

Slow violence and corporate greening in the war on drugs in Colombia

IRENE VÉLEZ-TORRES AND DIEGO LUGO-VIVAS*

Since the 1980s, the economic geography of rural Colombia has felt the impact of the cultivation of illicit crops as a means of subsistence amid enormous social, economic and technical disadvantages faced by peasants. The peace agreement in Colombia,¹ signed in 2016 between the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC-EP) and the government, not only brought about the demobilization of armed guerrillas but sought to establish a suite of plans and projects that, implemented at the local level, would facilitate a rural transformation capable of guaranteeing a stable territorial peace. The accord included a series of initiatives, among them rural reform, a handover of weapons, political participation by the demobilized guerrillas and the victims of the conflict, and a concerted solution to the problem of rural dependence on illicit crops.² As part of that vision, the accord's chapter 4—created through discussions with FARC-EP and the National Coordinator of Coca, Poppy and Marijuana Growers (COCCAM, the acronym in Spanish)³—introduced a new perspective on the war on drugs based on rural development. This included provisions on: (1) voluntary eradication of illicit coca crops; (2) investment and technical assistance in productive projects; (3) social participation for territorial planning; and (4) a transition period (of two years) in which peasants were to receive basic economic 'food assistance'.⁴ This design connected the problem of illicit crops with a comprehensive agrarian reform set out in chapter 1 of the agreement.

* This article is part of the January 2021 special issue of *International Affairs* on 'Environmental peacebuilding', guest-edited by Tobias Ide, Carl Bruch, Alexander Carius, Geoffrey D. Dabelko and Erika Weinthal. The research on which it is based was made possible by financial support from MINCIENCIAS and RCUK (grant CT 274-2018). We are grateful to the social organizations of indigenous and mestizo peasants from the Central Andes region of Colombia for their generosity in sharing their space, time, trust and ideas.

¹ Gobierno de la República de Colombia and FARC-EP, *Acuerdo final para la terminación del conflicto y la construcción de una paz estable y duradera* (Bogotá: Oficina del Alto Comisionado para La Paz, 2016).

² Serena Simoni, 'Queens of narco-trafficking: breaking gender hierarchy in Colombia', *International Affairs* 94: 6, Nov. 2018, pp. 1257–68.

³ The COCCAM is a social organization created in 2017 by mestizo peasant, indigenous and Afro-descendant coca-grower communities who saw in the peace agreement an opportunity to negotiate with the government a comprehensive solution to the problem of illicit crops in Colombia.

⁴ UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), *Informe no. 19: Programa Nacional Integral de Sustitución de Cultivos Ilícitos—PNIS* (Bogotá: UNODC, 2019), https://www.unodc.org/documents/colombia/2020/Febrero/INFORME_EJECUTIVO_PNIS_No._19.pdf. (Unless otherwise noted at point of citation, all URLs cited in this article were accessible on 6 Aug. 2020.)

From 2017, the government of Juan Manuel Santos fostered a newly designed National Programme for the Substitution of Illicit Crops (PNIS, the acronym in Spanish). At the end of that year, 130,000 families throughout Colombia had signed collective agreements, declaring their interest in voluntarily eradicating their coca plantations and replacing them with legal crops.⁵ The Santos government spent close to US\$250 million under the PNIS,⁶ and to date has achieved the voluntary eradication of 40,506 hectares of coca crops,⁷ with a replanting rate⁸ of 0.6 per cent.⁹ The programme, conceived as a cornerstone of the peace accord, created a unique opportunity to reorientate agrarian change in favour of the marginalized peasantry, mainly by recognizing their need for rural investment and technical assistance in agricultural development.

The municipality of Miranda, in the department of Cauca (in the Central Andes, southwestern Colombia), was chosen as the location for the development of one of several pilot schemes for the replacement of illicit crops. In 2017, over 1,300 peasant families agreed to participate in this programme. At the local level, the plan was perceived as the spearhead of the state machinery, which was making every attempt to reach territories historically affected by the war. However, nearly three years later, the PNIS in Miranda has incorporated only 500 families (38 per cent of the pre-registered number), who have received only transitional financial aid. They have not received support for productive projects as a solution to the illicit drug economy. In the context of creating solutions to drug trafficking, we question whether it is possible to move towards achieving political stability and contributing to environmental peacebuilding without reconstructing the land-ownership relations or the local agro-export production model,¹⁰ both of which have for decades reinforced highly regressive wealth distribution systems.

With this question at its core, the article contributes to this special issue by addressing environmental vulnerability, risks and ‘slow violence’¹¹ during the

⁵ Coca (*Erythroxylum coca*) for the production of cocaine is not the only product grown illicitly on a substantial scale in Colombia. The cultivation of poppies (*Papaver somniferum*) for the production of morphine and heroin was central to the national illicit economy during the 1980s and 1990s. Also, according to SIDCO [Sistema de Información de Drogas de Colombia] (2020), Colombia recorded 4,273, 715 and 462 hectares of marijuana (*Cannabis sativa*) in 2001, 2007, and 2016 respectively. It is worth knowing that since its inception in 2017, the PNIS has only included the substitution of coca crops, excluding other illicit drugs and economies (see Irene Vélez-Torres, Diana Hurtado and Bladimir Bueno, ‘Medicinal Marijuana Inc.: a critique on the market-led legalization of cannabis and the criminalization of rural livelihoods in Colombia’, *Critical Criminology*, forthcoming).

⁶ Presidencia de la República, *Informe de empalme de la función pública 2014–2018* (Bogotá, 2018).

⁷ UNODC, *Informe no. 19*.

⁸ The replanting rate refers to the proportion of coca that has been planted again.

⁹ Fundación Ideas para la Paz, ‘¿En qué va la sustitución de cultivos ilícitos? Desafíos, dilemas actuales y la urgencia de un consenso’ (Bogotá, 2019), http://ideaspaz.org/media/website/FIP_sustitucion_VOL06.pdf.

¹⁰ Jon Unruh and Rhodri Williams, ‘Land: a foundation for peacebuilding’, in Jon Unruh and Rhodri Williams, eds, *Land and post-conflict peacebuilding* (London: Earthscan, 2013).

¹¹ We refer to slow violence when mechanisms of everyday dispossession are used to generate a subtle and prolonged decomposition of biological and social life in a specific context. It includes socio-ecological damage resulting from toxic exposure and the progressive deterioration of living conditions resulting from interventions that systematically degrade the quality of the environment (water, soil and air). In this research, we employ the concept of slow violence to explain the socio-ecological effects that arise from contamination by forced eradication through aerial spraying with glyphosate and the erosion of soils that results from failed processes of substitution of illicit crops. See Thom Davies, ‘Toxic space and time: slow violence, necropolitics, and petrochemical pollution’, *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 108: 6, 2018, pp. 1537–53; Rob

post-agreement period in Colombia,¹² a country with a long history of conflict in which natural resources have been instrumental in fuelling war, and where egalitarian distribution continues to be vital to sustain the peace accord signed between FARC-EP and the Colombian government. It shows that the attempt to substitute legal crops for coca has done little to improve the livelihoods of remote and marginalized peasant communities; to date, it has generated false promises of transition, going hand in hand with neo-liberal agricultural projects benefiting corporations and political/economic elites. The analysis presented here is an important contribution to the body of work that addresses the challenges of peacemaking and peacekeeping,¹³ bringing an insightful, yet so far hardly considered, political ecology perspective to peacebuilding research in general and environmental peacebuilding in particular.

This article discusses, from an ethnographic stance, the experience of peasants who, three years after the beginning of the coca substitution programme, have not seen productive projects or technical assistance materialize; nor has the state undertaken new investment in rural infrastructure. Instead, they have been pushed to accept a plan of small-scale corporate agriculture that, in addition to being at odds with the autonomy and diversity of the peasant production model, has been poorly implemented. While peasants who replaced their coca crops are facing growing impoverishment, the perceived ecological impacts are equally negative: there is evidence of progressive erosion in areas where eradication of coca has been carried out and where there has been no replanting of new food crops; also, in some areas the PNIS overlooked the fact that coca farms were located on isolated and very steep hillsides with difficult access. Thus, we contend that poorly implemented substitution strategies have resulted in peasant families experiencing both slow violence and existential threats to their survival, while the so-called ‘territorial peace’ seems to be an increasingly unattainable goal.

Political ecology contributions to environmental peacebuilding

This article moves between the political ecology of state-sponsored corporate greening and the politics of space in post-agreement times. It analyses the direction of agrarian change in the context of peacebuilding in Colombia and questions whether state policies, particularly regarding the solution to drug trafficking, are designed to solve the problems of rural impoverishment or if, rather, they are detrimental to the livelihoods of indigenous and mestizo cocagrowers or ‘cocalers’. Furthermore, it examines the extent to which coca substitution, as part of a broader agrarian reform in the aftermath of the armed conflict, has generated the benefits

Nixon, ‘Neoliberalism, slow violence, and the environmental picaresque’, *Modern Fiction Studies* 55: 3, 2009, pp. 443–67; Martin Meszaros, “Defoliating the world”: ecocide, visual evidence and “earthly memory”, *Third Text* 32: 2–3, 2018, pp. 230–53.

¹² We have opted for the concept of ‘post-agreement’, rather than ‘post-conflict’, as we argue that the direction of change taken by implementation of the peace accord has not contributed to territorial peacebuilding and peacekeeping, but rather has promoted both old and new forms of local violence.

¹³ Jonathan Bright and John Gledhill, ‘A divided discipline? Mapping peace and conflict studies’, *International Studies Perspectives* 19: 2, 2018, pp. 128–47.

necessary to sustain a dignified and peaceful coexistence. Or has state-sponsored corporate agriculture, in the absence of a more inclusive and efficient land reform, merely promoted old and new forms of violence in the post-agreement phase?

From a political ecology perspective on environmental peacebuilding, this article seeks to contribute to the growing literature on the socio-political outcomes of environmental degradation, scarcity and stress in peacebuilding contexts.¹⁴ This approach is relevant to the current conditions in the world, not only in Colombia, since environmental change experienced after the conclusion of major peace processes can compound inequality and regressive effects on marginalized communities. Environmental change could result in new violent conflicts by increasing not only the economic pressure on the poor, but also the socio-ecological effects of new environmental governance arrangements on traditional systems.¹⁵ Accordingly, scholars are pressing for more emphasis on the power relations and exclusionary socio-economic structures underlying environmental problems, which are usually treated as pre-existing technical matters.¹⁶

The promotion of green enterprise, particularly 'environmentally sustainable' monocrops and large-scale conservation, has been part of the process of state formation, especially in contested peripheral locations.¹⁷ Since the economic and associated food crisis of 2008,¹⁸ the development industry and governments in the global South have shown renewed interest in agriculture, defining a set of neo-liberal policies and regulations to facilitate the development of corporate and biotechnology-based agribusiness.¹⁹ The influence of capitalism in the current phase of agrarian development is expressed through the inflation of land prices, the commoditization and transnationalization of agriculture chains, and the expansion of new agrarian frontiers.²⁰ Accordingly, the reconstruction of the state

¹⁴ Hans Günter Brauch, 'Security and environment linkages on the Mediterranean space: three phases of research on human and environmental security and peace', in Hans Günter Brauch, Peter H. Liotta, Antonio Marquina, Paul F. Rogers and Mohammad El-Sayed Selim, eds, *Security and Environment in the Mediterranean* (Berlin and Heidelberg: Springer, 2003), pp. 35–143.

¹⁵ Uche Okpara, Lindsay C. Stringer, Andrew J. Dougill and Mohammed D. Bila, 'Conflicts about water in Lake Chad: are environmental, vulnerability and security issues linked?', *Progress in Development Studies* 15: 4, 2015, pp. 308–25.

¹⁶ Tobias Ide, 'The dark side of environmental peacebuilding', *World Development*, vol. 127, March 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2019.104777>.

¹⁷ Nancy Peluso, 'Coercing conservation? The politics of state resource control', *Global Environmental Change* 3: 2, 1993, pp. 199–217; Nancy Lee Peluso and Peter Vandergeest, 'Territorialization and state power in Thailand', *Theory and Society* 24: 3, 1995, pp. 385–426; Daan Brockington, Jim Igoe and Katja Neves, 'A spectacular eco-tour around the historic bloc: theorizing the convergence of biodiversity conservation and capitalist expansion', *Antipode* 42: 3, 2010, pp. 486–512; Noel Castree, 'Neoliberal ecologies', in N. Heynen, S. Prudham, J. McCarthy and P. Robbins, eds, *Neoliberal environments: false promises and unnatural consequences* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 281–6; Noel Castree, 'Neoliberalizing nature: "the logics of deregulation and reregulation"', *Environment and Planning A* 40: 1, 2008, pp. 131–52; Noel Castree, 'Neoliberalizing nature: processes, effects, and evaluations', *Environment and Planning A* 40: 1, 2008, pp. 153–73; Daan Brockington, Rosaleen Duffy and Jim Igoe, *Nature unbound: conservation, capitalism and the future of protected areas* (London: Earthscan, 2008).

¹⁸ Philip McMichael, 'The land grab and corporate food regime restructuring', *Journal of Peasant Studies* 39: 3–4, 2012, pp. 681–701.

¹⁹ Gerardo Otero, 'The neoliberal food regime in Latin America: state, agribusiness transnational corporations and biotechnology', *Canadian Journal of Development Studies* 33: 3, 2012, pp. 282–94.

²⁰ By new agrarian frontiers, we mean not only the extension of agriculture and animal production to new, previously uncultivated areas, e.g. wilderness land and rainforest, but also to regions that have experienced either strong land use and land cover (LULC) changes or the presence of new actors and mechanisms of control in the agricultural means of production. See Nancy Lee Peluso and Christian Lund, 'New frontiers

that originates in peacebuilding must incorporate renewed debate about sustainable preservation.

The politics of agrarian change in the Maya Forest and the Peten Lowlands in Guatemala,²¹ in Urabá and the High Plains in Colombia,²² and in the Ica region around its ground or aquifer water in Peru,²³ as well as the Burmese experience around the concession of thousands of hectares to trans-Asian conglomerates to boost postwar economic development,²⁴ are all examples of the trajectory of change towards corporate peace greening. In this national rush for economic and military control, productive reorientation can incline towards the instalment of 'flex crops' (crops that have flexible uses in the three-in-one complex of food, feed and fuel), small-scale monocrops, industrial tree plantations and large-scale conservation projects.²⁵

A variety of states in different geographical regions and circumstances have conceded exploitation rights in land and resources to companies, NGOs and foreign states seeking to expand into new economic sectors such as small-scale monocrops, ecotourism, forestry and biofuel production.²⁶ This insertion of external actors not only enables the generation of wealth in excluded and marginalized frontiers (by attacking economic poverty, one of the most frequently cited causes of the armed conflict in Colombia, state and private institutions alike offer fertile ground for the establishment of corporate greening platforms), but also supports discourses of eco-friendly development, carbon neutrality and the avoidance of dependence on fossil fuels. However, the uneven consequences of such interventions include the exacerbation of conflicts over the use and ownership of

of land control: introduction', *Journal of Peasant Studies* 38: 4, 2011, pp. 667–81.

²¹ Megan Ybarra, 'You cannot measure a Tzuultaq'a: cultural politics at the limits of liberal legibility', *Antipode* 45: 3, 2013, pp. 584–601; Comisión Internacional Contra la Impunidad en Guatemala, *Caso génesis: impunidad y despojo en Petén* (Guatemala City, 2016), <https://www.cicig.org/casos/caso-Genesis-impunidad-y-despojo-en-peten/>; Lizza Grandia, 'Road mapping: megaprojects and land grabs in the northern Guatemalan lowlands', *Development and Change* 44: 2, 2013, pp. 233–59.

²² Oxfam, *Divide y comprarás: Una nueva forma de concentrar tierras baldías en Colombia* (Oxford, 2013), https://www-cdn.oxfam.org/s3fs-public/file_attachments/rr-divide-and-purchase-land-concentration-colombia-270913-es_o.pdf; Jacobo Grajales, 'State involvement, land grabbing, and counter-insurgency in Colombia', *Development and Change*, special issue on 'Governing the global land grab: the role of the state in the rush for land', 44: 2, 2013, pp. 211–32; Jacobo Grajales, 'The rifle and the title: paramilitary violence, land grab and land control in Colombia', *Journal of Peasant Studies* 38: 4, 2011, pp. 771–91; Diego Lugo, 'Differentiated impacts of environmental policies in the Colombian frontier: coercive conservation and containment of illicit activities in the Pacific and the Ariari region', *Journal of Land Use Science* 15: 2–3, 2020, pp. 343–67, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1747423X.2019.1699612>; Diego Lugo, 'Conquering the last agricultural frontier in Colombia? Post-agreement economies and uneven titling of public (vacant?) lands in the Middle Vichada', in Ginneth Narváz and Camilo Castiblanco, eds, *Balance Territorial Pos-acuerdo final—Contribuciones a la sociología de la paz en Colombia* (Bogotá: Universidad Santo Tomás, 2020), pp. 55–104.

²³ Gerardo Damonte, 'Redefiniendo territorios hidrosociales: control hídrico en el valle de Ica, Perú (1993–2013)', *Cuadernos de Desarrollo Rural* 12: 76, 2015, pp. 109–33.

²⁴ Tom Kramer and Kevin Woods, *Financing dispossession: China's opium substitution program in northern Burma* (Amsterdam: Transnational Institute, 2012); Tom Kramer, *Neither war nor peace: the future of the cease-fire agreements in Burma* (Amsterdam: Transnational Institute, 2009); Tom Kramer, *Burma's cease-fires at risk: consequences of the Kokang crisis for peace and democracy* (Amsterdam: Transnational Institute, 2009).

²⁵ Wendy Wolford, Saturnino Borrás, Ruth Hall, Ian Scoones and Ben White, 'Governing global land deals: the role of the state in the rush for land', *Development and Change*, special issue on 'Governing the global land grab: the role of the state in the rush for land', 44: 2, 2013, pp. 189–210.

²⁶ Kramer and Woods, *Financing dispossession*; Kevin Woods, 'Ceasefire capitalism: military–private partnerships, resource concessions and military–state building in the Burma–China borderlands', *Journal of Peasant Studies* 38: 4, 2011, pp. 747–70; Ybarra, 'You cannot measure a Tzuultaq'a'.

land, and indeed over the very power to define the direction of change in rural settings.

Around the world, countries in which agreements to end longstanding armed conflicts have been implemented have reproduced different forms of corporate peace greening; in many instances, they have been carried out violently. Scholars converging in the environmental peacebuilding field have drawn attention to the importance of analysing the politics of space and agrarian change, particularly regarding land ownership and rights, as well as the changes in rural livelihoods.²⁷ They have shown that failure to address tensions over land access and property rights can create or perpetuate destabilization, whereas successful approaches to land issues could support sustainable peacebuilding.²⁸ In El Salvador, systematic governmental unwillingness and inability to address widespread rural poverty and rural landlessness in the period after the accord of 1992 have perpetuated violence.²⁹ While not all land disputes threaten peacebuilding, they could pose a risk, especially if access to and/or control over land and land-based resources have been drivers of the armed conflict.³⁰

In Colombia, marginalization, poverty and highly unequal access to land have been identified as structural causes of both the internal armed conflict and the cultivation of illicit crops.³¹ It therefore seems of crucial importance to analyse the nature and direction of current rural change, for a number of reasons. First, it can help us to understand the differences between rural settings that, at first glance, look similar but might in fact differ significantly in respect of who accumulates economic surpluses and under what conditions.³² Second, the analysis of different trajectories can help identify divergences from the corporate and agribusiness farming model towards more customary systems of production.³³ And third, it can help assess progress in implementation of peace agreements while informing decision-makers about the role played by natural resources and environmental vulnerability in either overcoming or exacerbating armed conflict.³⁴

²⁷ Cedric de Coning, 'Adaptive peacebuilding', *International Affairs* 94: 2, March 2018, pp. 301–18; Finn Stepputat, 'Pragmatic peace in emerging landscapes', *International Affairs* 94: 2, March 2018, pp. 399–416.

²⁸ Unruh and Williams, 'Land: a foundation for peacebuilding'.

²⁹ Alexandre Corriveau-Bourque, 'Beyond land redistribution: lessons learned from El Salvador's unfulfilled agrarian revolution', in Unruh and Williams, eds, *Land and post-conflict peacebuilding*, pp. 321–343.

³⁰ Peter Van der Auweraert, 'Institutional aspects of resolving land disputes in post-conflict societies', in Unruh and Williams, eds, *Land and post-conflict peacebuilding*, pp. 115–137; Liz Alden Wily, 'Resolving natural resource conflicts to help prevent war: a case from Afghanistan', in Helen Young and Lisa Goldman, eds, *Livelihoods, natural resources, and post-conflict peacebuilding* (London: Earthscan, 2015), pp. 345–62.

³¹ David Goyes, 'Land uses and conflict in Colombia', in Avi Brisman, Nigel South and Rob White, eds, *Environmental crime and social conflict: contemporary and emerging issues* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), pp. 75–94; Marcela Ibáñez, *Who crops coca and why? The case of Colombian farmers*, discussion paper no. 40 (Göttingen: Courant Research Centre on Poverty, Equity and Growth, 2010).

³² Irene Vélez-Torres, Daniel Varela, Víctor Cobo and Diana Hurtado, 'Beyond property: rural politics and land-use change in the Colombian sugarcane landscape', *Journal of Agrarian Change* 19: 4, 2019, pp. 690–710.

³³ Saturnino M. Borrás, Jr, and Jennifer C. Franco, 'Global land grabbing and trajectories of agrarian change: a preliminary analysis', *Journal of Agrarian Change* 12: 1, 2012, pp. 34–59.

³⁴ Florian Krampe and Suzanne Gignoux, 'Water service provision and peacebuilding in East Timor: exploring the socioecological determinants for sustaining peace', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 12: 2, 2018, pp. 185–207, doi: 10.1080/17502977.2018.1466945; Jon Barnett, 'Environmental security and peace', *Journal of Human Security* 3: 1, 2007, pp. 4–16.

In the Colombian context, the corporate green peace of the state differs from the peace for which communities have yearned, being based on a fundamentally different vision of modernity and (post-)development.³⁵ State agendas can clash radically with the visions, emotions and projects of rural groups that, even when cultivating coca, have founded their socio-cultural and biological reproduction on concepts such as small-scale productive diversity.³⁶ If, in the process of voluntarily substituting alternatives for illicit crops, indigenous, African-descended and mestizo peasants find themselves excluded from productive autonomy and diversification, corporate agriculture could force them into even greater dependence on highly precarious wage labour off the farm, as well as on the import of capital-intensive supplies.³⁷

Cárdenas notes, in the context of the small- and medium-scale cultivation of palm in Nariño (southern Colombia), that the articulation of neo-liberal environmental policies with agendas of political and military stabilization, especially in ethnic territories, presents serious paradoxes.³⁸ First, the dependence of peasant subsistence on monocrop cultivation has grown stronger over time. When the latter fails, it drags down the former, eventually destroying it. Second, given the economic orientation of the Colombian state and the rural private sector, the 'recovery' of formerly violent territories through programmes of eradication and voluntary substitution is pursued exclusively in accordance with neo-classical concepts of progress and development.³⁹ Thus the state invests its resources and deploys its regulatory and bureaucratic capacity in the same way as it has done before, reproducing many of the power relations and much of the structural violence that sustained the internal armed conflict in the past.

A systematic rejection of peasant livelihoods that fall outside neo-liberal trajectories ends up reinforcing widespread forms of dispossession, gender violence, abandonment at all levels, and exclusionary and discriminatory treatment of groups with alternative visions of development; it also inflicts slow violence, which scholars in other contexts have characterized as the subtle decomposition of biological and social life that results from exposure to toxic effects.⁴⁰ Soil degradation, and the consequent inability to produce food and sustain one's family, may be an expression of a form of indirect, subtle and prolonged environmental violence.⁴¹ While solutions to the problems of land access and formal registration of land ownership are absent from the state's agenda, and the most urgent technical and financial assistance is delayed, the soil is further eroded, and consequently the

³⁵ Arturo Escobar, 'Latin America at a crossroads: alternative modernizations, post-liberalism, or post-development?', *Cultural Studies* 24: 1, 2010, pp. 1–65.

³⁶ Angela Hilmi and Sara Burbi, 'Peasant farming: a buffer for human societies', *Development* 58: 2–3, 2015, pp. 346–53.

³⁷ Otero, 'The neoliberal food regime'.

³⁸ Rosbelinda Cárdenas, 'Green multiculturalism: articulations of ethnic and environmental politics in a Colombian "black community"', *Journal of Peasant Studies* 39: 2, 2012, pp. 309–333.

³⁹ Juan García, 'Mas allá del exterminio', in Alejandro Castillejo, ed., *La ilusión de la justicia transicional: perspectivas críticas desde el Sur Global* (Bogotá: Ediciones Uniandes, 2017).

⁴⁰ Nixon, 'Neoliberalism, slow violence'; Rachel Carson, *Silent spring* (New York: Mariner, 2002; first publ. 1962); Davies, 'Toxic space and time'.

⁴¹ Nixon, 'Neoliberalism, slow violence'; Davies, 'Toxic space and time'.

biological and social conditions for positive change are degraded. To the extent that the state's peacebuilding rationale and actions deviate from positive peace, (new) slow violence emerges and damages socio-ecological relations in territories where state-sponsored coca substitution interventions have failed, also pushing remote rural communities back into illegality and direct violence.

Furthermore, corporate peace greening may fuel new conflicts in a more structural way. As has been observed in the cases of Myanmar, Laos, Peru and Colombia (countries in the most significant zones of heroin and cocaine production in south-east Asia and South America),⁴² circumstances on the ground in the aftermath of peace agreements have meant the renewal of state efforts to control contested frontiers, with a paradoxical outcome of exacerbating illicit and criminal economies. Whether in Myanmar and Laos,⁴³ through the concession of thousands of hectares to trans-Asian conglomerates, or in Colombia and Peru, through the granting of vacant public lands to trans-Latina companies,⁴⁴ state-sponsored environmental peacebuilding has meant an aggravation of land and resource grabbing. In their efforts to accelerate the transition from war-torn landscapes and illicit activities to 'peaceful and legalized' territories, states have prioritized continental capital instead of access to land for minorities. On this cleansing path, criminal economies have moved beyond the state's radar, reaching historical peaks and new frontiers in supposedly peaceful times.⁴⁵ Currently, all the countries mentioned above have reached their highest levels ever of cultivation of coca and opium, respectively, even beyond the levels reported during the most intense stages of their armed conflicts.⁴⁶

Thus the signing of peace accords has led to the rapid expansion of both legal land grabbing and illicit economies. In Colombia, peasant, indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities are under more pressure than ever from these forces, experiencing new conflicts for land and reinvigorated criminal economies. Deforestation, soil degradation and erosion, and questionable practices by transregional corporations and illegal actors alike are some of the dark sides of this state-sponsored corporate environmental peacebuilding. These processes could potentially lead to worse armed and environmental violence, as well as many forms of ecological stress.

⁴² 'Asia's meth trade is worth an estimated \$61B as region becomes "playground" for drug gangs', CNN, 18 July 2019, <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/07/18/asia/asia-methamphetamine-intl-hnk/index.html>; Miles Kenney-Lazar, 'Relations of sovereignty: the uneven production of transnational plantation territories in Laos', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 45: 2, 2020, pp. 331–44; Miles Kenney-Lazar, 'Governing dispossession: relational land grabbing in Laos', *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 108: 3, 2018, pp. 679–94; Damonte, 'Redefiniendo territorios hidrosociales'; Oxfam, *Divide y compradas*.

⁴³ Miles Kenney-Lazar and Noboru Ishikawa, 'Mega-plantations in southeast Asia: landscapes of displacement', *Environment and Society* 10: 1, 2019, pp. 63–82.

⁴⁴ A trans-Latina company is a firm based on Latin America in which there are shared capitals and directorates that come from two or more Latin American countries. See Lugo, 'Conquering the last agricultural frontier in Colombia?.'

⁴⁵ Tom Kramer, Ernestien Jensema, Martin Jelsma and Tom Blickman, *Bouncing back: relapse in the Golden Triangle* (Amsterdam, Transnational Institute, Drugs and Democracy Programme, 2014); Tom Kramer, 'The current state of counternarcotics policy and drug reform debates in Myanmar', *Journal of Drug Policy Analysis* 10: 1, 2015, pp. 1–14.

⁴⁶ 'Asia's meth trade', CNN.

As Castillejo reminds us, ‘in such a context there is neither a radical fracture with the violent past nor the prospect of a new society’.⁴⁷ That is why the implementation of transitional agendas is so controversial, because it entails the persistence of the same political and economic hegemonies that were part of the armed conflict—only now through renewed conflictual systems of production and agro-ecology.

The war on drugs in Colombia

Colombia invests about 1.2 per cent of its annual GDP in the battle against drug trafficking.⁴⁸ Since 2000, this war on drugs has been defined by a criminalizing approach to coca cultivators, prioritizing militarism and control over the supply of cocaine, rather than fighting the demand for the drug. As a result, 74 per cent of the resources from Plan Colombia—a major strategy designed and financed by the United States to diminish armed confrontation and control drug trafficking in Colombia⁴⁹—has been invested in strengthening military capability through the acquisition of weapons, equipment and military technical assistance.⁵⁰

In Colombia, aerial fumigations to fight illegal crops have used Roundup glyphosate with a concentration of 158 grams per litre, a figure that corresponds to almost 500 times the dose recommended by the manufacturer.⁵¹ With an annual average area sprayed of 128,000 hectares since the beginning of Plan Colombia in 2000,⁵² this anti-narcotics strategy has been intensive in its use of agrochemicals, as well as extensive in terms of the territories fumigated. The use of glyphosate aerial spray has been denounced as a crime committed by states against those on the lowest rungs of the drug-trafficking ladder;⁵³ some studies even suggest that glyphosate is ‘probably carcinogenic to humans’.⁵⁴ Other studies frame aerial fumigation as a policy of ‘peace through poison’; while it has been justified as a necessary condition for achieving peace, the result is a repeated poisoning of lands, crops and people.⁵⁵ On the same lines, Meszaros characterizes the use of glyphosate as ecocide, as it constitutes a lethal force capable of affecting the web of human and non-human life.⁵⁶

⁴⁷ Alejandro Castillejo, *La imaginación social del porvenir: reflexiones sobre Colombia y el prospecto de una Comisión de la Verdad* (Buenos Aires: Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales (CLACSO), 2015), author’s translation.

⁴⁸ Ibáñez, *Who crops coca and why?*

⁴⁹ Philip Chrimes, review of Winifred Tate, *Drugs, thugs, and diplomats: US policy-making in Colombia*, *International Affairs* 92: 4, July 2016, pp. 1036–8.

⁵⁰ Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (CNMH), *El placer: mujeres, coca y guerra en el bajo Putumayo* (Bogotá: Taurus, 2012), p. 376.

⁵¹ Ricardo Vargas, ‘Fumigaciones y política de drogas en Colombia: ¿fin del círculo vicioso o un fracaso estratégico?’, in *Guerra, sociedad y medio ambiente* (Bogotá: Foro Nacional Ambiental, 2004), pp. 353–95.

⁵² Alejandra Arias, Adriana Camacho, Ana Ibáñez, Daniel Mejía and Catherine Rodríguez, compilers, *Costos económicos y sociales del conflicto en Colombia: ¿Cómo construir un posconflicto sostenible?* (Bogotá: UniAndes, 2014), p. 270.

⁵³ Daniel Patten, ‘The mass incarceration of nations and the global war on drugs: comparing the United States’ domestic and foreign drug policies’, *Social Justice* 43: 1, 2016, pp. 85–105.

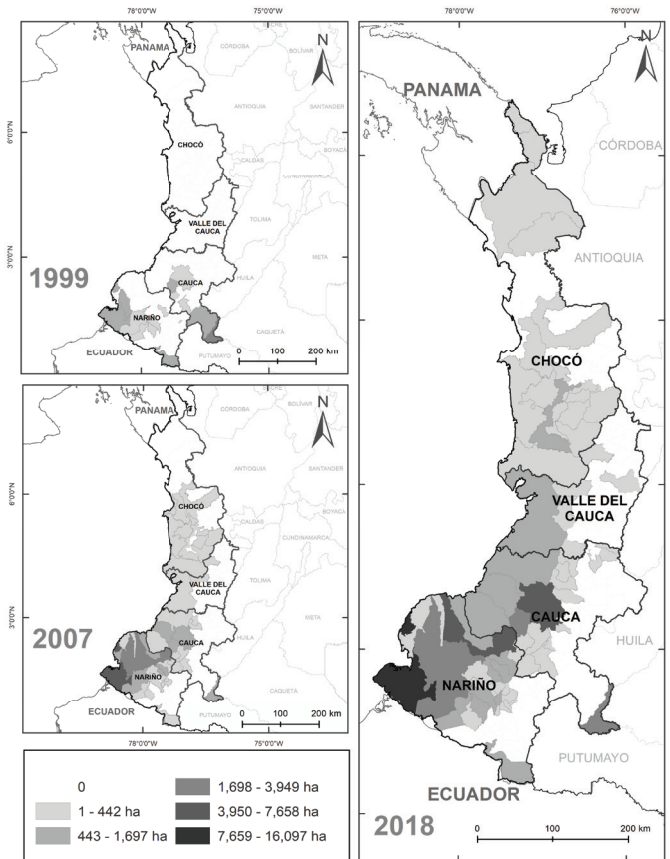
⁵⁴ International Agency for Research on Cancer, *Evaluation of five organophosphate insecticides and herbicides*, IARC Monographs on the evaluation of carcinogenic risks to humans, no. 112 (Geneva: WHO, 2017).

⁵⁵ Kristina Lyons, ‘Decomposition as life politics: soils, selva, and small farmers under the gun of the US–Colombian war on drugs’, *Cultural Anthropology* 31: 1, 2016, pp. 56–81.

⁵⁶ Meszaros, “‘Defoliating the world’”.

Paradoxically, considering the scale and intensity of fumigations, the cultivation of coca has not significantly decreased; indeed in some areas it has substantially increased (see figure 1). Numerous scholars have shown how coca crops have often been relocated as a result of shifting government policies and market pressures that have determined the areas targeted by the fumigations.⁵⁷

Figure 1: Extent and distribution of coca cultivation in the Southwestern-Pacific region of Colombia, 1999–2018



Source: Based on UN Office on Drugs and Crime and Sistema Integrado de Monitoreo de Cultivos Ilícitos (SIMCI), *Monitoreo de territorios afectados por cultivos ilícitos 2018* (Bogotá: UNODC-SIMCI, 2019).

⁵⁷ Alexander Rincón-Ruiz, Hyarold Correa, Daniel Leon and Stewart Williams, 'Coca cultivation and crop eradication in Colombia: the challenges of integrating rural reality into effective anti-drug policy', *International Journal of Drug Policy* 33, 2016, pp. 56–65; Michael Kennedy, Peter Reuter and Jack Riley, *A simple economic model of cocaine production* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1994); Carlos Ortiz, 'Luchando infructuosamente contra la hidra: un modelo sencillo del narcotráfico', *Documento de Trabajo del CIDSE* 54, 2000, pp. 2–22; Carlos Ortiz, 'La guerra contra las drogas es contraproducente: un análisis económico de equilibrio general', *Lecturas de Economía* 58, 2000, pp. 47–68; Rocio Moreno-Sanchez, David Kraybill and Stanley Thompson, 'An econometric analysis of coca eradication policy in Colombia', *World Development* 31: 2, 2003, pp. 375–583; Diego Lugo, "Prosperity for everyone" in the post-conflict? How does environmentally and militarily oriented state (re)control in the Ariari region propel productive segmentation and social fracturing?, *Revista de Estudios Colombianos* 53, 2019, pp. 103–20.

It was in this context of shifting patterns of cultivation and failed solutions to the production of illegal drugs that chapter 4 of the peace accord introduced an alternative and progressive vision of containment, based on voluntary substitution. This represented a new orientation in the approach of the war on drugs in Colombia: on the one hand, it recognized the structural needs of cocacero peasants in relation to rural infrastructure and technical assistance; on the other, it opened up an opportunity to balance power relationships by allowing the cocaleros to participate in territorial planning for peacebuilding. However, the implementation of chapter 4 turned out to be more difficult than expected, particularly after mid-2018 when the government of President Iván Duque, which took office in August that year, demonstrated a limited willingness to support the programmes established under the peace agreement.

Methodology⁵⁸

At the end of 2016, we arrived at FARC-EP's Sixth Front camp and began an ethnographic research project on the social, spatial and political transitions entailed in the implementation of the peace agreement in northern Cauca. This enabled us to gain a deep understanding, on the basis of daily experience on the ground, of the outcomes of peacebuilding in a socially and politically sensitive setting.

Once the guerrillas had laid down their weapons in mid-2017, we were able to stay near the camp, alongside indigenous and mestizo peasant communities who allowed us—first with some caution, and then with more confidence—to learn about their experiences. Through participant observation and informal dialogues with coca and marijuana growers, we achieved an understanding of the agrarian changes and the slow violence produced by a failed substitution and a postponed agrarian reform.

We made more than 30 visits to these communities in three years, an approach that enabled us to build bonds of trust with the community and gain access to a range of informants. We engaged in difficult conversations with impoverished peasants about their expectations and frustrations, about how they coped with hunger, lack of opportunity and economic difficulties in supporting their families, and about the incomprehensible lack of support from the state to overcome these difficulties.

Apart from two exceptional young and enthusiastic officials who considered a couple of meetings too crucial to miss, state officials rarely went up into the mountains. The usual pattern was a procession of officials between local administrative buildings, delivering a monologue of resolutions, decrees and laws filled with technical and legal concepts far distant from the realities and needs of local populations. It was the indigenous and mestizo peasants who, dressed in their best suits, descended from their mountain villages by motorbike and, as if attending a Sunday service, sat in the always crowded and badly ventilated rooms, trying

⁵⁸ The methodological design has been reviewed and endorsed by the Human Ethics Committee of the Universidad del Valle (Approval Act No. 022-017 of 2019).

their best to understand the opportunities that were supposed to come to them as a result of the peace agreement.

For us, 2018 was spent in meetings at state offices and visits to peasant families. Although their lives remained precarious, families celebrated the end of the confrontation, even though sporadic skirmishes between residual criminal factions and state forces persisted. Informal conversations, interviews and time shared with the community were all key to reconstructing subaltern narratives about the implementation of the peace agreement, highlighting the experiences and imaginaries of those who were 'subjects' of this institutional in(ter)vention.⁵⁹ Through witnessing the negotiations and disputes between government officials and peasant representatives, we acquired a better understanding of the needs and desires of peasant families, and their decision (reached with many reservations) to commit themselves to coca substitution efforts.

We remained in the territory until late 2019, when the situation worsened. During our last visit in January 2020, we saw aerial attacks by the Colombian air force against illegal armed groups. From that moment, we understood that the conflictual daily routine had returned. In the face of the evident threat of new and more intense violence, we could not return to Central Andes.

Peasant dependence on illicit crops in the department of Cauca

Over the past decade, Cauca became a hotspot for drug trafficking, with the fourth largest number of hectares of coca among the departments in Colombia, and the fourth highest annual growth among the departments in the country (see figure 2). Although a national stabilization in the cultivation of coca was officially reported between 2017 and 2018 (with an average decrease of 1.2 per cent), the department of Cauca showed an opposite trend, with an increase of 7 per cent in the number of coca hectares (see figure 3).⁶⁰

Several scholars have analysed coca cultivation in relation to marginality, inequality and rural poverty.⁶¹ In this context, illicit crops have emerged as an economic option for hundreds of peasant families, especially in underdeveloped and remote regions where legal agriculture is precarious.⁶² Furthermore, the expansion of coca has been studied from a political perspective, as disproportionately prevalent in dysfunctional democracies and highly exclusionary and ineffective states.⁶³

Comprehensive observation of the implementation of the peace accord leads us to recognize that the armed conflict in Colombia is connected not only to the illicit economy but to poverty. To the extent that illicit crops have become a

⁵⁹ See Kiran Asher, 'Fieldwork', in Antipode Editorial Collective, *Keywords in radical geography: Antipode at 50* (Oxford: Antipode, 2019), pp. 123–7.

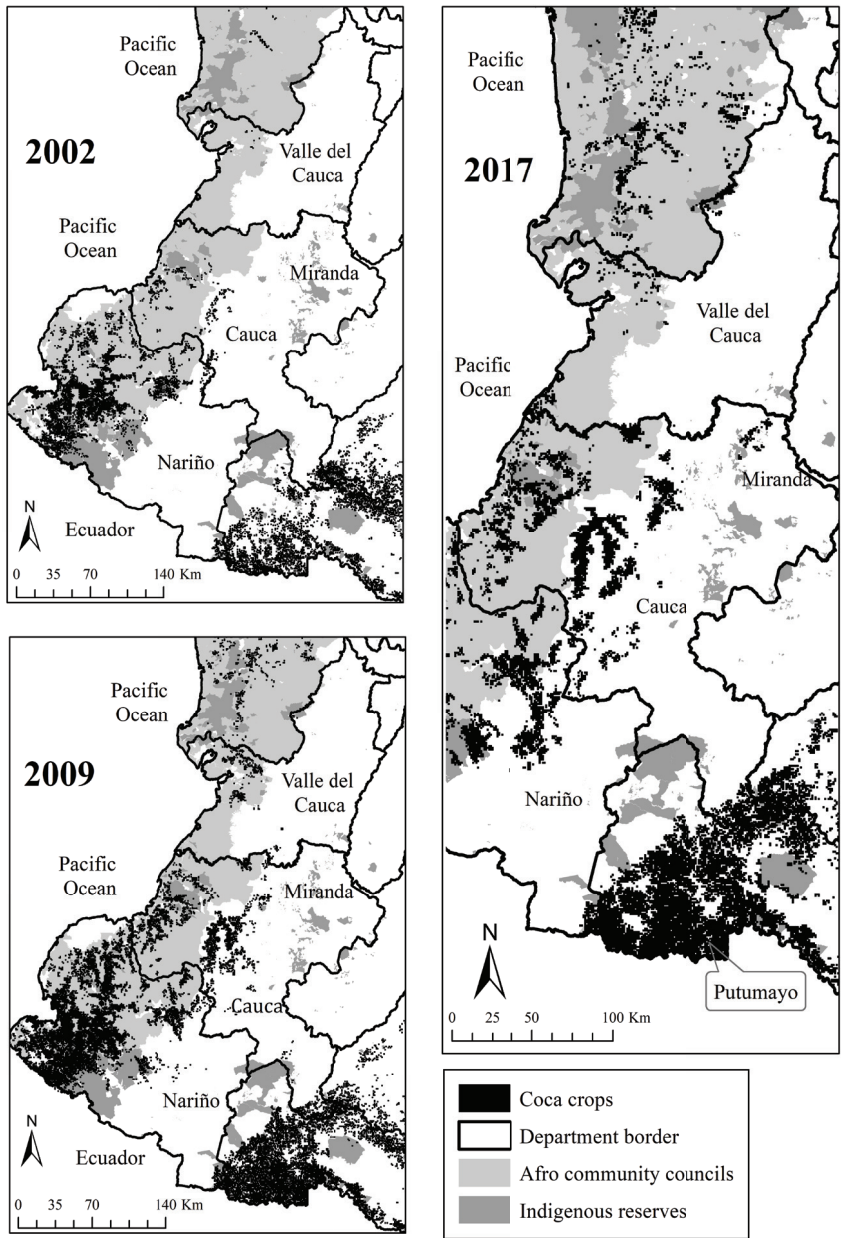
⁶⁰ UN Office on Drugs and Crime and Sistema Integrado de Monitoreo de Cultivos Ilícitos (SIMCI), *Monitoreo de territorios afectados por cultivos ilícitos 2018*, https://www.unodc.org/documents/colombia/2019/Agosto/Informe_de_Monitoreo_de_Territorios_Afectados_por_Cultivos_Illicitos_en_Colombia_2018_.pdf.

⁶¹ Ibáñez, *Who crops coca and why?*

⁶² Michelle Dion and Catherine Russler, 'Eradication efforts, the state, displacement and poverty: explaining coca cultivation in Colombia during Plan Colombia', *Journal of Latin American Studies* 40: 3, 2008, pp. 399–421.

⁶³ James A. Robinson, 'The misery in Colombia', *Desarrollo y Sociedad* 76, 2016, pp. 9–88.

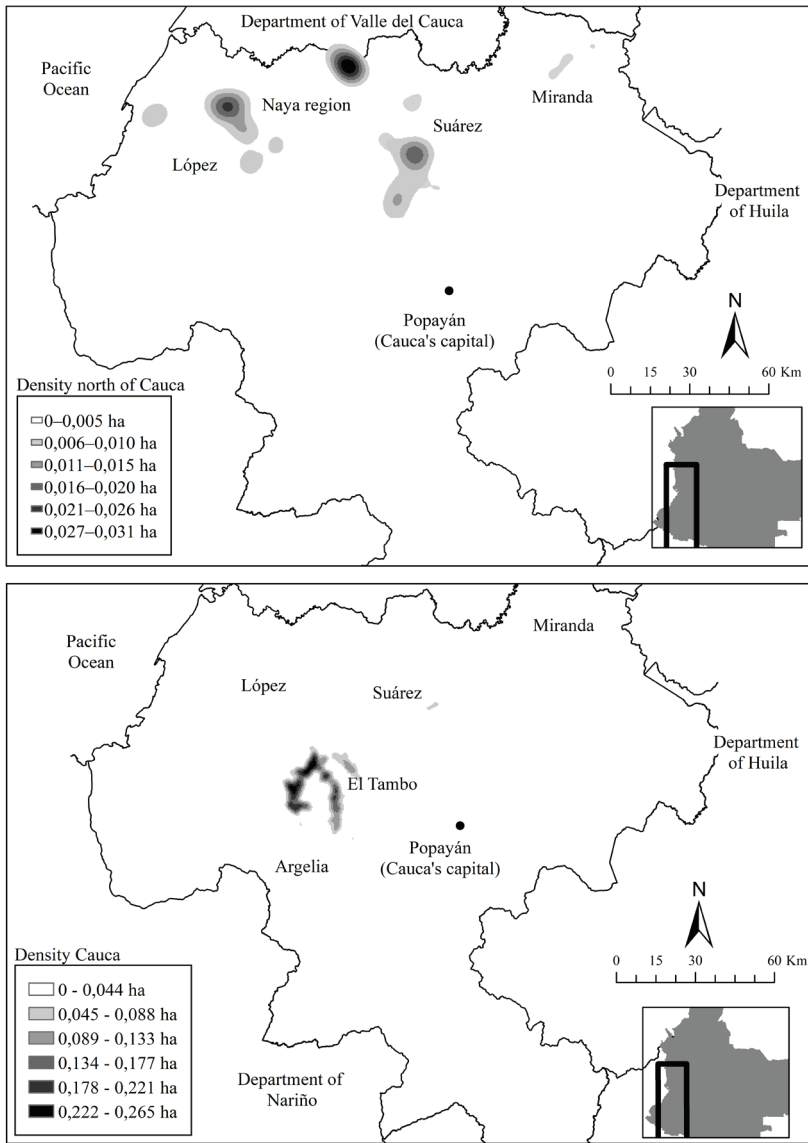
Figure 2: Distribution of coca crops in Cauca and the Colombian South-west, 2002–2017



Source: Based on UN Office on Drugs and Crime and Sistema Integrado de Monitoreo de Cultivos Ilícitos (SIMCI), *Monitoreo de territorios afectados por cultivos ilícitos 2018* (Bogotá: UNODC-SIMCI, 2019).

Note: Although the department of Cauca has seen a steep increase in coca crops since 2005, as shown in figure 2, academic research has focused on the south (municipalities of Argelia and El Tambo) and the Pacific. During the past decade, more than 66% of the coca crops traced in the department have been reported in the abovementioned regions. However, that does not mean the north of Cauca is free of illicit crops. On the contrary, when controlling for extreme cases such as El Tambo and Argelia, regional analysis shows several active centres in the north, including the municipalities of López, Suárez, Morales and Miranda.

Figure 3: Areas of coca crops in the department of Cauca by density, 2017



Source: Based on UN Office on Drugs and Crime and Sistema Integrado de Monitoreo de Cultivos Ilícitos (SIMCI), *Monitoreo de territorios afectados por cultivos ilícitos 2018* (Bogotá: UNODC-SIMCI, 2019).

Note: In figure 3, we add two types of controls to convey the intensity of the level of coca cultivation in Cauca. Figure 2 only describes their spatial location regardless of their intensity per hectare; many of the grids in figure 2 count for less than 0.1 hectares of coca that are in fact remnants of previous years. In figure 3, we not only create surfaces of active-high cultivation through a function of probability density (first control) but also determine two scenarios (second control): a departmental one (map at the bottom), in which the classical hotspots for coca cultivation, El Tambo and Argelia, outshine the rest of the department, and the second one (map at the top), in which the north of Cauca is analysed as an independent unit. This regional estimate shows that there are several areas in the north of Cauca with differentiated nuclei of high concentration of coca crops across the municipalities of López, Suárez, Miranda and the Naya region. Miranda, as we argue in this article, has become increasingly relevant in a discussion of the expansion of illicit crops, even if it does not register the levels of cultivation reported for other areas in Colombia.

means of survival for indigenous and mestizo groups settled in remote areas of the Colombian Andes, a comprehensive solution to coca cultivation has become an overwhelming need. Thus, in Miranda, coca has been a source to finance a diversified production model:

I have never liked coca or marijuana. I never liked that! But I am not going to tell you that we have not cultivated them ... What you see there, all those pigs that you see [four adult pigs], were bought with the money we've made with the coca crops. Or rather, if it weren't for the coca we have planted, we would not have anything. (Carlos Muñoz, February 2019)⁶⁴

Carlos Muñoz's testimony shows that, in the absence of financial support from public and private entities, farmers have embraced illicit crops not only to make a living but to finance a sort of diversification of production that includes legal activities. At a national scale, such productive diversification is a central component of income generation for the families that have signed up to the PNIS.⁶⁵ On average, one family that belongs to the PNIS earns its income from the following legal sources that come next to coca cultivation: livestock (16 per cent), waged work (14 per cent), plantain (11 per cent), cacao (6 per cent), cassava (5 per cent) and coffee (4 per cent). Legal diversification depends on surpluses accruing to the cocalers.

Also, the productive landscape in Cauca has been heavily influenced by the corporate appropriation and use of land in the inter-Andean valleys, which have been monopolized by the sugar cane industry. This pattern of land use has resulted in increased exclusion of minorities and fewer legal and productive opportunities for them in the more inaccessible and steeper areas of the Central Andes.

What we have proposed to the government is that we do not want to continue going up the paramo [Alpine intertropical ecosystem located 3,100 metres above sea level], we do not want to continue deforesting. What we want is some form of access to the valley, because that zone is overpacked with sugar cane and might be accessible to us. (Ramón Suarez, social leader of a peasant organization, September 2018)

Gradually, poverty has provided fertile ground for the generation of illicit income. Although coca growers understand the negative impacts of both the expansion of the agrarian frontier and the adoption of illegal activities, the occupation of the fertile and highly productive valleys by sugar cane and biofuel conglomerates has left no space for the development of the legal peasant economy.

Over half—57 per cent—of the families that embraced the PNIS are in conditions of monetary poverty, which contrasts with a national average of 26.9 per cent and a rural national average of 36 per cent.⁶⁶ Nearly all—97.5 per cent—of those families work in the informal sector, which means they are highly dependent

⁶⁴ He is a mestizo-peasant coca grower who lives in Corinto and was part of the initial group that agreed to substitute coca voluntarily. When the national government decided that Corinto was not going to be included in the PNIS, he continued cultivating coca alternated with coffee, and pigs' keeping.

⁶⁵ UNODC, ¿Quiénes son las familias que viven en las zonas con cultivos de coca? (Bogotá, 2018), https://www.unodc.org/documents/colombia/2018/Agosto/Quienes_son_las_familias_que_viven_en_las_zonas_con_cultivos_de_coca_N.1.pdf.

⁶⁶ UNODC, ¿Quiénes son las familias, p. 11.

on subsistence agriculture and small-scale livestock husbandry. In this context of impoverishment, families have found that coca is one of the best options for their survival. A cocalero peasant who has worked for over 30 years in the cultivation of coca explained the position:

It is no secret that illicit crops are all over these territories. [They have been] wrongly called ‘of illegal use’ by the government. For us these crops are not illegal: they are the only way of subsisting and surviving ... Due to state abandonment and lack of investment, along with lack of ownership over land, [mestizo] peasant and indigenous people have been forced to cultivate coca. Because everything that we legitimately cultivate, such as bananas, plantain, oranges, coffee ... They practically pay us whatever they please! Additionally, the roads are in poor condition. Instead, the [coca] harvest is bought right in front of one’s house. (Edgar Marín, March 2018)⁶⁷

About two-thirds—65 per cent—of the families within the PNIS have on average 0.5 hectares of usable land, which places them not only in the category of microfundia,⁶⁸ but also well below the national average of 0.96 hectares.⁶⁹ Furthermore, 87 per cent of the PNIS families claim that they have not had opportunities to obtain legal ownership over land or to register formal property rights to their lands.⁷⁰

Restricted access to land is decisive with regard to the decision-making of coca growers, since this crop can be over five times as profitable as any other agricultural product.⁷¹ Also, in areas such as the Central Andes, where the cultivable area is small and the geophysical conditions are dominated by steep slopes that are difficult to access, the contest between legal agriculture and the profitability of coca favours the latter. The PNIS did not consider the availability or quality of productive land as factors that could determine the productivity of an agricultural project; even worse, it did not consider the purchase of land as a condition of feasibility to comply with the substitution strategy; land acquisition has been kept by the central government as an independent and even disconnected chapter, focused on rural reform and unlikely land redistribution scenarios.

In this context, when the PNIS was launched in late 2017, three groups of coca growers were created:

1. Cocalero peasants with 2–3 hectares of coca, for whom the programme’s economic solution—transitional ‘food assistance’ in the first year worth US\$3,000; a vegetable plot in the second year; and a productive project with technical assistance worth US\$9,000—was not attractive. These coca plantations in Miranda remained intact after the initiation of the PNIS.

⁶⁷ He is a mestizo-peasant coca grower who lives in Miranda and was part of the initial group that agreed to substitute coca voluntarily. He knows coca from an early age, and in the past has migrated to several regions in Colombia following the cocalero bonanzas.

⁶⁸ Alejandra Vega Rodríguez, ed., *Concentración y extranjerización de tierras productivas en Colombia: marco conceptual, legal e institucional, contribución a la aplicación de las directrices voluntarias sobre la gobernanza responsable de la tenencia de la tierra* (Bogotá: UN Food and Agriculture Organization, 2017), p. 276.

⁶⁹ UNODC, *Monitoreo de territorios afectados por cultivos de coca 2016* (Bogotá, 2017), https://www.unodc.org/documents/colombia/2017/julio/CENSO_2017_WEB_baja.pdf.

⁷⁰ UNODC, *¿Quiénes son las familias?*

⁷¹ Ibáñez, *Who crops coca and why?*

2. Farmers with a small coca plantation who did not trust the government's approach and opted to keep their crops, taking advantage of an expected rise in prices after a likely fall in supply.
3. Cocaleros who saw compliance with voluntary eradication as a moral exercise to move towards the legal economy while making a political performative act that could push the state to comply with the peace agreement.

To this day, there has been uneven compliance with the PNIS in Miranda. By the end of 2017, nearly 300 families had eradicated 157 hectares of coca,⁷² and two years later 220 more entered the programme. So far, just 38 per cent of the families that formally signed substitution agreements have received basic economic food assistance. Therefore, spatially differentiated processes of both eradication and persistence/replanting have emerged. Currently, no family has received financial or technical assistance to start a project that could replace the cocalero economy. In other words, families in Miranda have completed 30 months of economic dependence on state aid while little progress has been made on productive alternatives. In fact, there is a general complaint about abandonment by the state, which has left dozens of families with only an eroded piece of land and no productive project implemented.

A substitution plan trapped in the arbitrary 'green revolution' model

Six months after receiving the first payment for basic 'food assistance', nearly 300 families whose coca eradication had been previously verified were called to a meeting. This was one of the few occasions on which UN officials and public officials from the Territorial Renovation Agency (ART, from the Spanish initials) went into the hills to hold a meeting with cocaleros. The officials began by celebrating government efforts to comply with the peace agreement and then explained the advantages of growing products under international legal rules. Then, the cocaleros were invited to decide between one of four agricultural projects: coffee, sacha-inchi (a type of peanut), hass avocado and cacao.

Many coca growers had never heard of sacha-inchi before, and none of them were familiar with the cultivation of avocado. Although they certainly knew about coffee, a distrust among peasants persists towards the National Federation of Coffee Growers, owing to previous disputes. After two hours at the meeting, one indigenous leader indignantly commented to his colleagues:

We are going to lose our traditional seeds and we won't be able to reproduce them from [the crops] they will bring to us. And then, after they leave, we will have to buy seeds and will end up trapped in their technological packages. The situation is so difficult that farmers with native seeds could be imprisoned for up to four years. And what they are offering right now will make the situation even worse because this hass avocado or that sacha-inchi ... What do we know? We know nothing about those crops, and we will end up being fully dependent on them. (Lenin Cunda, May 2018)

⁷² UNODC, *Informe no. 19*.

Despite their distrust regarding the commodities proposed to them, a more dangerous rumour persuaded them to sign the offer: an urgent decision had to be made since the election of President Iván Duque was around the corner and the continuity of the PNIS was at stake.

The period since the peace agreement has seen the resurgence of various corporate greening projects in other regions of Colombia, among them the promotion of small-scale and export-focused cultivation of monocrops such as cacao and avocado, the intensification of medium-scale forestry, and extensive biofuel and 'sustainable' carbon-neutral clusters developed with trans-Latina and multinational capital. We contend that institutional acceptance of corporate greening depends on economic factors, as we have shown in previous paragraphs. However, this type of decision also relies on specific political and moral commitments.⁷³

In this vein, the promotion of avocado and cacao in the Central Andes serves two moral causes. First, it emerges as a legal solution for hundreds of families (whether as wage workers or small entrepreneurs) that have been victims of both the armed conflict and the illicit economies that have fed it. Hass avocado and cacao have become entry points to legality for former cocalero groups, even when the problem of land access (one of the drivers of the armed conflict) remains unsolved. These products connect families with highly profitable trading networks, thereby apparently countering the forces perpetuating poverty and illegality. While top-down promotion of agribusiness persists in post-agreement times, alternative agro-ecological projects based on traditional practices and small-scale diversification are not even mentioned in the public discourse. Second, these monocrops guarantee quasi-'optimal' environmental and productive conditions to the extent that—at least in the case of Miranda—they do not accelerate processes of deforestation and agricultural frontier expansion. All in all, these corporate green projects seem to offer a perfect solution (they are even aligned with international discourses on global warming and climate change); however, they overlook the traditional diversified nature of small-scale agriculture which is the very basis of the peasant existence.

While coca growers are denied opportunities to decide the destiny of their land—or, in the words of Borrás and Franco,⁷⁴ what the direction of agrarian change should be—dissident voices have emerged. In Miranda, a social leader who represents the victims of the armed conflict declared:

We need to realize it now: *Esta paz no es nuestra!* [This peace is not ours!] It is not intended for communities or for territories such as Miranda. What one sees is that institutions want corporations to come and go above those who live there. So, this is when things get more complex ... because on the surface, peace seems good, seems necessary ... It is of course great that we are not hiding from bullets any more. But if you examine it more carefully, it seems that all these [projects that government officials] call 'peace' are really meant to get us out of the territory or make us do what they want. And I must be honest and say these are no real solutions. (Rosa Muñoz, September 2018)

⁷³ Carlos Gómez, Luis Sánchez-Ayala and Gonzalo Vargas, 'Armed conflict, land grabs and primitive accumulation in Colombia: micro processes, macro trends and the puzzles in between', *Journal of Peasant Studies* 42: 2, 2015, pp. 255–74.

⁷⁴ Borrás and Franco, 'Global land grabbing'.

Cocaleros have expressed their fears regarding the implementation of a peace agreement that does not respond to their needs but instead is defined by people who promote green enterprises that serve their own convenience. On the one hand, the cocaleros have criticized the government's corporate top-down model designed for the substitution of illegal crops. On the other, they have experienced renewed armed violence. Given the increasing number of attacks on, even murders of, social and environmental leaders, families fear that a new wave of forced displacement is imminent. In fact, in 2018 Rosa Muñoz noted that there might be a relationship between the increasing violence and certain economic green interests. By mid-2019, her family was itself displaced after armed men arrived at her home and intimidated them; since then, her house and what used to be a coca plantation have been abandoned.

Fragmented eradication, failed substitution and major disillusionment

The coexistence of an illegal economy and a substitution process has created barriers to those who have joined the PNIS. The case of the Campo family illustrates some of them. They joined the PNIS in 2017 and, after eradicating their coca crops, tried to survive on limited production of coffee. However, they got into difficulty when they realized that it was impossible to find day labourers who could work on their farm and help them to pick the coffee beans:

Since we got rid of the coca crops, we have tried a lot of things: beans, green beans, peas ... So far nothing has stuck. One day the seedlings look like sticking and the next day they look like they are dying. We have managed to slowly grow 5,600 coffee plants, with the problem that bushes are now seeding but my husband is the only one who can collect the beans because there is no way to pay a day labourer ... with the prices they charge, it is impossible to afford one. (Sara Campo, June 2018)

The consequences of simultaneously continuing with the cultivation of coca and its partial eradication are threefold. First, there is new competition to hire the scarce labour force of available day labourers. Second, there is pronounced wage inequality: usually, coca harvesting pays twice or three times the wage paid on coffee farms. Third, price inflation makes agricultural supplies very expensive.

In October 2018, the Campo family were in economic crisis after failing to recoup the money they had invested in coffee. The solution found by Sara's husband was to work as a day labourer on a neighbouring coca plantation where the farmer, knowing the situation of his family, offered him constant work as a coca picker. An unexpected consequence of this fragmented and delayed substitution process is that the Campo family has gone from being subsistence producers to being proletarians, depending on the work provided by other coca farms. Consequently, labour and food insecurity has increased in families that have relied on the substitution programme proposed—and mismanaged—by the state.

One year after that failed coffee harvest, Sara referred to new consequences related to the delay in the technical and financial assistance promised by the government:

I have to tell the truth here: inside me ... my deepest desire is that I would not have pulled up my coca. If I still had my plants, at least we would have something to eat for my family and at least I would have some money to buy school shoes for the girls ... But the way we are now, I only see one option and it is to sow again ... You cannot imagine how my heart has broken with this collapse [she weeps]. In the last rain we counted six landslides on the farm, six! ... It's just that we won't have anything left! (Sara Campo, August 2019)

In addition to the more visible problems associated with the substitution of coca, Sara points out a major indirect difficulty resulting from the delayed implementation of the PNIS: soil erosion on the farms. In the absence of the promised government financial support to start alternative projects, even when the coca plants were uprooted, Sara's family (and many more) did not have enough resources to replace the crops. After two years without new planting, the soil has been washed away in each rainy season, causing degradation of the land; on 15 November 2019 the rains triggered significant landslides and the Güengüé river overflowed, taking the life of a two-year-old boy and affecting dozens of homes.

Some authors note that vulnerability to natural hazards is the result of pre-existing and unequal societal structures, usually overlooked as technical matters in peacebuilding efforts.⁷⁵ Others refer to desertification and loss of biodiversity as slow violence since they represent adverse changes in the physical landscape that result in new human and environmental (in)securities.⁷⁶ Furthermore, a nexus between violence and environmental degradation has been described in areas of east Africa and south-east Asia where the spatial distribution of environmental vulnerability has been linked to the emergence and exacerbation of armed conflicts.⁷⁷

It has been suggested that these connections are a consequence of illusory expectations in post-agreement times. Several authors have noted how, in periods when a transitional justice system is being gradually implemented, involving efforts at reparation, restitution and eradication, solutions provided to the poor and marginalized peasantry are ephemeral. This is inevitable to the extent that the economic and political systems that operated in times of war (being in many ways responsible for the reproduction of violence) are still intact during the immediate postwar phase.⁷⁸ Thus, in Colombia, corporate and unevenly developed coca substitution programmes are proposed within the same political and economic structures that have perpetuated violence. In the case of Miranda, many of the alternative projects have ended up being disregarded because money to fund them runs out, because there are other areas in Colombia that need to be prioritized, because there are new administrations in power with other interests, and so on.

⁷⁵ Ide, 'The dark side'.

⁷⁶ Rob Nixon, 'Slow violence, gender and the environmentalism of the poor', *Journal of Commonwealth and Post-colonial Studies* 14: 1, 2007, pp. 14–37.

⁷⁷ Tobias Ide, Janpeter Schilling, Jasmin Link, Jürgen Scheffran, Grace Ngaruiya and Thomas Weinzierl, 'On exposure, vulnerability and violence: spatial distribution of risk factors for climate change and violent conflict across Kenya and Uganda', *Political Geography*, vol. 43, 2014, pp. 68–81.

⁷⁸ Alejandro Castillejo, 'Introducción: dialécticas de la fractura y la continuidad: elementos para una lectura crítica de las transiciones', in Alejandro Castillejo, *La ilusión de la justicia transicional Perspectivas críticas desde el Sur global* (Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes, 2017).

Therefore, a politics of abandonment (and of soil erosion and degradation as a result of that abandonment) becomes more powerful.

In this vein, an illusory transitionality encourages only those forms of sociability that suit the vision of progress promoted by governments and corporations alike. The politics of voluntary eradication and transitionality, as several authors argue, ‘crystallizes a new enlightened governmentality in which transition is inseparable from an orientation that supports homogenization of farming and rurality, facilitated by corporate agro-industrialization and a market-led control of natural resources. To advance this vision, the transitional political discourse relies upon (neo-)classical ideas of development, rehabilitation and progress.’⁷⁹

On top of the initial problem of an overemphasis on corporate greening for communities that have historically developed other livelihoods, there is a lack of state support for projects that communities did not even agree with (although they accepted them). Therefore, in addition to everyday forms of violence derived from an illusion of transitionality (pushed by corporate peace greening), ecological violence has been perpetrated on families and soils that, after the implementation of the PNIS, have been left with nothing: neither coca nor coffee nor *hass* avocado. Thus, they face only the new slow violence of abandonment, mistreatment and soil degradation.

Implications for environmental peacebuilding in Colombia

The peace agreement signed between the guerrilla FARC-EP and the Colombian government purported to promote a rural reform that encompassed a strategy for the voluntary substitution of legal for illicit crops. On the brink of potentially unprecedented agrarian change, the Colombian state—through the PNIS—reproduced its historical bias against small-scale diversified peasant farming,⁸⁰ choosing to favour instead green corporate solutions,⁸¹ with an emphasis on carbon-neutral monocrops as one of the main strategies to pursue legal and productive transitions during the post-agreement period. The case of Miranda shows that multiple obstacles made it impossible to achieve full compliance with the substitution programme PNIS. These obstacles include failure to ensure land availability and to consider this and land quality as factors that could determine the success of alternative food production projects; fragmented substitution that has led to the coexistence of coca economies and timid legal endeavours, with peasants attempting the transition finding themselves unable to pay the inflated prices of agricultural supplies and, above all, labour; and the reduction of the most vulnerable families to the status of a proletariat within the coca system, owing to delays in the financial and technical assistance promised by the government.

This article has discussed the extent to which formal land tenure and its absence, as well as the conflict between corporate and community land use, are determining

⁷⁹ García, ‘Mas allá del exterminio’ (author’s translation).

⁸⁰ Catherine LeGrand, Luis van Isschot and Pilar Riaño-Alcalá, ‘Land, justice, and memory: challenges for peace in Colombia’, *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 42: 3, 2017, pp. 259–76.

⁸¹ García, ‘Mas allá del exterminio’.

factors not only of the direction of agrarian change but also of opportunities to achieve a lasting peace. We have shown that the misguided implementation of the peace accord, instead of creating opportunities for the cultural and biological reinvention of cocalero groups, actually damages rural livelihoods by ignoring the traditional preference for small-scale diversified farming in favour of corporate green enterprises—enterprises that have not even been implemented. Thus, for the peasants, a feeling of general abandonment is added to the customary feeling of never being heard.

The inadequate and misguided implementation of the PNIS has ruined the already precarious autonomy and diversity of the peasantry. It has also created false promises of transition, since the desired ceasefire has produced no radical departure from the established trajectories of not only direct violence but also structural violence—where it had been hoped for in the form of access to land, technical assistance and financial aid. We contend that in the post-agreement phase, corporate agrarian development and selective institutional abandonment have not only failed to provide a solution to the cultivation of coca, but have the potential both to worsen the living conditions of rural groups and to reduce the possibility of an enduring peace.⁸² Moreover, the lack of an inclusive, responsive and efficient land reform, along with corporate greening under the peace accord, threatens to reproduce old armed conflicts caused by marginalization and inequality, as well as new slow violence associated with the degradation of the environment and of the livelihoods of remote and marginalized peasant communities.

After years of repeated failures in Miranda, this case of corporate-led environmental peacebuilding has become an example of how the state's rationale, actions and mechanisms have exacerbated environmental violence at different levels. The situation in Miranda is not unique. Structurally, Miranda has experienced the radicalization of both legal land and resource grabbing and illicit and criminal economies. In the field of everyday life, corporate peace greening has meant that many areas, now under the control of transregional conglomerates, have experienced questionable environmental practices, ranging from the large-scale use of glyphosate to detrimental practices in forest, waste and water-source management. In addition to these effects, direct violence has intensified, associated with coca crops, illegal mining, and a whole array of illicit and criminal activities that have taken off, increasing environmental risks including those of deforestation, soil degradation and more contamination.

Peasant, indigenous and African-descended groups are now more than ever trapped by these forces. They have been thrown to the wolves and left with just two options: (1) opt for state-sponsored corporate environmental peacebuilding, following promises and dreams that are never fulfilled (and experience the slow violence of land degradation and soil erosion, as some families in Miranda have already noted); or (2) retreat to the mountains and continue with the cultivation of illicit crops, thereby expanding the agricultural frontier and increasing both the contamination and the deforestation of newly colonized areas. This exacer-

⁸² Barnett, 'Environmental security and peace'.

bated circle of structural, slow and direct violence does not represent a 'dark side' to environmental peacebuilding. These are global failures of peacebuilding. To assume that they are dark sides of a broader state programme is to claim that environmental peacebuilding exists, and works, but has some gaps to address. Our argument is that state-sponsored corporate environmental peacebuilding does not exist anymore. All that is left is a fragmented, poor and strained governance that has shifted away from peacebuilding towards security discourses that constantly create environmental violence in almost every direction.

