciations of armed actors.

International support is considered a key factor by both communities (ACVC#11). One association leader (ACVC#14) explained how the power to speak up and denounce not only abuses by armed actors, but also the effects of coca fumigation programmes implemented by the government, was achieved through the development of networks connecting the local experience of peasants, regional and national human rights organisations, and international actors. Ideas about human rights were spread through social organisations based in Barrancabermeja, such as the Regional Corporation for the Defence of Human Rights (CREDHOS) and the Grassroots Women's Organisation (OFP), and linked to local peasant-led initiatives and protests which emerged in the 1980s.

Until the mid-1990s, the peasants of the Magdalena Medio region had engaged in dialogues with the guerrillas and the army in order to gain respect for civilians, although these dialogues were not as formal as those led by the ATCC, and were not successful (ACVC#14). The idea of creating an organisation whose aim would be to increase respect for peasants' rights and promote a model of development in line with their needs arose. Peasants were able to transform the ACVC into a crucial node within wider networks at the regional, national and international scale. From then on, the ACVC was able to mobilise protection networks based on a human rights discourse, gain the necessary international support and strengthen the social cohesion of the 120 local action councils which make up its local base (ACVC#1). Through the help of key individuals, the ACVC could exert the necessary pressure on the Colombian state (Tierra 2010a). All these efforts contributed to the creation of the Peasant Reserve Zone (ZRC) in 2002.

Resettlement processes and spacial strategies

Resettlement processes led by all three communities are another good example of how the peasants associations have used scales and mobilised

networks for the protection of specific places. These processes also illustrate the connection between the three strategies of protection, appropriation and production. In the case of the CdPSJA, some members were able to return to the hamlet of La Resbalosa with the support of the community. One of the leaders explained that the principles of neutrality and non-violence allowed them to keep fighting and return to their land (CdPSJA#8). He said that he himself returned to his hamlet with the support of the community.

> " [This is] how people started to return to Mulatos as well... There, we then built, we started working on an idea, where Luis Eduardo Guerra was assassinated... like a small hamlet, the one that nowadays is known as the Luis Eduardo Guerra Peace Hamlet. (CdPSJA#8)

This account shows how strategies of protection and processes of appropriation of the territory intermingle. What started as a process to help families settle back on their land after being displaced was eventually broadened to include the creation of a specific place and its association with a specific meaning: a peace hamlet named after a member of the community assassinated by paramilitary groups in collaboration with the Army in February 2005. As Burnyeat explains, returning to their land was very important for the CdPSJA, both to recover their rural way of life and to occupy territory in order to establish new places of resistance and break the spatiality produced by armed actors and the conflict (Burnyeat 2015: 86). In addition to re-appropriating and producing on the territory, this implied protecting it by occupying places within it, and connecting these places within the wider protection networks and with actors at different scales.

Similarly, the unsuccessful attempts made by the CdPSJA to create humanitarian zones represented an effort to use a territorial and spatial concept in order to protect civilians in remote areas of the Serrania de Abibe, which had witnessed new forced displacements between 2003 and 2005 (CdPSJA 2005). These zones would be specific and delimited places where no armed actors would be permitted. The protection of the zones would ultimately rely on the public denunciation of human rights violations and on the action of national and international actors, such as the *defensoria*[9] and *procuraduria*,[10] the Office of the United Nations for Human Rights (OHCHR), and embassies. Peace Committees were to be established in each hamlet, granted the task of coordinating the protection and organic elements of the proposal. The proposal also defined commitments which the peasants would be bound to respect in order to be allowed within the zones (CdPSJA 2005). Although the CdPSJA did set up these humanitarian zones, it did not manage to get the necessary political support for the initiative to be successful (Burnyeat 2015: 136; Constitutional Court 2007). Despite an order issued by the Constitutional Court in 2012 supporting the community's claims (Constitutional Court 2012), the humanitarian zones have not yet been officially recognised. This example illustrates how the success of the spatial strategies led by peasant communities hinges on their ability to build protection on political grounds, using scales and mobilising networks.

Foundational agreements and information sharing
The foundational agreements which underpinned the establishment of the CdPSJA further illustrate how networks, scales and places converge towards the

[9] The Ombudsman's Office is the national government agency that is charged with overseeing the protection of civil and human rights (*http://www.defensoria.gov.co/es/public/stitucional/5847/¿Qu%C3%ADenes-somos.htm*).

[10] The Office of the Inspector General of Colombia is an independent Colombian public institution which oversees the public conduct of those in authority or in public office, and of overseeing the correct functioning of other government institutions and agencies (*https://www.procuraduria.gov.co/portal/objetivos-y-funciones.page*).

protection of a territory. The declaration issued on the day of its creation states that none of its members should be the target of human rights violations or infringements of international humanitarian law (CdPSJA 1997: Article 2). As in the case of the ATCC, cooperation with armed actors is prohibited (Article 3), but most importantly, it is affirmed that the CdPSJA "will take all relevant and necessary measures to control access or transit of any person without the right to remain or move within [its] settlements" (Article 4). As such, the community's principles are closely associated with its territory, which is clearly identified by banners and fences (Article 6). The CdPSJA controls its territory through the circulation and diffusion of information on armed actors' activities. This implies the use of messengers who walk hours from one hamlet to another in order to inform members of the Internal Council of any violations or combat between armed actors (Aparicio 2012: 151). The CdPSJA then publishes the information in a press release and disseminates it through its national and international networks, including NGOs, Members of Parliament or Ministries. The CdPSJA also tries to protect its territory through the presence of international NGO workers within its settlements. Their presence allows NGOs to provide international actors such as embassies, foreign offices or members of parliament with reliable, first-hand information and ask them to take action to protect the community and its territory. In this way, the CdPSJA gains key positions at the international scale and its territory becomes the central node in a wider protection network connecting many different places at local, national and regional scales, and whose action is oriented towards the protection of community members and their territory.

Legal approaches

Finally, both the CdPSJA and the ACVC have managed to challenge the state in its role as duty-bearer of human rights by using legal strategies at national and international scales, and gaining key positions within national and international courts. In particular, the ACVC and the CdPSJA have ensured the protection of their members through the Inter-American system. In December 1997, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) requested the adoption of precautionary measures[11] on behalf of the members of the CdPSJA (IACHR 1997). In 2000 they also granted precautionary measures to the ACVC (IACHR 2000; IACHR 1999) and the president of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights requested provisional measures[12] for 189 members of the community. The provisional measures issued by the Inter-American Court were ratified by the Colombian Constitutional Court through the sentence T-1025 in 2007, which established that the CdPSJA and the state should agree on the measures by which the community would be protected. However, the state has not followed through on the orders of the Constitutional Court. The judge who was in charge of delivering the orders characterised the attitude of the state as one of deliberate neglect, both at the local and national levels (CC#1). She added that the initiative of the CdPSJA "sought to draw the attention of the state" towards regions where its presence is weak. According to her, the CdPSJA and other communities were constructing "protection networks through the use of international humanitarian law, human rights international law, the treaty ratified [by Colombia] as a democracy, and the Constitution". Through support of these protection networks, the state would be able to offer "clear responses" in order to protect these communities. This could also provide a "way to consolidate the presence of the state in forgotten spaces" (CC#1).

[11] Precautionary measures are ordered by the IACHR to request that a State take immediate measures in serious and urgent situations. Such measures, whether related to a petition or not, concern serious and urgent situations presenting a risk of irreparable harm to persons or to subject matter of a pending petition or case before the organs of the Inter-American system (*http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/decisions/about-precautionary.asp*).

[12] Provisional measures are ordered by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in serious and urgent cases in order to avoid irreparable harm to persons.

It is striking to note that strategies of appropriation and protection are also almost always accompanied by strategies of production, aiming to fulfil the material needs of peasants. This production can be symbolic and meaningful, as the processions organised by the CdPSJA and the memorials located in all three communities show, but it is also closely linked to strategies of economic production. The next section considers these strategies.

Strategies of production

The strategies of production developed and implemented by peasant communities not only aim to fulfil the needs of peasants, but also to strengthen the tie between peasants and the land. In this regard, they are also strategies of appropriation of the territory through the development of a peasant economy based on a specific mode of production, grounded in a use of space which accords with peasants' social and economic needs. This relies on a mode of cooperation which places human dignity and solidarity at its centre. It aims at countering the state-led neoliberal economic policies and the illegal economic activities promoted by armed criminal groups, which are the source of the peasants' displacement from the territory. For the CdPSJA and the ACVC, this collective mode of production and the development of a peasant-based economy is at the core of their political practices. As many of them told me, the territory is the foundation of their 'life plan'. In the case of the ATCC, the association's ability to assert control over its territory was weakened due to the failure of its strategies of appropriation and production from 2000 until today. The ATCC sought to find a remedy for the lack of social cohesion and control over its territory through strategies of production and the elaboration of development plans. But these plans were not organic enough – not closely enough bound to the territory – to be supported at the grassroots level and for community members to take ownership of them (Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación and Grupo de Memoria Histórica 2011: 295, 489).

Conversely, the economic projects implemented by the ACVC and the CdPSJA have clearly managed to give substance to the organic connection between peasants and the land. The ACVC has implemented several economic projects over the years which have produced clear rewards and benefits for peasants of the Cimitarra River Valley. One of these projects combines the mobilisation of resources at the international scale, the local needs of peasants and a political economy based on solidarity, sustainability and respect for natural resources. Started in 2002, the farming and breeding of buffalos has benefited around 46 families and has grown into a community-run business selling milk, meat and cheese (ACVC 2014). The ACVC has benefited from the support of the regional Magdalena Medio Peace and Development Program, and has raised funds from the World Bank. It has also managed to get the support of several state entities for the technical training of employees of Ecobufalo Campesino, a company created especially for the commercialisation of buffalo products. Ultimately, this project fulfils the goal of the ACVC to defend "peasant territoriality through productive initiatives that ensure sustainable settlement on the territory, [and] contribute to guarantee food sovereignty and an equilibrium with the environment" (ACVC 2014). These elements are, according to the ACVC, "necessary conditions for the achievement of peace with social justice within these territories which have been terribly affected by war" (ACVC 2014). In this

regard, the ACVC is convinced that the "political recognition of peasants and the strengthening of a peasant-based economy are the path to reach peace" (ACVC 2014).

While the ACVC has formulated an extensive development plan with clear strategies of production, the strategies of the CdPSJA are embodied within what Burnyeat terms the "organic narrative" of the community (Burnyeat 2015: 171-186). At the centre of this organic narrative lies the production and commercialisation of cocoa, which symbolises the mode of production promoted by the CdPSJA and its relationship with the territory. Burnyeat shows how the production strategies of the CdPSJA are intimately linked to its perception and characterisation of the state, multinational companies and their neoliberal policies. This leads to an insistence on food sovereignty and the implementation of production strategies of which the goals are autonomy and subsistence. It also underlies the will to produce food in an organic way, in contrast to the methods used by multinational companies and intensive agriculture. Such a narrative helps the CdPSJA to establish connections and alliances with economic initiatives based on solidarity at the international scale.

According to Burnyeat, a trade relationship established with the UK-based cosmetics company Lush has contributed to the strengthening of the organic narrative within the CdPSJA by emphasising concepts of autonomy, the opportunity to get a fairer price and the preference for alliances at the international scale (Burnyeat 2015: 184). This novel form of collaboration between the British cosmetics firm, Peace Brigades International and the CdPSJA well illustrates the fact that strategies of production, appropriation and protection are sometimes intermingled. Lush is the main buyer of the community's cocoa, which it ships to Europe to be processed into cocoa butter and powder. The first 25 tonne shipment of cocoa beans left the CdPSJA in 2010 and Lush supported the community's application to become a certified Fair Trade and Organic producer (Lush 2014).

In March 2014, Lush campaigned in the UK, Europe and North America in favour of the the community's struggle for peace and human rights as part of its Peace Pioneers Campaign (ibid). Alongside actions targeting civil society and aimed at raising awareness around the situation of the CdPSJA, such as film screenings and activities organised in Lush shops, activities targeting political society were also scheduled. A special reception was organised at the House of Lords in London, where Simon Constantine, the person responsible for sourcing and buying the raw materials used to make Lush's ethical products, addressed the Colombian Ambassador and the UK Foreign Office (PBI UK 2014). The aim of this campaign was to push the Colombian government to finally implement the Constitutional Court Order from July 2012, officially recognising the humanitarian zones established by the CdPSJA in 2007.

In this collaboration between Lush and the CdPSJA, strategies of protection, appropriation and production meet. In this regard, the CdPSJA's practices represent a fascinating attempt to isolate and protect its members, not only from armed conflict but also from the violence induced by the economic system and neoliberal policies of the Colombian government. This they seek to achieve through a mode of production which combines scales and uses pre-existing economic and political networks.

A key element of peasant communities' strategies of production is labour. When asked what resisting meant for them, some interviewees answered that it meant staying on the land. And when asked how they resisted, they answered that they work the land. Labour symbolises the peasants' view and conception of the land, against the state and market conception of land as a commodity. In this regard:

- Labour occupies a critical position in the relationship between land and the autonomy of peasant communities, and plays a material role as the means through which members of the community subsist.

- Labour has an important place within the discourse of the peasant communities about their right to own the land.

- Labour has an organisational function in the sense that peasant communities organise around the development of an autonomous mode of production which is instrumental to the sustainability and growth of their resistance.

Again, we see how strategies of protection, appropriation and production are intermingled. This is "making the territory" (ACVC#1). Labour provides the means of subsistence to be able to live in the midst of armed conflict. The extent to which the daily activities of the peasant communities' members are focused on subsistence and, as such, do not seem to be related to their resistance, is striking. Harvesting cocoa, growing manioc or potatoes, chopping wood, taking care of the cattle – all these activities are part of the daily work of the community. At first sight, none seem to be directly related to the community's resistance. Yet, these everyday tasks are actually crucial to the autonomy and development of the peasant communities. Further, they also seem to be directly related to how the communities' members conceive their resistance. They work the land to affirm their rights to it; they grow enough crops to be able to feed their families; they harvest enough cocoa to be able to generate income for the community as a whole. It is in this light that labour can be understood as one of the ATTC's three principles that sustain their resistance. The slogan of the association is "for the right to life, peace, and work". Ensuring the right to work is therefore one of their main aims (ATCC no date). This principle is grounded in a particular vision of what peace means. Peace is not only the absence of violence. Peace would be nothing without economic development, which should not be based on a paternalistic conception that supposes the assistance and aid of the state, but must be grounded in local peasant labour (ibid).

In the context of armed conflict, being able to grow and produce food is a way of countering the conditions imposed by armed actors, be they legal or illegal, and reducing their impact on the civil population. Peasants from the three communities mention the troubles caused by food blockades or controls imposed by the army (CdPSJA#5). One day a week, usually Thursday, all members of the community set aside their individual commitments and work for the collective projects of the community. This day is called a communal day and is one of the elements that holds the CdPSJA together. Aparicio, in his ethnographic account of the creation of the CdPSJA, recalls one the collective working days: one of the oldest men present, who was carrying a huge bag full of maize seeds, looked at him and said: "This is my weapon against war. There is no time to play or rest, we need to produce our own food" (2012: 250). In

this regard, labour is directly and materially linked to the CdPSJA's autonomy (CdPSJA#6; CdPSJA#8). The relationship between autonomy and labour is also reflected in the social relationships that develop around labour (CdPSJA#9). The collectivity of labour and the community's working groups is mentioned as one of the most important aspects of what the community represents for its members; "one cannot resist on his/her own" (Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación and Grupo de Memoria Histórica 2011: 327-28).

Labour is also linked to the right to land that the peasants have established over the years. The argument is that peasants have a right to own a piece of land insofar as they work and cultivate the land. In the case of the ATCC, the widespread and systematic violence imposed on peasants before the creation of the association led to a situation in which tasks related to smallholder and small-scale agriculture could not be carried out. The peasants' right to labour was denied (Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación and Grupo de Memoria Histórica 2011: 327-28). The subdivision of land, massacres and scorched earth operations led by the army were the norm before the creation of the ATCC. The right to land claimed by the peasants reflects the fact that the land is the cornerstone of the settler-turned-peasants' life project, achieved through years of hard work to transform the environment and turn jungle into an adequate space for agriculture (Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación and Grupo de Memoria Histórica 2011: 328).

Further, labour refers to a certain mode of cooperation between the members of the community, which is associated with the mode of production (Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación and Grupo de Memoria Histórica 2011: 328). This mode of cooperation is a "productive force" (Marx and Engels 1970: 50). Remembrance of past events and their collective reconstruction by all members of the community, and the creation of alternative modes of teaching or educating children growing up within the community, can be considered part of this mode of cooperation.

Conclusion

I have demonstrated in this paper that the control achieved by peasant communities over their territory, through the spatial strategies of war of position analysed herein, allows them to build social and collective bonds, to develop organisational and productive processes, and to protect their members. Their capacity to control their territory, both in representational and material ways, determines their place within society. In turn, such control depends on their ability to protect, appropriate and produce on the territory. The link between the protection, appropriation and production of the territory on the one hand, and peasants' rights and contribution to peacebuilding on the other, is key. These rights would not have any meaningful content if peasants could not control their territory, and peace would be devoid of any positive meaning. This ability is therefore fundamental to their capacity to contribute to peacebuilding at local and national scales by grounding in the territory their social, political and economic alternatives.

One of the most critical issues faced by human rights defenders and activists all over the world, and irrespective of the presence of armed conflict, is land. As

part of my continued experience as a practitioner working with environmental and land activists, I have witnessed the need for the development of effective strategies to confront and counter land-grabbing by state-sponsored national and multinational companies. It is therefore crucial to explore further, how space can be strategically integrated within HRDs' practices. One way to achieve this is through the study of those HRDs who defend their rights to stay on their land in the face of economic projects aimed at the exploitation of natural resources. However, another opportunity arises to study the role of space through the struggles led by urban movements in Western societies, such as Occupy or the Spanish indignados, which could provide useful insights into how to counter the spatial impact of neoliberalism.

List of Interviews

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CdPSJA#8, San José de Apartadó, 16 April 2014.
CdPSJA#9, San José de Apartadó, 18 April 2014.
CdPSJA#10, San José de Apartadó, 19 April 2014.

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