Socio- territorial conflicts over the Gulf of Tribugá. Black collectivities and the socio ontological dispute over their territory

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von Andrés Bateman

Prof. Dr. Peter Frensch
(komm.) Präsident der
Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

Prof. Dr. Christian Kassung
Dekan der Kultur-, Sozial- und
Bildungswissenschaftlichen Fakultät

Gutachterin /Gutachter:

1. Professor Boike Rehbein
2. Professor Alejandro Pelfini

To accept one's past – one's history – is not the same thing as drowning in it; it is learning how to use it. An invented past can never be used; it cracks and crumbles under the pressure of life like clay in the season of drought

The Fire Next Time – James Baldwin

Somos hijos de la tierra y sus parásitos; nos liga a ella, como un cordon umbilical, la ley de la gravedad

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Introduction

> *The plan must be assumed as a permanent, flexible and coordinated process that aims at the construction of an ethnic-territorial development model based on the biological and cultural diversity that exists in our region, which develops its actions with a gender and generational approach, with territorial autonomy and harmonious inter-ethnic and intercultural relations. In this sense, our Ethno-development Plan is not an end, but a beginning that lays the foundations to build a life project of our own* (Los Riscales, 2007, 12)[1].

The former sentence belongs to the *Ethno-development Plan: Vision of life of the black communities of the Gulf of Tribugá (2007-2020)* and reflects the intercultural and transmodern horizon of the coastal dwellers of the Gulf of Tribugá in the Northern Colombian Pacific basin, which constitutes the ultimate concern of the present research. Transmodernity and interculturality as an economic, social and political horizon implies breaking up with most of the notions mainly associated with European epistemology, which are currently hegemonic all over the globe. Struggling towards a transmodern and intercultural horizon entails questioning some of the epistemological and ontological fundaments of what is commonly defined as "modernity". With this in mind, this research argues that the socio-territorial dispute currently taking place between the Afro-Colombian collectivities of the Gulf of Tribugá and developmental agents is not only over resources but can rather be read as mainly ontological.

Although this socio-territorial conflict materialises through multiple disputes over resources, space and environmental conditions, the main argument of this research is that, rather than being limited to such resources or environmental conditions, this struggle is ontological. This means that what is at stake in the Gulf of Tribugá, as in many other places where such disputes occur, are the conditions of existence and the interactions between existing entities according to their ontology, as well as the role each entity plays in the constitution of the territory as an emerging and constantly changing category. To understand this ontological dispute, this research contrasts the differences and partial connections between developmentalism – the most recent manifestation of the project of western modernity – and local forms of inhabiting, interacting with and enacting the Gulf of Tribugá. On top of that, the present document highlights some strategies through which local collectivities, by appropriating specific abstract universalisms of modernity and concretising them through the lenses of their own experiences, propose and enact a transmodern and intercultural territory.

To do so, it is first necessary to understand modernity as a particular social ontology that has manifested through different discursive practices since its emergence in the sixteenth century.

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[1] Henceforth my own translation from: Los Riscales. (2007). *Plan de Etnodesarrollo: Visión de vida de las comunidades negras del Golfo de Tribugá 2007-2020*. Los Riscales.

Before analysing the scope and dimension of modernity, however, the notion of social ontology should be clarified as the embodied sets of meanings, systems of classification and symbolic values that a collectivity subconsciously shares and materialises through specific *habitus*,[2] practices and institutions (Baumann & Bultman, 2020; Baumann & Rehbein, 2020). This particular definition of social ontology provides two main theoretical elements towards understanding the ontological dispute currently taking place in the Gulf of Tribugá.

On the one hand, to the extent that the notion of social ontology reflects the systems of classification, sets of meanings and symbolic values of a collectivity, it also reflects the role and level of agency that social groups grant to specific landforms, animals, spirits, climatic events or death. That means that, according to each social ontology, such non-human, other-than-human or more-than-human entities might be active and autonomous parts of a given collectivity. Acknowledging the existence of more-than-human, other-than-human and non-human entities as part of a collectivity reflects the efforts made by this conceptualization to question the Eurocentric dualism between humans and nature, recognising that social classifications of certain collectivities might include plants, animals, ancestors, landforms, climatic events, etc. Besides providing the theoretical tools to understand multiple forms of social organization, broadening the definition of *what constitutes* a collectivity also broadens the roles that entities might play *inside* collectivities, their particular forms of inhabiting a given space, their decision-making processes and their claims to particular rights.

On the other hand, due to its focus on *habitus*, practices and institutions, this notion of social ontology recognises that its materialization takes place through specific enactments performed in historically and geographically particular circumstances. One of the most important contributions of the concept of social ontology resides in its acknowledgment that both the conditions of existence and existence as such are contextual. In turn, this also means that the particular characteristics of collectivities are malleable, open-ended singularities defined and re-created both by their environmental and historical surroundings, as well as by the concrete practices, institutions and *habitus* that enact them. This practice-oriented conceptualization of social ontologies means that any kind of entity or institution belonging to the collectivity constantly enacts the social ontology that dialectically conditions it. The dialectical nature of the relationship between social ontology and practice becomes evident as both simultaneously depend on and condition the other.

[2] According to Bourdieu, *habitus* is the structure within which every individual behaves following "common sense." It constitutes the intrinsic social principles under which every person behaves according to their position and role in society. As the author describes, it is "the conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce *habitus*, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. Objectively 'regulated' and 'regular' without being in any way the product of obedience to rules, they can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organizing action of a conductor" (Bourdieu, 1990, 53).

In order to understand the ontological dispute currently taking place in the Gulf of Tribugá, it is possible draw upon this practice-oriented and contextual conception to understand modernity as a particular social ontology with its own system of classification, sets of meanings and symbolic values materialised through specific practices, *habitus* and institutions. To do so, this research refers to the decolonial understanding of modernity as a set of discourses and practices originating in the sixteenth century with the expansion of Europe into the "New World" and, albeit with certain changes along the way, its continuation into the present. According to this perspective, modernity is a process that co-emerged with capitalism and colonialism when Europeans reached what would later be called "America" and the Atlantic Ocean emerged as one of the most important centres of commerce and geopolitical domination (Dussel, 1994, 2005; Escobar, 2007; Mignolo, 2003, 2009b; Quijano, 2000a, 2005).

In dialogue with world-systems theory (Wallerstein, 1974), the decolonial perspective argues that the co-emergence of modernity, capitalism and colonialism has multiple global causes. Although the emergence of capitalism also refers to a series of phenomena that took place within Europe, it is important to question the process as exclusively inner-European and to acknowledge the global events that created the conditions for the emergence of capitalism as the hegemonic economic system of modernity. The global pre-conditions of the emergence of capitalism are related to many diverse phenomena such as European interaction with the Ottoman Empire, the plague, the Crusades and the role of Italian city-states as commercial bridges between the hegemonic Arab world and peripheral Europe.

Moreover, the co-emergence of capitalism, modernity and colonialism also implied the transformation of European subjectivity into the modern subject. The encounter between European individuals and inhabitants of the "New World" meant the moulding of a new subjectivity and the beginning of a new epistemological paradigm. It was the beginning of a new social ontology with specific characteristics such as the pretension to universalism, multiple dualisms – human/nature, mind/body, subject/object – and a teleological understanding of history in which the European experience is the ultimate goal, the model that every society should follow. The conditions that ultimately allowed for the emergence and consolidation of the triad of modernity, colonialism and capitalism were the initial encounter between Europe and the "New World" and the latter's subsequent occupation (Dussel, 1994, 2005; Grosfoguel, 2018; Mignolo, 2003, 2009b).

The emergence of this new social ontology of modernity, with its own subjectivity, economic relations and a racialised geographical division of labour, represents the constitution of the modern world-system. However, the co-emergence of modernity, colonialism and capitalism does not mean that the three can be collapsed into same phenomenon – rather, it simply means that they are entangled. In that sense, it is important to approach each of these processes as correlated singularities with their own characteristics and scopes, rather as than one single

unit. Notwithstanding the importance of analysing the colonial, racial, capitalist and marginalising content of modernity, it is also necessary to identify its emancipatory moments. On top of having a critical perspective on the social ontology of modernity and its multiple problematic manifestations, it is also important to claim some of the emancipatory elements that it provides for marginalised collectivities, particularly in terms of the current social-territorial conflict under study. Such a complex and multi-layered analysis of modernity implies understanding the mechanisms through which its colonial and capitalist components became hegemonic, put aside their potentially positive effects and monopolised the actual materialization of modernity in the constitution of the racialised, modern world-system.

With that in mind, for the sake of conceptual clarity, when necessary, this research refers to "capitalist modernity" or "western modernity" instead of just "modernity." This seeks to differentiate between modernity as an *abstraction*, with its positive and negative connotations, and as a *concrete* form materialised through the expansion of capitalism, colonialism and the racialised division of labour. This conceptual difference also allows for an understanding of "transmodernity", a concept that encapsulates the appropriation of the positive elements of modernity by the collectivities historically marginalised by its western and capitalist materialization.

Considering that the materialization of modernity in its western form implied the deployment of colonial, racialised and capitalist practices, the emergence of a new European subjectivity and the expansion of Europe also implied the development of material and discursive mechanisms to problematise, intervene and transform collectivities that do not share the social ontology of modernity. This process mainly takes place on two scales of power: the macro and the micro levels.

On the macro level, it refers to the political and economic efforts deployed by western modernity in Europe and in its colonies to control societies' power relations and means of production. In the particular case of the expansion of western modernity, it implied the co-optation or imposition of institutions and socio-economic relations in the dominated collectivities. This sphere of power, related to political and economic structure, can be defined as colonialism. On the micro level, the efforts by the hegemonic powers of western modernity that seek to subjugate or coerce the non-western imaginaries, common senses, aspirations, sensitivities and desires is called coloniality. The dialectical deployment of both phenomena – colonialism and coloniality – pretends to produce and reproduce colonised subjectivities by naturalising their position in the racialised international division of labour.

With that in mind, the dialectical relationship between the macro and micro levels of power, materialised through colonialism and coloniality carries with three main layers or scopes. First, "coloniality of power" refers to the naturalization of the racialised positioning of colonised subjects in the modern world-system (Quijano, 2000a, 2005). Second, "coloniality

of knowledge" refers to the process of disavowing, diminishing and later eliminating those epistemologies that do not share the same principles as modern epistemology (Castro-Gómez, 2005a; Mignolo, 2003, 2005, 2009b). Third, "coloniality of being" refers to the mechanisms through which western modernity seeks to shape the lived experiences of colonised subjects, as well as their forms of interacting with each other and with their surroundings (Maldonado-Torres, 2007a, 2007b). In a general sense, "coloniality" refers to the mechanisms of colonial power that hinder the production and reproduction of social ontologies different from its modern iteration.

Analysing both the macro and micro levels of power – colonialism and coloniality – helps understanding the complexity of the colonial system and its penetration into every aspect of life, from socio-economic structure to the aspirations and desires of individuals. Notwithstanding the hierarchical nature of the colonial system, a complex analysis of western modernity and its colonial condition also implies understanding the heterarchical nature of the reproduction of power. In other words, an effective exercise of power entails a dialectical relation between macro and micro levels; it is necessary that both the structures and the subjectivities work towards the reproduction of the racialised, modern world-system. Understanding the expansion of Europe since the sixteenth century implies understanding western modernity as a new socio-economic and subjective configuration operating on both the micro and the macro levels of power.

Exercising power over colonial territories and collectivities that can be called "non-western" in that they do not share the social ontology of western modernity implies problematising and legitimising the domination of such spaces and peoples. In that sense, non-western or "other" territories, races and cultures become the epitome of colonial expansion. As part of the universalising nature of the social ontology of western modernity, hegemonic power, through its religious and scientific institutions, labelled as barbarian, backward or sub-humans those populations ruled and organised under different structures than the European standard. Following the universalising pretension of western social ontology, certain practices, *habitus* and institutions that did not, and do not, mirror the hegemony fall into a "sub-human" condition. Such a condition supposedly renders them ready for interventions to take them out of the zone of non-being.

One of the most recent sets of interventions deployed by western modernity is the discursive practice of developmentalism. This ongoing materialization of western modernity made its appearance at the end of the Second World War and became, with its varieties, the most important mechanism in the expansive exercise of both the micro and macro levels of power. Although it continues some of the colonial practices performed by western modernity since its expansion, developmentalism does not refer to the same discursive mechanisms in that it avoids racial and cultural references – rather, it limits its references to the economic conditions of populations, territories and countries. In that sense, with developmentalism, the

universalising discourse of western modernity turned the official labelling of non-western collectivities from "savage" or "backward" into "underdeveloped" or "economically disadvantaged." From that moment on, collectivities that were formerly labelled "uncivilised" or "savages" were now in need of economic progress, income and capital accumulation (Escobar, 2007).

Although developmentalism turned its attention away from intrinsic racial, cultural and territorial characteristics, it did not eliminate the racialised international division of labour and the hegemonic distinction between those collectivities that share the social ontology of modernity and those that do not. By focusing on the economic conditions of non-western collectivities and their income levels, the discursive practice of developmentalism falsely posits the possibility of overcoming the sub-human condition and attaining the European standard.

Unlike previous forms of problematising difference that focused on unmodifiable features of collectivities and territories, under developmentalism, hegemonic discourse promises the possibility of reaching western modernity by following certain steps and incorporating certain practices. By abnormalising certain forms of being-in-the-world, developmentalism argues that collectivities can overcome their underdeveloped conditions by means of interventions aimed at transforming their economic, social and political practices, *habitus* and institutions. The abnormalization of non-western forms of being-in-the-world requires specific mechanisms of legitimation around the notions of income, growth and economic progress. These mechanisms of legitimation, accompanied by a series of developmental interventions, have the main purpose of transforming non-western social ontologies and naturalising the racialised international division of labour.

Considering that the deployment of developmentalism reached most of the so-called "underdeveloped" areas of the world or "Third World" countries, neither Colombia nor its Pacific basin have been exempt from it. Originally populated by multiple indigenous collectivities, the Pacific region became a territory with mostly black population with the forced introduction of enslaved African peoples during Spanish colonial rule. The elimination of the indigenous communities due to the violent advancement of the Spanish colonial power, the rapid expansion of European diseases previously unknown to locals and the forced introduction of enslaved populations taken from Africa between 1533 and 1810, made the region an area mainly populated by black peoples until today.

Moreover, since the forced introduction of enslaved African peoples, the northern Pacific basin became an important region to escape, hide and resist the Spanish rule. Due to the position of relative autonomy and only partial connection with the different hegemonic powers, the collectivities of the northern Pacific basin have managed to produce and reproduce their own social ontologies, along with their own practices, *habitus* and

institutions. After the historical defence of their territories and unique social ontologies, it was not until the end of the twentieth century that black collectivities managed to issue the Provisional Article 55 (AT 55) of the Constitution of 1991 that issued Law 70 of 1993. This historical legal achievement stated that the territories occupied by black collectivities in the Pacific basin were collectively owned and guaranteed them certain level of autonomy.

The use of the term "black collectivities" to refer to the people of African descent currently living in the Pacific basin. This research responds to a long semantic dispute between the terms "afro-Colombians," "afro-Americans" or "afro-descendants" and terms "blacks," "black culture" or "black communities."

Advocates of the first semantic group argue that the term "afro" ancestrally links these peoples with Africa and reinstates the human value that the term "black" took away under slavery. Those who argue for the use of this term state that the word "black" is offensive because it reduces a large and plural group of human being to the colour of their skin (Lozano, 2014). Moreover, this argumentation insists that the African people forcibly taken to current-day Colombia came from multiple cultures, such as Ashanti, Bantu, Yoruba, Congolese, Mandinka and many others, but were homogenised under the label "black." Succinctly, the promoters of the term "afro" highlight its relationship with ancestry and its cultural specificity (Hoffmann, 2007).

On the other hand, those who advocate use of the term "black" highlight the "socio-racial characteristic that distinguishes them from the rest of the population, recalling the historical discrimination to which they have been subjected" (Hoffmann, 2007, 25).[3] In this regard, using the term "black" seeks to visibilise a shared experience of marginalization that started with the transatlantic slave trade, passing from the enslaved condition to a condition of discrimination and exclusion today (Grueso, 2007). For that reason, this argument continues, denying the denomination "black" also means denying the twin histories of oppression and resistance. According to Libia Grueso (2007) "denying the black would be to denying the project of libertarian struggle for being a fully autonomous subject in conditions and capacities for its own development. The right to be black is a project in the face of the denial as an integral human person" (Grueso, 2007, 147).[4]

Following the latter tack, by identifying themselves as "black," these collectivities claim for the acknowledgment of an ongoing historical configuration that subordinated and keeps subordinating specific subjects. For this reason, until the conditions of marginalization and subordination change, along with the need for resistance and struggle, they will still be black.

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[3] Henceforth my own translation from: Hoffmann, O. (2007). *Comunidades negras en el Pacífico colombiano*. Ediciones Abya-Yala Quito.

[4] Henceforth my own translation from: Grueso, L. (2007). Escenarios de colonialismo y (de) colonialidad en la construcción del Ser Negro. Apuntes sobre las relaciones de género en comunidades negras del Pacífico colombiano. *Comentario Internacional. Revista Del Centro Andino de Estudios Internacionales*, *7*, 145–156.

In the end, the denomination "black" focuses on recognising the history of oppression and resistance as one of the most important elements through which these collectivities have built their identities.

Besides these two main denominations, afro or black collectivities also use as self-designation other terms besides those of "black" and "afro," such as *libres* or *renacientes*. The former refers to the non-enslaved condition of most of these black populations, refugees in the Pacific even before the abolition of slavery (Hoffmann, 2007, 26). The latter seeks to emphasise "both the continuity and the permanent rebirth of life in society" (Hoffmann, 2007, 26).

Considering that black or afro collectivities use all these terminological options simultaneously or successively depending on context and interlocutor, the present document uses the words "black" or "afro-Colombian" in a general sense unless specified in the text. However, the more extended use of the term "black collectivities" or "black communities" responds to the institutionalised, normative and organised conception of these populations given in Law 70 of 1993 that defines "black communities" as follows:

> It is the group of families of Afro-Colombian descent who possesses its own culture, shares a common history and has its own traditions and customs within a rural-urban setting and which reveals and preserves a consciousness of identity that distinguishes it from other ethnic groups (Ley 70, 1993, Art. 2).[5]

Although the significance of Law 70 of 1993 is undeniable, the fact that this law was issued during the expansion of neoliberal policies in the country also presented a series of challenges for black collectivities. To the extent that multiculturalism under neoliberalism limits itself to some commodified folkloric practices for the market, it hinders the capacity for black collectivities to be active agents of change, autonomy and transformation. Additionally, the type of multiculturalism that neoliberalism performs implies a retraction of the state from the territories, which amounts to a breach of fundamental rights. Moreover, by retracting from its responsibilities, the state holds back the transformative potential of black collectivities because, from that moment on, they must put all their efforts into finding resources.

It is in the context of a law that provides collective territorial ownership and a degree of autonomy to black collectivities, as well as the expansion of developmentalism in the region and the neoliberal perspective of socio-ontological difference, that the socio-territorial conflict at hand takes place. The ongoing socio-territorial dispute taking in the Gulf of Tribugá is not limited to access to resources, but is mainly ontological and socio-ontological: the magnitude of the struggle involves the conditions of existence and existence itself.

[5] Translated version of the Law 70 of 1993 by Norma and Peter Jackson of Benedict College, Columbia, South Carolina. https://www.wola.org/sites/default/files/downloadable/Andes/Colombia/past/law%2070.pdf

Considering the ontological stakes, analysing reality as something enacted or performed rather than fixed and permanent allows the complexity of the dispute to emerge. To the extent that reality depends on the actions performed by entities with agency – humans, non-humans or more-than humans – it is multiple, malleable and emerges out of two types of interactions: those between entities with agency and those between other enactments of reality.

To the extent that reality is the result of specific institutions, *habitus* and practices performed by particular entities in particular time-space contexts, thinking about reality as "enacted practices" provides two main analytical tools. First, challenging Eurocentric notion of a single reality seen through multiples perspectives, reality as enacted practice allows for thinking about the socio-territorial conflict as a dispute over the practice-oriented social ontologies dialectically performed in a territory by specific agents. Such agents might go from state institutions and international cooperation to collectivities and the multiple entities that might conform it. Second, it allows for thinking the conflict over the Gulf of Tribugá as a dispute between different enactments of reality and as multiple co-existing, partially connected and in-constant-negotiation enactments of reality.

In dialogue with the notions of socio-territorial conflicts as ontological and reality as enacted practice, understanding both the conditions of existence and existence itself as *relational* provides a new type of conceptualization relevant to the ontological dispute under study. Relational ontology refers to a type of existence that emerges out of the multiple interactions that take place in a particular time-space framework. In other worlds, relational ontology argues that everything that exists only does so *in* relation and *because* of the relations it has with all other existing things (Viveiros de Castro, 2004). Reality is, then, an interconnected multiplicity of performances enacted by multiple entities and agents. Furthermore, drawing upon assemblage thinking and actor-network theory (ANT) (Law, 1992; Müller & Schurr, 2016), identifying the particular type of relational ontology that belongs to the coastal dwellers of the Gulf of Tribugá allows the current dispute to be understood as a multi-scaled, complex interconnectedness of institutions, human, non-human and more-than-human entities that struggle for the constitution and re-creation of particular enactments of reality.

This multi-scaled, partial interconnectedness of assemblages manifests as a constant dispute and negotiation over the hegemony of the territory. The unequal struggle between assemblages dialectically materializes through practices, institutions and *habitus* performed by multiple actors present in the region[6]. Each of these actors enact at least one of the three disputing assemblages in the Gulf of Tribugá: developmentalism/capitalism, sustainability/multiculturalism and communitarianism/non-capitalism. The fact that all actors participate in more that of the assemblages suggests that the latter are not fixed, nor are the individuals and collectivities that participate in them. Although these assemblages are

[6] Namely, collectivities, investors, NGOs, environmental agencies, multiple state entities and tourists, among others.

embedded in specific social ontologies and respond to specific forms of interacting with and re-producing the space, they are malleable and relatively fluid to the extent that, in a specific period, one individual or collectivity can participate in all assemblages.

The first assemblage relates to the social ontology of modernity, has multiple dualisms and conceives history as teleological. It materialised through multiple capitalist enterprises such as coca leaf production and trafficking, agroindustry, industrial fishing, mega infrastructure projects, etc. Second, although the sustainability/multiculturalism assemblage can promote black social ontology in specific contexts, it still belongs to the social ontology of modernity in that it involves multiple dualisms and conceives the European experience as ultimate. Among others, this assemblage materialises through sustainable fishing, sustainable tourism, communitarian tourism, environmental conservation and the support of cultural manifestations as folkloric/exotic expressions. Third, the assemblage of communitarianism/non-capitalism is embedded in black social ontology and conceives existence as relational. As a radical interconnectedness between every existing human, non-humans and more-than-human entity, it materialises through livelihood economic practices, certain reciprocity and specific medical and care practices, among other performances.

In light of the above, while there are three assemblages in the Gulf of Tribugá, there are only two social ontologies. The social ontology of modernity materialises and gives fundament to both the assemblages of developmentalism/capitalism and sustainability/multiculturalism. Black social ontology materialises and gives fundament to the assemblage of communitarianism/non-capitalism. However, each of these assemblages is partially connected with the others. That means that, as stated above, one individual or collectivity might participate in all these assemblages in a short period of time. A person could fish for self-consumption, participate in reciprocal practices and sporadically participate in capitalist enterprises, all while also being part of a sustainable tourism project.

In that sense, the coastal dwellers of the Gulf of Tribugá participate in and reproduce each of the three assemblages depending on context. Although most of the black collectivity in the area mainly participates in the assemblages of sustainability/multiculturalism and communitarianism/non-capitalism, collectivities and social organizations may actively participate in and foster the constitution of the territory according to the developmentalism/capitalism assemblage under specific conditions. Moreover, despite the socio-ontological differences between the sustainability/multiculturalism and communitarianism/non-capitalism assemblages, they partially share some of the practices and performances that materialised them.

In the end, the unequal dispute over the territory at hand takes place between open-ended and partially connected assemblages that are defined by the structural position of the Gulf of Tribugá in the modern world-system. That is, the macro and micro levels of power constantly

seek to reproduce and expand their presence in the territory through developmentalism, in one form or another. In that sense, this unequal dispute over the territory represents the efforts made by local collectivities in the region to challenge hegemonic power on both macro and the micro levels. This dispute reveals some of the strategies that coastal dwellers of the gulf are taking against the expansion of capitalism and developmentalism as racialised, exclusive and extractive manifestations of the social ontology of modernity. Very often, the materialization of the social ontology of western modernity resorts to violence to solve such socio-territorial disputes.

Agreeing on the ontological nature of socio-territorial conflicts, plus the ontological distinction between individuals and collectivities in the zone of *being* and those in the zone of *non-being*, the assemblage of developmentalism/capitalism often resorts to violence and deterritorialization to gain space in the struggle. Developmentalism tends to fall back on deterritorialization and dehumanization of non-western collectivities to keep expanding. But violence is not limited to the macro level of power; it also aims to shape desires, aspirations and common sense. In the end, in this context, the final purpose of developmentalism as a hegemonic discursive practice is the elimination of black social ontology by eliminating its agents of materialization and reducing them to a mere folkloric commodity of consumption for tourists.

Notwithstanding the multiple mechanisms both on the macro and micro levels of power through which developmentalism expands in the Gulf of Tribugá, there are a plurality of strategies of resistance performed by local collectivities to reproduce and re-create their own social ontologies, as well as their own practices, institutions and *habitus.* Some of these strategies are transmodern, others are intercultural, sometimes they are both. Despite the possible similitudes between the notions of transmodernity and interculturality, there are some differences that are worth noting.

Considering that every collectivity in the world has had contact with and has been influenced by the social ontology of modernity, "transmodernity" refers to a horizon in which multiple social ontologies interact in traversing modernity. That means appropriating and concretising abstract universalisms of modernity (development, progress, equality, etc.) and materialising them according to their own particularities, struggles and contexts. In that sense, transmodernity does not reduce modernity to colonialism or capitalism, but takes it as a complex, multi-layered phenomenon that might be emancipatory if collectivities manage to concretise some of its abstractions and create dialogues in which every participant, while questioning the expansive character of modernity, also questions specific elements of their own social ontology and socioculture that might be regressive or against the well-being of all its members. In short, the project of transmodernity is one that stands for the appropriation of certain abstract universalisms of modernity and seeks to traverse them by means of intercultural dialogue.

On the other hand, although similar to the transmodern project, "interculturality" focuses on creating the conditions to foster an interactive dialogue between multiple cultures based on the full acknowledgment and respect of each and every social ontology. The intercultural project implies, first, questioning the epistemic violence that takes place within the expansion of western modernity; second, identifying universal concepts, arguments and ethics; and, third, strengthening local philosophies and epistemological traditions. The intercultural project calls this type of dialogue a "polylogue" and represents a communicative horizon that avoids both parochialism and cultural relativism. While they share strong similarities, the difference between transmodernity and interculturality is the role that the former gives to traversing modernity and appropriating its notions.

Although both projects, let alone their combination, are far from complete, there are a series of strategies that are moving towards the constitution of socio-ontological, plural territories. Notions such as "controlled equivocations," (Viveiros de Castro, 2004) "ecology of practices" (Stengers, 2005a)and "cosmopolitics," (Stengers, 2005b) among others, are important efforts that seek to overcome some of the difficulties that many transmodern or intercultural projects face.

Besides their multiple theoretical contributions to the transmodern or intercultural horizon, the coastal dwellers of the Gulf of Tribugá are making concrete efforts towards the constitution of a plural region. With the aim of providing and constituting well-being for all its members, black collectivities in the area are already appropriating abstract universalisms of modernity, transfiguring them according to their own realities and creating intercultural dialogues among the actors in the region. Besides questioning the Eurocentric and capital-centric notion of development, coastal dwellers are appropriating and filling it with content that responds to their own social ontology, practices, institutions and *habitus.* The process of constituting a transmodern and intercultural gulf does not only imply borrowing concepts of partially connected collectivities, but also involves questioning some of the inner practices, institutions and *habitus* that may hinder the well-being of every member of the collectivity and its inhabited space. Such is the case of the *Ethno-development Plan: Vision of life of the black communities of the Gulf of Tribugá (2007-2020)* and the *Regional District of Integrated Management* (Los Riscales, 2007). Both efforts appropriate and transfigure some abstract universalisms, revisit some local practices and foster intercultural interaction with every actor in the region.

To understand and grasp the complexity of the phenomena presented above, besides the historical and theoretical critical perspective on the constitution and expansion of western modernity and its materialization through concrete practices, institutions and *habitus*, this research refers to two main methodological approaches: Indigenous Research and Participatory Action Research. In a general sense, both methodologies have the purpose of transforming the living conditions of the places and people with which they interact. To do

so, both approaches are concerned with the macro and micro levels of power, recognise the dialectical relationship between both realms and the correlated influence they both have in the structuring process of the modern world-system. The modern world-system is reproduced not only through political and economic spheres, but also through shaping and normalising certain subjectivities, aspirations and desires. Both methodologies understand and focus on the possible changes that may take place on both levels of power.

Through their own particularities, both methodologies strive to strengthen the autonomy and self-determination of peripheral collectivities, historically marginalised by the racialised modern world-system. Besides providing theoretical elements for the transformation and overcoming of the marginalised condition of these collectivities, both approaches agree on the importance of understanding the historical and social situations of exclusion, racialization and colonization of workers, peasants, afro-descendant collectivities, indigenous groups and all other people harmed, subjected or eliminated due to the expansion of western modernity.

Moreover, to the extent that these methodological approaches focus on the transformation of realities through research, both claim the importance of conducting social research that focuses on practices. In this sense, following both approaches, the present research draws upon three types of methodological ruptures. First, between theory and practice by allowing the constitution of paradigms to change and transform during the research. Second, by acknowledging the role of the interlocutors in the Gulf of Tribugá in the research, it seeks to overcome the dualistic separation between subject and object typical of mainstream social science. Third, by ascribing equal value to every type of knowledge, this research strives to break with the tension between the academic, external and usually Eurocentric vision of the world and the local, telluric and everyday kind of knowledge.

That said, it is necessary to introduce the structure of the present document and its sections. The text is divided into three main parts. Part I, *Understanding modernity and western modernity,* seeks to understand the main characteristics and scope of modernity and its western version. Chapter 1, *Understanding modernity. Notes on its definition, scope and implications*, questions the Eurocentric understanding of modernity and its emergence as an inner-European process, while striving to recount the main features of modernity as an ongoing process that, although global, started with the expansion of Europe to the Americas.

Chapter 2, *Alterity and exclusion: colonising difference,* examines the nature of colonialism as a constitutive part of western modernity and as power dynamic that produced and continues to reproduce the colonial configuration of subjectivities in both the core and the peripheries of the modern world-system. This chapter delves into the most important nodes and legitimising discourses developed by the Eurocentric colonial powers to problematise non-western social ontologies and justify the intervention, transformation or elimination of those collectivities that do not share the social ontology of western modernity.

Chapter 3, *Developmentalism as a discursive shift of modernity,* analyses the emergence of developmentalism as a discursive innovation of modernity and considers its main mechanisms of materialization. Besides identifying the main features of developmentalism, this chapter queries the discursive practices and strategies deployed by developmentalism to problematise socio-ontological difference by creating standardised and capital-centric notions of well-being, poverty and development. This chapter questions some of the main characteristics and purposes of developmental programs and interventions as innovative ways of intervening in, transforming and ultimately eliminating socio-ontological difference.

After an interlude on methodology briefly described above, Part II of the research begins. This part, *Developmentalism and socio-territorial conflicts: political ontology in the Gulf of Tribugá – Colombia,* also consists of three chapters. The first chapter of Part II, but the fourth of the document, is *Introducing black communities in the Gulf of Tribugá: the struggle over territory*. Apart from introducing the region and its population, this chapter gives an account of the historical struggle of the black collectivities in the area and seeks to provide some elements necessary for understanding the current legal framework that provides particular rights to these collectivities, as well as some of the limitations of these institutional achievements.

Chapter 5, *Understanding socio-territorial conflicts: political ontology, reality as enacted practices and complex thinking*, argues that the core of the socio-territorial conflict that is currently taking place in the Gulf of Tribugá, rather than being limited to space or resources, it is ontological and socio-ontological in nature. To grasp the ontological and socio-ontological scope of the dispute, this chapter refers to the discussion of reality as the result of enacting practices, as a surfacing category that constantly interacts with other emergences of reality. Moreover, to understand the complexity of reality as the result of plural interactions between human and non-human entities that produce, reproduce and transform specific emergences of reality, Chapter 5 draws upon the concepts of relational ontology, assemblage theory and ANT in order to order to understand the complexity of reality as the result of divers and plural interactions between human and non-human entities that constantly produce, reproduce and transform specific emergences of reality in its multi-scaled levels.

Chapter 6, *Socio-territorial struggles in the Gulf of Tribugá: complex assemblages and the ontological conflict over territory,* presents the three main assemblages that dispute the hegemony in the Gulf of Tribugá. Namely, developmentalism/capitalism, sustainability/multiculturalism and communitarianism/non-capitalism. Referring to Part I, this chapter analyses the main characteristics of the first two assemblages as different manifestations of the social ontology of western modernity. Although stressing their differences, this chapter argues that both share the same socio-ontological framework and only allow for a passive and inert role for both the territory and its non-human entities. This chapter also describes the main features of black social ontology present in the Gulf of

Tribugá, as well as the ontological conditions that it provides to the entities of the territory. By presenting the three in-dispute assemblages, this chapter seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the ongoing struggle of and for the Gulf of Tribugá.

Taking a concrete case to exemplify the socio-territorial conflict between the three assemblages, Chapter 7, *Assemblages and the construction of the Port of Tribugá,* refers to the infrastructure project of the Port of Tribugá as one of the most symbolic and concrete disputes over hegemony in the territory. This chapter analyses the positions that each of the assemblages has towards the mega-infrastructure project according to their own forms of materialising their social ontologies. The main argument of this chapter is that, although the assemblages of developmentalism/capitalism and sustainability/multiculturalism belong to the same social ontology, they have different positions concerning the port to the extent that they materialise through different practices. Likewise, this chapter presents the main reasons that the assemblage of communitarianism/non-capitalism, which materialises black social ontology, rejects the project.

Finally, the Part III, called *The Gulf of Tribugá and the Pacific Region. What is next?,* and its chapter *Towards a transmodern and intercultural enactment of development and wellbeing in the Gulf of Tribugá* seeks to provide insight into the theoretical elements of the notions of transmodernity and interculturality, the main challenges of these two interrelated horizons and some of strategies to overcome such challenges and move towards the constitution of socio-ontological dialogues and co-existence. Moreover, this chapter draws on the notion of well-being developed by the coastal dwellers of the Gulf of Tribugá and argues that such a conception is already transmodern and intercultural, for it reflects the dialogues and multiplicity of the partially connected social ontologies and assemblages present in the territory. Finally, this chapter presents two processes that local collectivities have been using to work towards the constitution of a transmodern and intercultural Gulf of Tribugá.

PART I. UNDERSTANDING MODERNITY AND WESTERN MODERNITY

His father was an early convert to the Christian faith. We can imagine the fatal meeting between the native and the alien. The missionary had traversed the seas, the forests, armed with the desire for profit that was his faith and light and the gun that was his protection. He carried the Bible; the soldiers carried the gun; the administrator and the settler carried the coin. Christianity, Commerce, Civilization: the Bible, the Coin, the Gun: Holy Trinity

Petals of Blood - Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o

1. Understanding modernity. Notes on its definition, scope and implications

Although some scholars such as Toulmin (1990) and Harvey (1989) place the beginning of modernity in the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century, the present research understands modernity as a process that started in 1492 with the expansion of Europe and the confrontation of the European subject with those collectivities and individuals inhabiting the region later called America. With that encounter, through defining those collectivities as the "other," the European subject defined itself as the "discoverer," the conqueror and the coloniser of its alterity.

According to this perspective, Christopher Columbus can be read as the first modern person. He was the first to (officially) leave Latin-Europe, begin the process of constituting European ontology, soon to self-declare the "centre of history" (Dussel, 1994). Upon the "discovery" of the "New World," peripheral Europe became the core of the modern world-system (Wallerstein, 1974). Although it was Amerigo Vespucci who found that Europe had reached an unknown territory in 1492, Columbus embodies the expansion of Europe. His encounter with the "other" represents the constitution of modern European subjectivity. Now, the Earth was complete for the European subject to position itself as the centre of any human event and as the universal horizon of humanity (Dussel, 1994).

The expansion of Europe to the Americas and the development of capitalist modernity have multiple non-European causes that defined the geopolitical conditions that consolidated the modern world-system. Particularly, according to Anievas & Nişancıoğlu (2015), before the "New World," non-European causes of the emergence of modernity and capitalism relate to the Black Plague and the Ottoman Empire, among other reasons. All these processes created the conditions for the emergence and consolidation of capitalism within Europe and the expansion of the hegemonic powers of the continent as a result of over-accumulation (Harvey, 2004). The "discovery" of the Atlantic and the "New World" meant a shift in European subjectivity and the beginning of a new epistemological paradigm. Under this paradigm, modernity acquired some specific features, such as its pretension to universalism, its separation between humans and nature and its linear understanding of history, in which Europe stands at the end, as a model for every non-European society.

Along with these changes in European subjectivity, a product of the emergence and expansion of western modernity, there was a fundamental shift in scientific and philosophical thinking. Since the conquest of the Americas, two main factors became the pillars of western modernity: first, the racialised relationship between Europe and the indigenous communities of the "New World;" second, the Cartesian conception of *ego cogito ergo sum.*

Overall, the main objective of this chapter is to highlight the most important characteristics of modernity, its economic system and its epistemology. In order to achieve this objective,

the present section questions the Eurocentric perspective of the emergence of modernity, the emergence and consolidation of capitalism, the teleological understanding of history and, last, the importance of the Americas in the consolidation and expansion of the modern world-system as a racial and geographical division of labour.

It is worth noting that questioning modernity and its colonial condition does not mean invisibilising its positive aspects and contributions. Although modernity, colonialism and capitalism co-emerged entangled, they are not the same. In that sense, it is important to consider them as interrelated singularities rather than as one single unit. Notwithstanding the critical perspective the present chapter has on modernity and its colonial, racialised, capitalist and marginalising manifestations, it recognises its emancipatory elements. In that sense, a complex critique of modernity, acknowledging its positive elements, must analyse the mechanisms through which colonialism, racism and capitalism monopolised the materialization of modernity, co-opted its emancipatory elements and excluded them from discussion.

According to Fontana (2019), such is the case for the Industrial Revolution, the French Revolution and the European Revolutions of 1848: these events may have had the intention of and capacity to transform the social order in the region, but were diminished by the governments that "undertook the task of restoring the old social order while continuing to favour capitalist development" (Fontana, 8, 2019).[7] In the same vein, Castro-Gómez (2019) argues that it is necessary to revisit the notion of republicanism, still co-opted by political liberalism, and make it transmodern and popular (see section 8.1). In other words, any critique of modernity should be aware of its emancipatory elements and focus on its conflictive and exclusive hegemonic characteristics since the expansion of Europe in the sixteenth century. Similarly, Domingues (2009) argues that misacknowledging the positive elements of modernity and only considering its dark side (see section 2.1) crystallises its partial exteriorities, portrays them as stagnated in time and reduces their margin of action.

Questioning the colonial condition of modernity that materialised since the expansion of Europe seeks to provide some theoretical arguments in order to overcome its exclusive, racist and hierarchical features and explore emancipatory proposals for the constitution of a horizontal dialogue among multiple collectivities and cultures (see section 8.1).

With this in mind, this chapter is divided in two sections. First, by questioning the Eurocentric perspective of modernity as inner-European, *Modernity as a worldwide process* explores the multiple and diverse origins of modernity and capitalism. This section describes the origins and main characteristics of capitalism as the economic configuration of the modern world-

[7] Henceforth, my own translation from: Fontana, J. (2019). *Capitalismo y democracia 1756-1848: Cómo empezó este engaño*. Editorial Crítica.

system. The second section, *A brief epistemological and ontological characterization of western modernity,* analyses the epistemological and ontological fundaments of modernity, as well as some of its most representative characteristics. To do so, the section explores three main constitutive elements of modernity: i) the constitution of "I think, therefore I am" as the pillar of the dualist thinking of modernity; ii) the Eurocentric understanding of history as a teleological process that culminates in the European experience; and iii) some of the most characteristic features of scientific modern thought.

1.1. Modernity and capitalism as worldwide processes

Beginning with the revision of the conception of Europe as the centre and most decisive actor of modernity, the Eurocentric perspective asserts that the characteristics of modernity, such as scientific knowledge, capitalist practice, secularization and laicism are exclusive and particular to Europe. According to this perspective, modernity is an exclusively inner-European process that spread all over the world. However, according to a variety of sources (Anievas & Nişancıoğlu, 2015; Castro-Gómez, 2005a; De Sousa Santos, 2015; Dussel, 2005, 2007, 2013; Mignolo, 2005, 2009a, 2009b; Quijano, 2000a, 2005; Rehbein, 2015, 2020), modernity and capitalism are entangled historical processes of plural relations, characteristics and consequences. This perspective stands for a more complex and critical understanding of the features of modernity and capitalism as its economic system, rather than for the static Eurocentric idea. As an example, Quijano (2005) writes that what modernity claims as its own actually happened in different territories at different historical moments.

> If the concept of modernity is referred, only or fundamentally, to the ideas of novelty, of the advanced, of the rational-scientific, laic, secular, which are ideas and experiences normally associated with that concept, there is no doubt that it is necessary to admit that it is a possible phenomenon in every culture and in every historical period (Quijano, 2005, 212).[8]

Advocates of this Eurocentric perspective of modernity claim a linear perspective of history that ends in Europe. This position appeals to the Hellenic-Roman tradition and to the Mediterranean world in claiming the exclusivity of this process. Nonetheless, a closer look reveals the importance of the Islamic and Judaic traditions in maintaining the Hellenic-Roman heritage while Europe was going through its so-called "Middle Ages." Moreover, certain features of modernity that Europe claims at its own, such as the commodification of labour and the capital-salary relation probably developed in areas of Islamic and Judaic

[8] Henceforth, my own translation from Spanish from: Quijano, A. (2005). Colonialidad del poder, eurocentrismo y América Latina. En *La colonialidad del saber: eurocentrismo y ciencias sociales. Perspectivas Latinoamericanas* (pp. 201-246). Buenos Aires: Lander, Edgardo (comp.), UNESCO-CLACSO.

influence and later expanded to Europe. Last, it is only after the expulsion of Islam from Spain in 1492 and the later shift of the world's economic core to Northern/Central Europe that this region became the centre of economic and cultural activity.

Moreover, drawing on Harman's (2004) analysis of the rise of capitalism, the co-emergence of capitalism and modernity as different but entangled processes was not a product of some European occurrence, but was rather a "product of the development of the forces and relations of production on a global scale" (Harman, 2004, 54). According to this perspective, capitalism is a cumulative growth of new forces of production spread across Europe, Asia and Africa that began to emerge in several different parts of the world. With this in mind, the main argument of this section is that capitalism emerged as the new hegemonic social configuration due to a heterogeneity of European and global phenomena, which, since the sixteenth century the European expansion, seeks to impose itself on the rest of the world.

Although it is only after 1492 that the world's economic centre turned to Northern/Central Europe, the Crusades were Latin Europe's first attempt to take over the East Mediterranean Sea. After the European failure in this enterprise, Latin Europe remained a peripheral, secondary and isolated culture for the Turkish and Muslim worlds. In the thirteenth century, the Muslim and Turkish worlds was geopolitically dominant from Morocco to Egypt, Mesopotamia, the Mughal Empire of Northern India, the mercantile kingdoms of Malacca, to Mindanao Island in the Philippines. The Muslim world spread from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Until 1492, Latin Europe was a peripheral culture that had never been the centre of history, not even during the Roman Empire (Dussel, 2005).

In the text *How the west came to rule,* defying the Eurocentric perspective of modernity, Anievas & Nişancıoğlu (2015) analyse the international influences and determinants of the emergence of capitalism and western hegemony. It is important to stress that the phenomena analysed by this work are neither capitalist nor modern in themselves, but represent the pre-conditions for the emergence of North-European hegemony and capitalism as its economic system. These historical processes and events helped the materialization of capitalism in Europe by means of a class that directly controlled production.

In their study, Anievas & Nişancıoğlu (2015) identify three main moments that determined the emergence and later consolidation of capitalist modernity: the "long thirteenth century," the Ottoman-Habsburg rivalry during the sixteenth century and the invasion of the Americas since the sixteenth century.

Beginning with the long thirteenth century from 1210 to 1350, two mayor phenomena occurred and helped the formation of capitalism and the emergence of modernity. First, the role of the Mongolian Empire that unified the Eurasian steppes through trading networks. Although the study of Anievas & Nişancıoğlu (2015) is limited to the Mongols, it is important

to consider other mercantile-capitalist interactions of the time that unified the "Eurasian landmass under its imperial authority provided propitious conditions for commercial growth in Europe" (Anievas & Nişancıoğlu, 2015, 88).

Dussel (2013) argues that certain mercantile-capitalist interactions took place during this century due to the economic, social political and cultural connections deployed by the Mongols through the desserts and the steppes, from North Syria and the Black Sea to Europe. This system of mercantile capital, controlled by Muslims, connected multiple cities through the Silk Road and had Bagdad as its centre of operations. While Europe was in its Middle Ages, the Muslim-Arab-Ottoman world developed capitalist interactions by means of banks, accounting instruments and credit, among others.

In this sense, the importance of Italian cities as Venice, Genova or Napoli in the deployment of capitalist practices in Europe does not reside in their mercantile or financial innovation, for such practices were already taking place from China to the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, but on their location as bridges between partially isolated Latin-Germanic Europe and the existing mercantile system. As Rehbein (2020) puts it, Venetian capitalist practices focused on finance and commerce and the city became one of the most important mediators between Asia and Europe between 1204 and 1453. However, most of the practices and exchange mechanisms deployed in Venice that the Eurocentric perspective claims as inner-European, such as strong financial institutions, are not innovations of Italian cities. Such innovations occurred in multiple places along the along the existing mercantile system.

Additionally, before some of these cities became relatively significant as peripheral points of connection in the mercantile network, they supported and financed the Crusades as a desperate strategy to overcome their peripheral condition in the Muslim economic network. From the eleventh century onwards, trade began to grow around the edges of Europe – in both the North and the South - in order to reach the Mediterranean commerce system.

> Soon, too, rivers like the Rhine and the Rhone were being used to link the commerce of northern Europe and the commerce of the Mediterranean – and in the process giving a forward push to towns and cities in between (Harman, 1989, 39).

After two centuries of partial and limited control over some Eastern cities on the Mediterranean, the Muslims expelled western occupants at the end of the eleventh century. In 1289, Sultan Qalaun took Tripoli (in today's Syria) and, in 1291, Sultan Al-Ashraf Khalil took Acre (in today's Israel) (Maalouf, 2020).

This expansion of mercantile capitalism is what Wood (2003) calls the "Empire of Commerce": a type of expansive enterprise that centred their efforts in controlling international trade rather than focusing on dominating territories. This form of empire,

although tightly associated with capitalist practices, had extra-economic powers as basic operating principles. Such is the case of the Arab-Muslim, Venetian and Dutch empires that, despite their temporal differences, "sustained their domination over a wide geographic expanse not simply by means of extending the reach of a single powerful state but by perfecting their role as vital economic links among separate markets in dispersed communities and regions" (Wood, 2003, 47).

The second major event of the long thirteenth century analysed by Anievas & Nişancıoğlu (2015) is the Black Plague. One of the consequence of the unification of Eurasia by empires of commerce was the diffusion of the "Black Death." The first registered cases of the plague happened in Mongolia, China and Russia, so the products and people that travelled from that region may have brought the plague with them and spread it across Europe. Besides the devastating human effects, the plague influenced the social and economic organization of the continent. With the decline of the population in both Western and Eastern Europe, the epidemic disease reordered the feudal system (Anievas & Nişancıoğlu, 2015).

Contrary to Eastern Europe, where the decrease of the population brought special interest in rural areas due to the abundancy of land, in Western Europe, the plague brought an increase of agrarian revolts and a special movement to urban areas. The particular cases of France and England show how different reactions of the ruling class carried different consequences in the socio-economic conditions. Moreover, Anievas & Nişancıoğlu (2015) show how the responses to the plague by the ruling class of France and England contributed to the emergence of capitalism.

In France, the state decided to support the peasants' revolts by protecting their freehold and fixing dues. The consequence of this reaction was that the peasants' freedom "precluded market forces of compulsion emerging in agrarian relations, leaving Frances a fundamentally feudal state"(Anievas & Nişancıoğlu, 2015, 89). In contrast, the English ruling classes were particularly unified, such that when the agrarian revolts occurred, the state took the side of the landowners. This allowed proprietors to maintain tenancy of the land by "engrossing, consolidating and enclosing peasants freeholds, leading to the development of market forces in production and the emergence of symbolic relations with tenants capitalists; in short, presaging the sustained economic development of agrarian capitalism" (Anievas & Nişancıoğlu, 2015, 89).

The second major event is the Ottoman-Habsburg rivalry during the sixteenth century. Its main effects were the political fragmentation of feudal Europe due to resistance to Habsburg intentions to build an Empire, the European shift towards the Atlantic Ocean rather than the Mediterranean Sea, and the primitive accumulation of capital. These three developments, crucial to the consolidation of capitalism in Europe, are tightly related to contemporary Ottoman geopolitical pressures on Europe (Anievas & Nişancıoğlu, 2015, 93). Ottoman

superiority over the Habsburgs led to their control of most of the Black Sea, as well as the Red and Mediterranean Seas. This meant that the Ottoman commercial empire closed European trading routes and forced them to search for new ways to reach the Asian market through the Atlantic Ocean.[9]

After controlling the commercial Mediterranean routes and pushing the Italian city-states, Spain and Portugal to the Atlantic, the Ottomans made commercial capitulations to France (1536), England (1583) and the Netherlands (1612). Under these agreements, the North-Western European countries, formerly peripheral to Habsburg-Mediterranean commerce, were able to trade under more advantageous conditions that their competitors and connect to Asia. These geopolitical alliances reconfigured Europe and led the Mediterranean powers to focus on the Americas (Anievas & Nişancıoğlu, 2015, 116).

Under these new conditions, the Dutch and the English became dependent on the Ottomans on two fronts: first, for the supply of raw materials; second, the Ottoman market became the main recipient of their exports. In both countries, "the attempts of merchants and financiers to monopolise and control such trade led to the establishment of strong trading companies" (Anievas & Nişancıoğlu, 2015, 117). At the same time, the importation of raw materials stimulated European manufacturing. Additionally, by freeing agricultural land from extensive production, land around European towns and ports became geared "toward more capital-intensive and labour-intensive forms of use, such as (proto) industrial manufacturing" (Anievas & Nişancıoğlu, 2015, 117).

Overall, this process contributed to increases in population, pressures on land, rises in rent and reduction of rural wages that set the conditions for both rural revolts and the primitive accumulation of capital that set the basis of the development of agrarian capitalism. The authors expose the process as follows:

> As the peasants were dispossessed, they turned to an alternative means to secure their means of subsistence and social reproduction: selling their labour to landlords and capitalist tenants in return for a wage. The persistent success of the state-nobility alliance in dispossessing the peasantry of the means of production led to the emergence of a "free" class of wage-labourers. The social property relations through which surplus were appropriated was thus transformed, from the extra-economic

[9] The invention of the caravel in 1441, a Portuguese innovation that, although smaller than the Chinese boats used by Zhen He earlier in the same century, could sail against the ocean currents. This technology, combined with the urge to reach the Asian market through the Atlantic, allowed for the expansion of Southern Europe. First, via the Portuguese conquest of the Western coasts of Africa in the South Atlantic, then of the coasts of East Africa towards Asia, to Sri Lanka and Japan. Later, Spain took the lead in terms of expanding westward into the tropical Atlantic, conquering the indigenous peoples of the "New World," from México to the Philippines, Japan and China (Dussel, 2013).

> means of feudalism to the "economic" or "market" mechanisms of agrarian capitalism (Anievas & Nişancıoğlu, 2015, 219).

The third main event exposed by Anievas & Nişancıoğlu (2015) that set the conditions for the development of capitalist modernity is the expansion of Europe to the Americas. Although Section 2.2 deals with the problematization of difference as the course of Eurocentrism and universalism, it is presently important to highlight the effects of the confrontation between Europe and the indigenous communities in the Americas. This confrontation brought a series of new definitions of subjectivity, territory, private property and humanity that shaped the hegemonic forms under which the modern subject relates and portrays difference. As Anievas & Nişancıoğlu (2015) put it:

> It is no exaggeration to say that the challenges presented by the disorienting experiences of the colonial encounter were one of the most formative and constitutive of modern European developments, destroying and creating in equal measures (Anievas & Nişancıoğlu, 2015, 123).

Furthermore, the contribution of the Americas to the constitution of the modern world-system focuses on three main aspects: i) the modern notion of sovereignty; ii) the consolidation of capitalism as the hegemonic economic system; iii) the emergence of racisms as a system of social categorization. As for the notion of sovereignty, the invasion of the Americas brought two major territorial challenges. First, the aforementioned confrontation between Europeans and the native populations of the Americas. Second, the presence of different European states with competing claims to colonial dominance in the "New World" (Anievas & Nişancıoğlu, 2015).

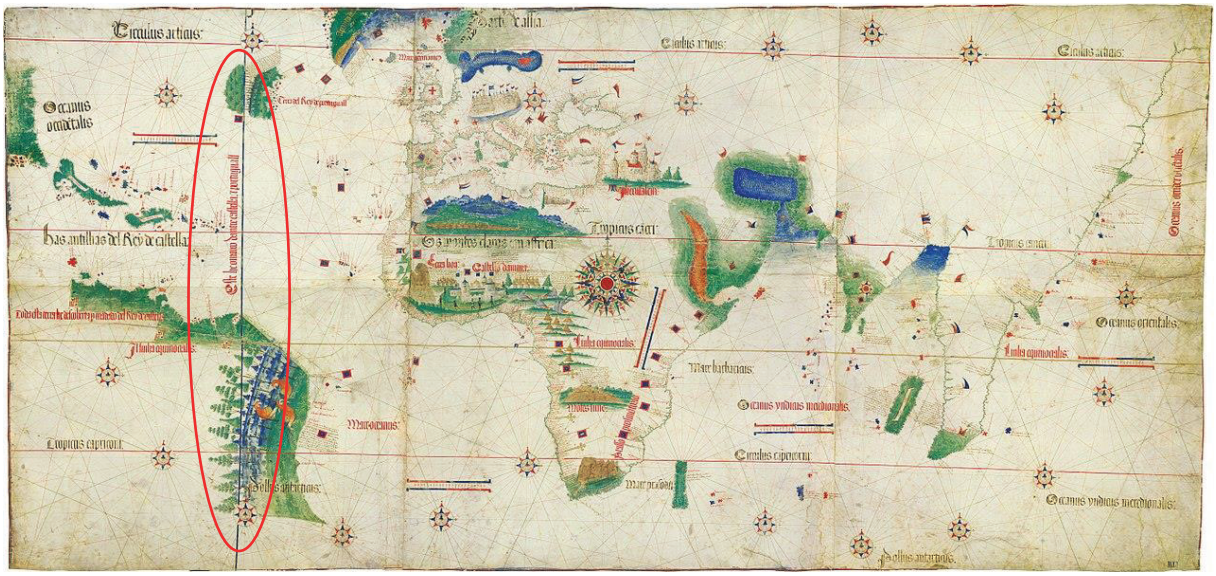
As Branch (2012) argues, although conventional studies on the emergence of the modern territorial state identify the process as an initially inner-European one that later spread through the world, this narrative overlooks the impact of the early modern period of colonial expansion. According to the author, in order to secure control of "new" territories, colonial powers had to design innovative conceptions to take possession of spaces without knowing the concrete places (Branch, 2012). The solution found by the colonial powers came from the classical Greek author Ptolemy. The conquest of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453 and the subsequent exile of the Greeks in Italy, the event that represented the beginning of the Italian Renaissance, helped Europeans incorporate the idea of the global, 360-degree foundation needed to claim "unknown" territories (Branch, 2012). Moreover, the incorporation of this mapping technique allowed colonial powers to organise global sovereignty according to abstract lines:

> The Ptolemaic cartographic grid made possible the linear division of the world according to abstract lines, a technique demanded by European rulers' desire to make

political claims over the (to them) unknown spaces of this New World (Branch, 2012, 248).

New mapping techniques allowed novel conceptions of a linear geographical space to materialise for the first time in the Treaty of Tordesillas between Spain and Portugal in 1494. Under this treaty, the two colonial powers that sought to claim "unknown" territory drew a geographical line, as opposed to referencing a place or a landform, to represent an international border (see Figure 1). The red circle in Figure 1, identifies the dividing line between Portuguese and Spanish colonies in the American territory. According to Anievas & Nişancıoğlu (2015), this first linear international division is the consequence of the "encounter with societies that European considered 'empty' – 'stuck in a state of nature' and nor under the capable of any sovereign authority – and the competing claims to occupy such 'empty' spaces by various colonial powers" (Anievas & Nişancıoğlu, 2015, 139). This form of territoriality and division of sovereignties set the basis for the modern territorial state that persists today.

Figure 1. Catino Planisphere (1502)



Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cantino_planisphere (accessed 04.09.2018).

As for the emergence of capitalism and the role of the Americas in its consolidation as the hegemonic economic and social system, it is worth highlighting that colonialism and slavery in the "New World" catapulted capitalism into the global industrial system that it would become. This is due to changes in the forms of production, both in the Atlantic and in metropolises, after the subjugation of American and African economies. As Anibal Quijano and Immanuel Wallerstein (1992) argue, "the Americas were not incorporated into an already

existing capitalist world-economy. There could not have been a capitalistic world-economy without the Americas" (Quijano & Wallerstein, 1992, 549).

Moreover, although authors like Irfan Habib (1995) suggest that colonialism was a necessary pre-condition for capitalism, the decolonial perspective asserts that colonialism is an intrinsic component of the emergence of capitalism. It is through the subjugation and alienation of specific populations that capitalism emerged and found its way to hegemony. Hence, although colonialism and capitalism are different phenomena, the former is not an exclusive pre-condition for the latter, but rather only one of its conditions of possibility since its consolidation in the sixteenth century. As Rehbein (2020) puts it, it is not that capitalism developed in Europe and later expanded to the world, but that "European capitalism developed in conjunction with colonialism and spread across the world due to colonialism" (Rehbein, 2020, 696).

To the extent that the emergence and expansion of capitalism developed in conjunction with colonialism, the role of the Americas in the constitution of the modern world-system is decisive. According Anievas & Nişancıoğlu (2015), the final push towards the consolidation of capitalism was the colonization of the Americas. The invasion of the "New World" "[came] to constitute the principal crucible through which modern European political thinking and identity relations were forged. The web of commercial and financial relationship engendered by the Atlantic slave trade would also be subsequently prove a critical factor in Britain's capitalist industrialisation, further assisting its rise to global supremacy" (Anievas & Nişancıoğlu, 2015, 121-122).

In the same vein, Quijano (2005) emphasises that, with the Americas, for the first time in history, every form of control over labour and over the production, appropriation and distribution of products became articulated in terms of the capital-wage relationship and the world market. The constitution of worldwide capitalism was only possible after the colonial powers made use of every known form of control over labour, resources and products in the Americas. These forms of control included slavery, serfdom, small mercantile production, reciprocity and wage labour. Colonialism in the Americas established, for the first time, "a global pattern of control of labour, its resources and its products. (…) In this way, a new, original and singular structure of production relations was established in the historical experience of the world: world capitalism" (Quijano, 2005, 204).

The "New World," the final straw in the constitution of capitalism, responds to the linkage between capitalism and the emergence of Eurocentrism and racism. That means that the Americas were determinant in constituting the henceforth hegemonic exercise of power in both its macro and micro forms (see Chapter 2). With the invasion of the Americas and the further enslavement of African populations, European powers produced new identities that structured a new global division of labour. This new global division of labour, established in

the sixteenth century, responded to the social classification of humans according to their race or phenotype.

> Thus, each form of work control was articulated with a particular race. Consequently, the control of a specific form of work could be at the same time the control of a specific group of dominated people (Quijano, 2005, 205).

Due to this new socio-economic configuration, the production, appropriation and distribution of products became correlated with particular phenotypes. In non-European regions, unfree labour or non-wage labour was for African and indigenous communities while wage labour was almost exclusively reserved for the white population. This meant that the colonial division of labour geographically distributed capitalism based on race. This geographical distribution of capitalism, that is, the modern world-system, viewed Europe as the core of the world's economy (Wallerstein, 1974). Broadly speaking, the modern world-system is a scheme "in which there is extensive division of labour. This division is not merely functional – that is, occupational – but geographical" (Wallerstein, 1974, 348).

According to Wallerstein (1974), the consolidation of capitalism as the economic scheme of the modern world-system required three main elements: first, the expansion of the territory under control; second, the development of different types of labour control according to product and location (i.e. wage labour in Europe, non-wage labour in the Americas); third, the creation or strengthening of states in what would become the core of the world-system. In this regard, Quijano & Wallerstein (1992) suggest that the Americas provided two of these elements: the region offered virtually unlimited space and "became the locus and prime testing-ground of variegated methods of labour control" (Quijano & Wallerstein, 1992).

A global understanding of the co-emergence of modernity and capitalism does not mean misacknowledging or excluding the local social and economic processes that took place in Western Europe, but providing a complex and dynamic perspective on such phenomena. In this sense, after describing the global processes that created the conditions for the emergence of capitalism as the economic system of modernity, it is worth referring to the inner-European social and economic transitions that led to the configuration of capitalism.

According to Harman (2004), the capitalist configuration in its full development came into "existence because at some point a capitalist class emerged that did directly control production and was therefore able to directly exploit people on its own account, rather than simply being an intermediary between other exploiters" (Harman, 2004, 57). The latter is the case of merchant capitalism and usurer classes that depended on exploitation carried out by others. Moreover, the differences between other manifestations of capitalism and "proper" capitalism reside in the fact that extra-economic forces are essential to economic coercion

(Wood, 2003). This does not mean that capitalism does not require extra-economic forces, but, rather, that their role is opaque and usually carried out by state institutions.

> Capitalism is unique in its capacity to detach economic from extra-economic power, and that this, among other things, implies that the economic power of capital can reach far beyond the grasp of any existing, or conceivable, political and military power. At the same time, capital's economic power cannot exist without the support of extra-economic force; and extra-economic force is today, as before, primarily supplied by the state (Wood, 2003, 5).

With this in mind, then, capitalism is an economic and social configuration in which all economic actors depend on the market for their basic needs. It is a system in which "class relations between producers and appropriators, and specifically the relation between capitalists and wage labourers, are also mediated by the market" (Wood, 2003, 9). The emergence of this type of relation between producers and appropriators, as well as dependence on the market for basic needs, required the separation of producers from the means of production, which passed into the hands of the new exploiting class (Harman, 2004).

With the appropriation of the means of production by this new class, the former producers had to make use of their labour power in return for sufficient remuneration to provide for their basic needs and keep them fit for work. The difference between the cost of the product produced and the remuneration the worker gets (the surplus) goes to the owner of the means of production. The appropriation of the means of production and changes in the form of exploitation – from serfdom to wage labour – are connected to changes in the modes of production. According to Harman (2004), with the emergence or arrival of new productive techniques, the new exploiting class managed to derive more surplus when operated by wage labour than by serf labour.

This form of productive capitalism developed through the separation of producers from their means of production, as well as the incorporation of new productive techniques, carried with it a four-fold effect on the constitution and institutionalization of capitalism. These effects are:

> It (1) increased the output -and therefore the potential surplus- to be obtained from a given quantity of labour. It (2) increased the cost of equipment and materials needed to undertake production -and therefore the likelihood that the individual producers would not be able to supply them themselves. It (3) increased the dependence of production on the initiative and commitment of the producer (if only because more care needed to be taken on the expensive equipment) and therefore the advantage of exploiting 'free' as opposed to serf or slave labour. And it (4) increased the

> importance of trading networks which could supply raw materials and dispose of the increased output (Harman, 2004, 58-59).

Along this vein, the four-fold effect of the mechanisation of production meant the separation of producers from the means of production and the subsequent use of "free" wage labour by the new exploiting class. Moreover, the mechanisation process also increased the integration of the production process and its outcome into the market. Not all four effects were always present, but, once the mechanisation process took place, the conditions for the emergence capitalism were present. The development of productive capitalism, in contrast with usurer or merchant capitalism, depended on such developments in the forces of production.

In contrast, where such developments did not occur, merchant and usurer capitalism were possible, but not productive capitalism. As Harman (2004) puts it, this "explains why capitalism did not develop in the ancient civilisations of the Middle East and the Mediterranean lands or in the pre-Hispanic civilisations of the Americas. In neither case were the forces of production sufficiently advanced for a new class of capitalist exploiters independent of the old ruling classes to emerge" (Harman, 2004, 59).

Furthermore, parallel to the development of new techniques of production, one of the central elements in the consolidation of capitalism was the marketization of some products in the countryside, and the correlated growth of trade and towns. Although, according to Harman (1989), commodity production alone did not bring feudalism to an end, it had great impact on the underlying from of production and exploitation. To the extent that the growing marketization of the economy provided merchant capital with a way of expanding itself through trade alone, and that it also turned a growing number of people into a potential pool of wage labor by depriving them of direct access to means of production, this process evidenced the contradictions of the feudal system (Harman, 1989):

> Peasants who could not pay their rents sold their land and sought paid employment, journeymen who could not afford to set up as independent tradesmen were forced onto the urban labour market. Capitalist exploitation, based on 'free labour' became possible, but often this did not appear in its full form (Harman, 1989, 63).

The incorporation of these new social and economic relations through the transition from feudalism to capitalism, a result of the global and local phenomena formerly described, made both systems - feudalism and capitalism - co-exist and compete since the fifteenth century (Harman, 1989).

> The two forms were both complementary (as when a feudal lord used some of his wealth to take part in commercial ventures using some waged labour, or when a merchant used the profits from the putting out system to set himself up with a manor)

> and contradictory (as when merchants and feudal lords fought physically for political dominance of great cities) (Harman, 1989, 70).

In this sense, merchant capitalism and its transition to productive capitalism created a situation of over-accumulation that, instead of being solved by internal mechanisms, lead to the geographical expansion of Western Europe and to imperial and colonial practices. According to Harvey (2004), the lack of political will on the part of the bourgeoisie to give up some of their privileges blocked the possibility of absorbing over-accumulation through internal social reforms, which made imperialism and geographical expansion the only possibilities to solve the excess of labour and capital. In that sense, the expansion of Europe since the sixteenth century, along with the cultural and ideological transformation of Western Europe, responded to the strategy that new classes, related to merchant and usurer capital, deployed in order to solve the problem of over-accumulation. Here, the relationship between capitalism, modernity and colonialism becomes evident, because although they are not the same – for there might be non-capitalist practices in modernity or colonial practices in non-capitalist structures – they are entangled, and have been since their emergence.

Capitalism as the configuration of new social relations

Agreeing on the local and global determinants in the emergence of capitalism as the economic system of western modernity, it is necessary to have a brief look at its main characteristics and at the creation of a particular subjectivity alienated from itself, from others and from nature. Although Ellen Meiskins Woods (2017), in the book *The Origin of Capitalism,* focuses on the inner-European processes that led to the emergence of capitalism, her analysis helps shed light on the characteristics of this economic and social configuration. Woods (2017) understands capitalism as follows:

> Capitalism is a system in which goods and services, down to the most basic necessities of life, are produced for profitable exchange, where even human labour-power is a commodity for the sale in the market, and where all economic actors are dependent on the market. This is not true only for the workers, who must sell their labour-power for a wage, but also for capitalists, who depend on the market to buy their input, including labour-power, and to sell their output for profit (Wood, 2017, 2)

Moreover, the author questions the idea of capitalism as a market of opportunities and introduces the notion of imperative coercion in economic relations. As Wood asserts, the classic understanding of capitalism relates to the notion of the market as a place with opportunities to sell or buy every commodity according to one's will, as opposed to by force or coercion. In capitalist ideology, the market represents a free space guaranteed by a "certain mechanism that ensure[s] a 'rational economy,' where supply meets demand, putting on offer commodities and services that people will freely choose" (Wood, 2017, 6). This means that,

under this ideology, market society is the optimal space of opportunity, choice and freedom, where the only possible form of coercion is the obligation of different economic actors to behave "rationally" in order to maximise choice and opportunity (Wood, 2017).

The supposedly rational will of those participating in the market, even when selling one's own labour, denies the commodification of labour power and class exploitation, and it does not contemplate the compulsion and coercion intrinsic to economic relations. According to Wood (2017), the most coercive component of capitalism is the fact that "material life and social reproduction of capital are universally mediated by the market, so that all individuals must in one way or another enter into market relations in order to gain access to the means of life" (Wood, 2017, 6). This means that capitalism is an economic system with universal pretensions within which market dependence regulates not only economic transactions, but also social relations and existence itself.

> You must make everything that is yours *saleable,* i.e., useful. If I ask the political economist: Do I obey economic laws if I extract money by offering my body for sale, by surrendering it to another's lust? (The factory workers in France call the prostitution of their wives and daughters the nth working hour, which is literally correct.) – Or am I not acting in keeping with political economy if I sell my friend to the Moroccans? (And the direct sale of men in the form of a trade in conscripts, etc., takes place in all civilised countries.) – Then the political economist replies to me: You do not transgress my laws; but see what Cousin Ethics and Cousin Religion have to say about it. My *political economic* ethics and religion have nothing to reproach you with, but – But whom am I now to believe, political economy or ethics? – The ethics of political economy is *acquisition*, work, thrift, sobriety – but political economy promises to satisfy my needs (Marx, 1959, 76)[10].

Blind participation in the market means reducing one's own existence, the existence of every other human being and the existence of every other existing element in the world to an economic transaction. Thus, the imperatives of competition, profit maximization, accumulation and increasing labour productivity define and administer social relations. In Polanyi's (1944) words, such "an institution could not exist for any length of time without annihilating the human and natural substance of society; it would have physically destroyed man and transformed his surroundings into a wilderness" (Polanyi, 1944, 3).

Moreover, under capitalism, to the extent that the market determines every social relation, society must become a market society. According to Polanyi (1944), one of the innovative requirements of the liberal economy is that it demands that society embed itself into the market and not the other way around. In that sense, a market economy is only possible in a

[10] Italics in the original.

market society, for the liberal economy commodifies any form of social interaction. A market society also implies the separation of the economic and political realms. Although in every society certain institutions, classes or specific groups deal with the systems of production and distribution of services and goods, it is only under capitalism that economic institutions separate themselves from social and political institutions. Normally, the economic realm is part of, or a function of, the social realm:

> Neither under tribal, nor feudal, nor mercantile conditions was there, as we have shown, a separate economic system in society. Nineteenth-century society, in which economic activity was isolated and imputed to a distinctive economic motive, was, indeed, a singular departure (Polanyi, 1944, 71).

From the conditions of a market society and a self-regulated market emerges a particular form of being-in-the-world. In his critique of liberal economy, Marx (1959) argues that mainstream political economy considers labour and workers as abstractions, as commodities. That means that liberal economy makes the "worker sinks to the level of a commodity and becomes indeed the most wretched of commodities; that the wretchedness of the worker is in inverse proportion to the power and magnitude of his production" (Marx, 1959, 41).

Socio-economic relations under capitalism reduce workers to commodities and simultaneously alienate them from the product they produce, from their means of subsistence and from nature itself:

> The *worker* has the misfortune to be a *living* capital, and therefore an *indigent* capital, one which loses its interest, and hence its livelihood, every moment it is not working. The *value* of the worker as capital rises according to demand and supply, and *physically* too his *existence*, his *life*, was and is looked upon as a supply of a *commodity* like any other. The worker produces capital, capital produces him – hence he produces himself, and man as *worker*, as a *commodity*, is the product of this entire cycle. To the man who is nothing more than a *worker* – and to him as a worker – his human qualities only exist insofar as they exist for capital *alien* to him (Marx, 1959, 52)[11].

The commodification of labour carries with it the alienation of labour. This notion, of great relevance for the purpose of this research, strives to explain the distance between workers and the products they produce, as well as their distance from nature.[12] To the extent that workers are just another means of production, the lower the salary (that is, the cheaper a person "is"), the cheaper the goods produced. In short, the devaluation of workers is directly

[11] Italics in the original.

[12] The existence of different assemblages in Gulf of Tribugá evidences the existence of multiple types of relationship between humans and the inhabited space.

proportional to the devaluation of things. This implies that labour under capitalism does not only produces commodities, but it also produces itself and a particular type of worker. The production of commodities, labour and workers-as-commodities under capitalism creates a distance between the worker and the product. It alienates the worker from the product:

> (…) the object which labour produces – labour's product – confronts it as something alien, as a power independent of the producer. The product of labour is labour which has been embodied in an object, which has become material: it is the objectification of labour. Labour's realization is its objectification. (…) The *alienation* of the worker in his product means not only that his labour becomes an object, an *external* existence, but that it exists *outside him*, independently, as something alien to him, and that it becomes a power on its own confronting him. It means that the life which he has conferred on the object confronts him as something hostile and alien (Marx, 1959, 43).[13]

Succinctly, the conditions of alienated labour under capitalism consists of the following characteristics: i) it makes labour external to the worker; ii) the worker self-affirms through labour, but labour denies the worker; iii) the worker is not happy, but labour mortifies his/her body and ruins his/her spirit; iv) labour is not voluntary, but coercive. Labour is not the satisfaction of a need, but merely a means to satisfy needs external to it (Marx, 1961).

Furthermore, the alienation of labour also implies the distancing of workers from nature. The alienation of workers from nature translates into the deprivation of means of subsistence in two particular manners. The external world ceases to be an object that belongs to the workers' labour. The external world ceases to be either a means of life or the physical subsistence of workers (Marx, 1961). With the alienation of workers from nature, the former become servants in two ways:

> (…) first, in that he receives an *object of labour*, i.e., in that he receives *work*, and, secondly, in that he receives *means of subsistence*. This enables him to exist, first as a worker; and second, as a *physical subject*. The height of this servitude is that it is only as a *worker* that he can maintain himself as a *physical subject* and that it is only as a *physical subject* that he is a worker (Marx, 1959, 41).

Reflecting on modern epistemology (see section 1.2), the alienation of workers from nature implies the ontological separation of both entities. According to Marx (1959), it is through labour that humans create nature and create themselves as historical subjects. However, the alienation of workers from nature implies taking both entities as fixed, dehistoricised elements. Marx (1959) argues that, under liberalism, nature, humans and labour become

[13] Italics in the original

abstractions – not the result of material interactions. In other words, liberalism does not recognise the dialectical autopoietic component in the creation and re-creation of humans and nature through labour. In the end, the alienation of humans from nature under capitalism strips humans of their agency, of their intrinsic cooperative nature and of their dialectical relationship with nature.

In the end, capitalism is the economic system of western modernity and the economic structuring element of the modern world-system, "encompassing historically specific configurations of social relations and processes" (Anievas & Nişancıoğlu, 2015, 9). These particular social relations and processes, ruled by the abstractions of labour and workers, imply the reduction of individuals and collectivities to mere commodities, as well as their alienation from nature. Moreover, the reduction of humans and nature to mere commodities and the further alienation of both entities denies the dialectical autopoiesis behind the creation and re-creation of humans as species, as generic beings.

Considering the nature of capitalism as the structuring economic configuration that commodifies labour, alienates humans from nature and deshistoricises the dialectical interaction between humans and their environment, it is necessary to analyse its expansive condition. Capitalism resonates with the idea of western universalism because it makes every single entity and the interactions between them into commodities. The abstraction that liberalism makes of workers, labour and nature, and its denial of their contextual emergence and reproduction as historical entities, corresponds to the epistemological and ontological background to which it belongs. In other words, capitalism as the hegemonic economic system is another manifestation of some of the most important epistemological innovations of modernity, which will be analysed in the following sections.

1.2. A brief epistemological and ontological characterization of western modernity

Now that the multiple, non-centric emergence of modernity, of capitalism as its economic system and some of the elements that constitute them have been analysed, it is necessary to critically consider such features. First, thinking through western modernity requires taking it as a particular social ontology manifested through a particular socioculture. Although Chapter 5 deeply analyses the notions of social ontology and socioculture, for now it is sufficient to define social ontology as the ontological and epistemological framework that defines the limits of existence of individuals and collectivities. To illustrate, two of the most important characteristics of modern social ontology are the teleological understanding of history and the ontological dualisms such as human-nature or mind-body. Among others, these two constitutive elements of modernity define the limits within which individuals and collectivities exist and interact with each other and with the world.

In turn, sociocultures are the reproductions of social structures embodied in individuals and collectivities materialised through practices, institutions and *habitus* that concretise and perform the social ontology in question. An example of a socioculture that belongs to the social ontology of modernity might be capitalist developmentalism (see Section 3). The practices that materialise capitalist developmentalism base themselves on the socio-ontological features of a teleological understanding of history and the ontological division between humans and nature. Likewise, the socialist experiment of the twentieth century, which also stood on the same socio-ontological framework, conceived of history as both linear and progressive, and considered nature to be external to humans.

With this in mind, the following section describes transition experienced by the European subject from the *ego conquiro* to *ego cogito*: the consolidation of the rational modern subject. Moreover, the following pages explore some of the socio-ontological fundaments of modernity, such as the teleological perspective of history in which Europe positions itself at the end of it, the pretension of universalism in western epistemology and the modern dualism between human and nature, subject and object, body and soul.

From ego conquiro to ego cogito

According to Dussel (1994), unlike the postmodern approach that questions modern "reason" as reason, decoloniality questions it in terms of its aspiration to cover up irrational myth. This perspective maintains that modernity began in 1492 with the expansion of Europe and the confrontation of the European subject with what became its alterity. With this encounter, after defining and controlling the "other," the European ego defined itself as the discoverer, conqueror and coloniser of alterity. This means that 1492 marked the beginning of modernity as a concept, as a myth, and as the process of eclipsing non-European collectivities (Dussel, 1994).

The ego of the conqueror started in 1492 under conflictual circumstances. To the extent that inhabitants of the "new" territories were not the European "other" but, rather, the self to be conquered, once the explorers appropriated the new territories, the struggle turned to the people and to the self-reflection of the "other". The conqueror, as the first to impose his individuality against another, becomes the first modern person. Represented by Hernan Cortés and his encounter with the indigenous groups of today's Mexico, conquest is a violent process in which the conqueror denies the "other" as a different self and tries to incorporate it as an instrument into hegemonic logic. The instrumental oppressed becomes *encomendado*[14] (Dussel, 1994). This configuration of power based on violence that denies the difference of the "other," constitutes what Dussel (1994) calls the *ego conquiro.* This ego

[14] *Encomienda* was an economic system used by the Spanish in Latin America. It granted a conqueror a number of indigenous people to work on the fields, search for gold or perform any other labour.

is the subjectivity of the Spaniards conqueror that relates to the "other" through violence and military domination.

The conquest of Mexico by Hernan Cortés in the early sixteenth century began the shift from the *ego conquiro* to *ego cogito.* The triumph of Cortés over an indigenous quasi-God emperor (Moctezuma) related to *Quetzalcoatl*[15] set the basis for a new relation with the "other" (Dussel, 1994). With the *ego conquiro,* there was an almost sacred relation of superiority between the European "me" and the native-savage "other." This relationship set the basis for the later constitution of the *ego cogito.* In Dussel's words:

> The 'I conqueror' is the proto-history of the constitution of the *ego cogito*. A decisive moment has been reached in the constitution of its subjectivity as Will-of-Power (Dussel, 1994, 47).[16]

The stage following the eclipse of the "other" is the colonization of life, of the life-world (Lebenswelt).[17] After the domination by violence characteristic of the *ego conquiro* began the colonization of the systems of social classification and of everyday life of, first, indigenous communities in the Americas and, later, enslaved Africans. It is the first European process of modernization, submission and alienation of the "other," not as the object of a violent praxis, but of an erotic, pedagogic, cultural and economic praxis. Namely, domination of bodies, kinds of labour, culture, religion and institutions (Dussel, 1994). It is the beginning of the domination of ways-of-living, of social organizations, of relating to a space, of interacting with a territory. Colonization of the "other" means that Europeans tried to impose their social ontology and the racialised division of labour on the life-world of the indigenous and the enslaved Africans. Under this new subjectivity, hidden in "rationality," colonial power began its battle against difference.

Misacknowledging or denying difference as part of the shift from the *ego conquiro* to the *ego cogito* implies conceiving of the European experience as the only possible means to the end of history. As in the case of Cortés, western modernity relates to difference from an almost sacred and solipsist position of domination:

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[15] Quetzalcoatl is one of the gods of the Mesoamerican culture.

[16] Henceforth, my own translation from: Dussel, E. (1994). *1492 El encubrimiento del Otro: Hacia el origen del "mito de la modernidad."* Plural.

[17] From Husserl's perspective, life-world is everything, concrete or abstract, that surrounds the individual, the previous experiences of a given society, the ways under which the individuals relate to others. In a general sense, life-world is the "pre-given" condition under which individuals interacts with other subjects and with the surroundings (Moran, 2012). To a certain extent, the life-world is what the research has been referring to as "social ontology" (Baumann & Rehbein, 2020; Hofner, 2020). For a deeper analysis of this concept, see Chapter 5.

> The "I colonize" the other, the woman, the defeated man, in an alienating eroticism, in an mercantile capitalist economy, follows the course of the "I conquer" towards the modern "ego cogito" (Dussel, 1994, 53).

The symbolic dates of emergence of the *ego conquiro,* and its latter transition to the *ego cogito,* are 1492 (the beginning of the expansion of Latin Europe) and 1637 (the publication of *Discourse on the Method* by Descartes) (Dussel, 1994). This period represents the first era of modernity. The following period, characterised by the *ego cogito,* constituted by the idea of "Enlightenment," expanded on and spread all over the world the subjectivity that started with the expansion of Latin Europe in the sixteenth century.

Notwithstanding this shift, certain features of the old subjectivity, the *ego conquiro*, are intrinsic to the condition of the *ego cogito*. According to Maldonado Torres (2007), the almost sacred, dominant position of the *ego conquiro* renewed itself in the *res cogitas* or "thinking substance." The certainty of the conqueror in his tasks of domination precedes the certainties of ego *cogito* and his thinking condition. This means that the certainties of the *ego conquiro* are the root of the emergence of the *ego cogito.* Moreover, the certainties of both subjectivities reside in scepticism about the humanity of the colonial subject. In this regard, the almost sacred position from which the *ego conquiro* dominates and the *ego cogito* speaks is the certainty of the colonial enterprise and the racialised scepticism about the humanity of the "other" (Maldonado-Torres, 2007a).

Unlike the nature of the scepticism for the *ego conquiro*, based on the humanity of racialised subjects, the *ego cogito* considers the existence of the world and the conditions of science, mathematics and logic. However, the dualistic model between coloniser and colonised provided some of the elements of the Cartesian dualism and its separation between body and mind, human and nature and the *res extensa* (inert matter) and *res cogitans* (substantial thinking, consciousness).

The appropriation and reinterpretation of colonial dualism by western modern thinking translates into a racialised relationship between western modernity and its alterity. This new methodical dualism gave a scientific status to European "common sense" and assumed the body to be pure matter (*res extensa*). This allowed for the racialised studies of some populations. The dichotomy between mind and body and the dichotomy between coloniser and colonised gives to western scientific thinking a colonial condition.

> The very relationship between colonizer and colonized provided a new model to understand the relationship between the soul or mind and the body; and likewise, modern articulations of the mind/body are used as models to conceive the colonizer/colonized relation, as well as the relation between man and woman, particularly the woman of colour (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, 246)

This dichotomy translates into a distinction between "us" and the "other," into a dividing colour line (W.E.B. Du Bois, 1995) and into the zone of "being" and the zone of "not-being" (Fanon, 2009). This articulation of power, although developed in depth in Chapter 2, reveals how colonialism and exclusion have played a major role in modern science, for it labels nature as external to the human experience, renders racialised subjects disposable and European subjects superior. In the end, the *ego cogito* defines as *res extensa* both nature and the colonised subject. It takes humanity from some subjects and creates an imperial subjectivity in others:

> Thus, before Cartesian methodical scepticism (…) became central for modern understandings of self and world, there was another kind of scepticism in modernity which became constitutive of it. Instead of the methodical attitude that leads to the ego cogito, this form of scepticism defines the attitude that sustains the *ego conquiro*. I characterize this attitude as racist/imperial Manichean misanthropic scepticism. It could also be rendered as the imperial attitude, which gives definition to modern Imperial Man (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, 245).

Western modernity as the end of history

Promoters of the idea of modernity as an inner-European phenomenon also claim that the European experience is the end of history. According to this perspective, the European experience and project is modernity distilled – the goal of history and the culmination of any societal progress around the globe. This means that, by stripping modernity of its multiple origins, the Eurocentric perspective monopolised its content and established it experience as the end of history. At this point, what is remarkable is not that Western Europe conceives itself in an ethnocentric way – a characteristic of many societies – but that it managed to impose this idea, by force or persuasion, on the rest of the world, establishing a hegemonic perspective of global history.

In his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* from 1837, Hegel (2001), whose scholarship is key for understanding the Eurocentric perspective of history, emphasises that the "history of the world travels from East to West, for Europe is the absolute end of History, Asia the beginning" (Hegel, 2001, 121). According to this linear conception of history stated by Hegel, the process of reaching subjective freedom begins in the East and culminates in Germany.

> The History of the World is the discipline of the uncontrolled natural will, bringing it into obedience to a Universal principle and conferring subjective freedom. The East knew and to the present day knows only that One is Free; the Greek and Roman world, that some are free; the German World knows that All are free (Hegel, 2001, 121).

Moreover, Hegel (2001) compares history with the process of reaching the adulthood of humanity . In this sense, the East is the "childhood" of history because there is rational freedom without subjective freedom (Hegel, 2001, 122). The Hellenic world embodies the "adolescence" of an individual inasmuch as it can already be trusted for its "conducts and habits prescribed by Justice and the Laws. The Individual is therefore in unconscious unity with the Idea – the social weal" (Hegel, 2001, 124). The third stage of this process is the "manhood" of history, in which the individual "acts neither in accordance with the caprice of a despot, nor in obedience to a graceful caprice of its own; but works for a general aim, one in which the individual perishes and realizes his own private object only in that general aim" (Hegel, 2001, 125). Finally, the fourth phase closes the cycle by moving from the natural to the spiritual realm. This realm, reached by Germany, means "the discipline of the uncontrolled natural will, bringing it into obedience to a Universal principle and conferring subjective freedom" (Hegel, 2001, 121). The end of history is, therefore, self-control within freedom – self-control within the norms of the modern state.

According to this perspective, the German world reached a point in which the spiritual connects with the secular in which the state is no longer subordinate to the church. The conjunction state and church entails a "freedom [that] has found the means of realizing its Ideal – its true existence" (Hegel, 2001, 121). This stage, although only reached by German nations according to Hegel, means that the spirit becomes "capable of realizing the Ideal of Reason from the Secular principle alone. Thus it happens that in virtue of elements of Universality, which have the principle of Spirit as their basis, the empire of Thought is established actually and concretely" (Hegel, 2001, 127). This stage is the end of history: the point towards which every society is inescapably is moving.

This understanding of history, besides denying societal process in any other territory at any other moment in history, positions the "end" of history in Northern Europe. This means that almost every individual and collectivity must learn and reproduce the idea that history is a linear process that began a few thousand years ago in Mesopotamia and Egypt, spread to the Hellenic-Roman world and, after a brief period of Islamic rule, Europe regain dominance and universalised Enlightenment, modernity and development (Rehbein, 2015).

With the idea of Europe as the end of history and the means to any societal process, Quijano (2000) asserts that Europe became a pre-existing entity that developed and derived the features of western modernity from its own.

> Since the eighteenth century, especially with the Enlightenment, within the Eurocentrism it was affirmed the mythological idea that Europe was pre-existing of the power pattern, that it was already a centre of world's capitalism that colonized the

> rest of the world and elaborated by itself and from inside modernity and rationality (Quijano, 2000, 343).[18]

Hegel's perspective falls under what Dipesh Chakrabarty (2009) calls "historicism." From Marxists to liberals, this concept describes the aspirational modern perspective of history under which every society must submit to modernity to reach a concrete goal. Historicism suggests that, as Europe is supposedly the place where modernity, Enlightenment and capitalism happens, non-European societies are considered to be somewhere in the past – incomplete, not there yet (Chakrabarty, 2008).

Historicism, a teleological conception of time that evolved into linear developmentalism (see Section 3), is one of the intellectual foundations of racism (Anievas & Nişancıoğlu, 2015). Just as Hegel suggests, the most advanced place on Earth is Northern Europe, as they are the only ones who have reached "the Spirit." This means that the rest of the world is located somewhere behind Europe, having not yet reached "the spirit," and therefore existing as inferior.

In this regard, the social classification and distribution of labour based on race became the foundation of the theoretical development of racisms. The organization of societies according to race, a process that started with the invasion of the Americas in the sixteenth century, represents the empirical ground for scientific research trying to prove European superiority since the seventeenth century.

> In keeping with these unilineal stagiest models, the employment of scientific and technological criteria in proving the superiority (and thus domination) of Europeans over non-European peoples would become the norm over the course of the 17th and 18th centuries (Anievas & Nişancıoğlu, 2018, 128).

This racial teleological understanding of history means that modern world-system does not only classify the world geographically according to the racial division of labour, but also that it creates a temporal classification within every society. In other words, the modern world-system creates a temporal, racial and geographical relationship between core and periphery.

Nevertheless, in an attempt to rethink and re-define the way the Eurocentric perspective addresses history, Dussel (2005) establishes five aspects that are necessary to consider when discussing the nature of Europe and its Eastern origin:

1. The discussion should not confuse Greece with the idea of modern Europe. The idea of modern Europe located it in Northern Macedonia and the South of today's Italy.

[18] Henceforth, my own translation from Spanish from: Quijano, A. (2000). Colonialidad del Poder y Clasificación Social. *Journal of World-Systems Research*, *VI* (2), 342-386.

The so-called "barbarians" occupied the idea of modern Europe. What we know today as modern Europe was the horizon of Greece: the uncivilised, the non-political and the non-human.

2. The West would be the Latin-speaking Roman Empire and its Eastern border with what today are Serbia and Croatia. There was not a relevant concept as to what would become modern Europe.
3. Since the seventh century, the Eastern Roman Empire faced the growth of the Arab-Muslim world. This means that the classic Hellenic world is actually Arab-Muslim and Byzantine Christian.
4. In medieval Europe, scholars considered Greek philosophers part of the Arab-Muslim world. For example, before the Muslims translated Aristoteles and took it to Paris in the twelfth century, medieval scholars considered him a philosopher from Bagdad.
5. Last, after the fall of Constantinople in 1453, the Latin West fused with Eastern Greece against the Turkish world. With this fusion, the idea of modern Europe forgets the Hellenic-Byzantine origin of the Muslim world. It allowed for the following false equivalence that led to the Eurocentric perspective of history: Western = Hellenic + Roman + Christian (Dussel, 2005).

Moreover, Dussel questions the Eurocentric version of history in terms of seven different limitations:

1. The aforementioned Hellenic-centrism that assumes that the beginning of history and knowledge occurred in Greece, but denies the influence and importance of Egypt, Mesopotamia and others in the territory that the Greeks would later occupy.
2. The Eurocentric perspective does not realise the importance of the Eastern Roman or Byzantine Empires. It also tends to forget that the Italian Renaissance was the result of the exile of Greeks, after the Turks took over Constantinople in 1453.
3. Eurocentrism despises, ignores and forgets every practice or political achievement made by different cultures.
4. The periodization of history, according to European criteria, such as the Ancient, the Medieval and the Modern age.
5. Traditional secularism in political philosophies, which proposes, improperly, and without a historical sense, the birth and development of political secularization in Europe.
6. Coloniality of the political philosophies of peripheral countries.
7. The exclusion of Latin America from modernity since its inception, even though it played a major political role in world history. If it were to be included, modernity itself would have to be redefined, since Spain would have been the first modern state and Latin America would have been the first colonial territory of modernity (Dussel, 2005).

In contrast with Quijano (2000, 2005) and Dussel (1994, 2005, 2007), Castro Gómez (2005) places the features of modernity in time but not in space. In his book, *La Hybris del Punto Cero,* he does not consider modernity possible in every society in every moment of history. According to Gómez' perspective, modernity is a set of discourses related to race, nature, humanity, the state, progress, ethics and a particular episteme of philosophical and scientific explanations, that understood and organised the world in a wide spectrum of regions by the end of the eighteenth century.

In this vein, the author represents the origin of modernity and the Enlightenment in three particular events that happened in the late eighteenth century. First, the philosopher Immanuel Kant answers *"What is Enlightenment?"*in the *Berliner Monatschrift* newspaper. Second, Dutch clergyman Cornelius de Pauw states that any person born in the Americas was unable to achieve Enlightenment because the land there is humid and sterile. Third, the viceroy of New Granada – today's Colombia – commissions a plan for a university capable of enlightening the creole elite in the principles of science (Castro-Gómez, 2005a). In this sense, according to Castro-Gómez' perspective, modernity and the Enlightenment are not European phenomena that spread all over the world but, rather, were a set of discourses that have been accepted, produced and enunciated around the globe since the eighteenth century.

With this in mind, I take western modernity and the idea of Enlightenment as a particular episteme that contains conceptions such as absolute truth, indubitable principles and as specific method to reach knowledge. Following Dussel (2005), I argue that the consolidation of this particular social ontology consists of two stages: the first started in 1492, with the expansion of Spain as the first modern nation that begins with modern mercantilism; the second stage of modernity, constituted by the industrial revolution and the Enlightenment, deepens and extends the path begun in the fifteenth century. In the latter stage, England replaces Spain as the hegemonic power and commands modern Europe and world history, especially since the emergence of imperialism in the nineteenth century.

Overall, for purposes of this research, modernity consists of a particular discourse or language framed in ideas of progress, the state, science, knowledge, God and truth, among others, that positions itself as the end of history. It is a social ontology presented by Europe as its own creation, with different expressions and representations all around the world. According to Quijano (2000, 2005) and Dussel (1994, 2005, 2007), this social ontology had multiple manifestations in different places and moments in history, but it was Europe that spread it through the rest of the world. This "modern Europe," which, since 1492, conceived and continues to conceive of itself as the centre and end of world history, positioned, for the first time in history, every other culture in its temporal and spatial periphery (Dussel, 2005).

A brief analysis of scientific modern thought

Besides it colonial rooting, modern rationality has a series of characteristics that have been built upon by numerous authors since the seventeenth century. Considering most characteristic features of modern epistemology and ontology, the following section strives to identify the links between colonial practices and the conditions, proposals and statements of modern scientific thought.

Stephen Toulmin (1990) poses that the intellectual origin of the *ego cogito* occurred around 1630. He argues that, at this point, "scientific inquires became 'rational' – thanks to Galileo in astronomy and mechanics, and to Descartes in logic and epistemology (...) They committed the modern world to think about nature in a new and 'scientific' way, and to use more 'rational' methods to deal with the problems of human life and society" (Toulmin, 1990, 9). Moreover, he argues that, if one were to compare the production of knowledge before and after 1600, one could observe a transformation from a concern with practical and concrete issues to theoretical, abstract and general approaches to reality.

> There is a shift from a style of philosophy that keeps equally in view issues of local, time bound practice, and universal, timeless theory, to one that accepts matters of universal, timeless theory as being entitled to an exclusive place on the agenda of philosophy (Toulmin, 1990, 24).

In order to understand the nature of the shift that constituted the modern episteme, this section focuses on three of the most important representatives of Enlightenment: first, René Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy in which the existence of God and the distinction between Mind and Body are separated* (1996) from 1641 and his *Discourse on Method* (Descartes, 1994) from 1637; second, Francis Bacon's *Novum Organum* (Bacon, 2011) from 1620; last, Immanuel Kant's *An answer to the question: "What is Enlightenment?"* (2009) from 1784.

Although, at first, some of the methodological differences between these authors – particularly between Descartes as rationalist and Bacon as empiricist – might seem irreconcilable, they all represent the fundamental pillars of modern thinking. In addition, it is worth noting that all of these authors claim to have the method to reach "absolute truth." Claiming to be able to reach a truth that is otherwise only accessible to God is a false form of secularism, for these epistemological approaches depend on a particular perspective on God and the divine. As Rehbein (2015) puts it, this kind of reasoning is only possible in monotheistic religions:

> Only the monotheistic religions seem to be predicated on the idea that human beings are able to recognize an absolutely true foundation of their knowledge, namely the

> singular God, and that based on this principle, there can be only one reality (Rehbein, 2015, 23).

Descartes starts this trend in his claim to an abstract, deductive, universal and theoretical knowledge, denying any form of knowledge acquired through personal experience or the senses. According to him, the only way to establish any permanent structure in science is by getting "rid myself of all the opinions which I have formerly accepted and commence to build a new from the foundation" (Descartes, 1996, 6).

According to Nieto Olarte (2019), taking doubt as the core of methodology implies denying and considering false any idea or opinion about which one could have the slightest possibility of doubt. This means that we cannot be certain of what we learn through the senses, nor through experiences. In order to reach knowledge, Descartes needed a starting point beyond any form of doubt. That starting point is the fact one is thinking. As experiences cannot be trusted, nothing that one can see, smell, hear or catch is necessarily "real." The only thing that a person can be sure about is their own existence inasmuch as the person is thinking:

> I took note that, while I wanted thus to think that everything was false, it necessarily had to be that I, who was thinking this, were something. And noticing that this truth – *I think, therefore I am* – was so firm and so assured that all the most extravagant suppositions of the sceptics were not capable of shaking it, I judged that I could accept it, without scruple, as the first principle of the philosophy that I was seeking (Descartes, 1994, 51).

Descartes' line of reasoning is the following: even though one could feign that there is no body or world, one could not feign that there is no reason because, in the moment that one is questioning any truth (such as the existence of the self), there is the process of reasoning, which proves one's own existence. It means that the proof of human existence resides in the capacity for thought; once the person ceases to think, he or she ceases to exist. As Descartes asserts:

> Thus this "I," that is to say, the soul through which I am that which I am, is entirely distinct from the body, and is even easier to know than it, and, even if latter were not at all, the soul would not cease to be all that which it is (Descartes, 1994, 53).

Unlike the body and the material world (*res extensa*), the only certain thing that does not depends on anything corporeal substance is the existence of what thinks (*res cogitans*). This argument represents both the theoretical and solipsistic nature of modern thought and its characteristic dualism between mind and body. Due to the mutable and untrustworthy condition of objects, and to thought as the only reliable source of truth, humanity proceeds to separate itself from anything that it studies. This constitutes the separation between subject

and object – between thinking substances and defenceless, not-thinking material substances that might be studied in terms of form, movement or size, without any feature of will or any natural or divine intelligence.

According to Descartes, understanding such ontologically separate material substances is necessary to produce specific knowledge. Not every production of knowledge is worth it, for they may focus on material or ephemeral features. Any kind of knowledge based on corporeal or volatile elements, such as medicine, physics or astronomy, is uncertain, but disciplines such as geometry and arithmetic can be trusted because they do not concern their existence and contain some measure of certainty and an element of the indubitable (Descartes, 1996).

> For whether I am awake or asleep, two and three together always form five, and the square can never have more than four sides, and it does not seem possible that truths so clear and apparent can be suspected of any falsity (or uncertainty) (Descartes, 1996, 7).

In his analysis of Descartes, Rehbein (2015) suggests that the worthiness of arithmetic and geometry resides in the fact that these disciplines are "systems of knowledge in themselves but at the same time serve as models for the construction of a genuine system of knowledge" (Rehbein, 2015, 22). Therefore, the rest of the systems that explain the world become secondary and decorative. From then on, the only systems of knowledge able to explain the world are either arithmetic and geometry due to their "genuine" principles. Accordingly, this particular kind of knowledge unlocks the ability to unveil the mysteries of the world. This ability gives one a quasi-sacred position from which to understand the world.

That leads to the second of the contributions made by Descartes: the position from which scientists can understand the world through his deductive methodology. In this sense, Grosfoguel (2012) argues that "I think, therefore I am" places the ego at the foundation of knowledge in a position previously reserved for the "Christian God." All of the attributes of this Christian God came to be located in the "subject," the ego (Grosfoguel, 2012). To position knowledge as residing beyond time and space – in the eye of God – it is necessary to dissociate the scientist from any territoriality or temporality. Only by doing so can the scientific subject understand the object under study in its fundamental and eternal condition, devoid of any temporal or spatial circumstances.

This type of knowledge implies grasping a sense of perfection henceforth only possible in God, because God put it there. Descartes asserts that, by applying the correct method derived from arithmetic and geometry, it is possible to know the substance of objects and ideas –to reach absolute truth. His steps to acquire objective knowledge are the following:

1. Never to accept anything as true that I did not evidently know to be such (…) and to include in my judgements nothing more than that I were to have no occasion to put on doubt.
2. Divide each of the difficulties that I would examine into as many parts as would be possible and as would be required in order better to resolve them.
3. Conduct my thoughts in an orderly manner, by beginning with those objects the most simple and the most easy to know, in order to ascend little by little, as by degrees, to the knowledge of the most composite ones; and by supposing an order even among those which do not naturally precede one another.
4. Everywhere to make enumerations so complete and review so general that I were assured of omitting nothing (Descartes, 1994, 35).

Through these steps, scientists could reach infinite and godlike attributes inasmuch as they acquire the ability to understand the eternal substance of objects. As Nieto Olarte (2019) points out, the certainties that Descartes has are consequences of the kindness of God and in His status "as a source of truth, gives us the faculty of distinguishing the truth from error. The problem, which could be seen as epistemological – that is, a problem of knowledge – has for Descartes a solution of a religious nature" (Nieto Olarte, 2019, 473).[19]

> And one certainly ought not to find it strange that God, in creating me, placed this idea within me to be like the mark of the workman imprinted on his work; and it is likewise not essential that the mark shall be something different from the work itself (Descartes, 1996, 19).

In contrast to Descartes, who can be read as representative of modern rationalism, Francis Bacon belongs to the school of empiricism, which was very popular in seventeenth-century England. If Descartes focused on the general to understand the particular – deducting – Bacon and empiricists focused on the particular to understand the general – inducing. This approach aimed to reach knowledge claims through controlled observations and experimentations so that one could understand and dominate nature. According to Rehbein (2015), "natural science became explicitly technological with Francis Bacon. He argued that there was a cosmological fault line running between theory and practice: God created the universe so that humans could put it to their own use" (Rehbein, 2015, 26).

Bacon argues that the mind produces inexact images of reality because it tries to adapt things to human forms, which is why knowledge does not prosper. The principal cause of these deformations is what Bacon calls "idols," which are flaws or weaknesses of the human mind

[19] Henceforth, my own translation from: Nieto Olarte, M. (2019). *Una historia de la verdad en Occidente. Ciencia, arte, religión y política en la conformación de la cosmología moderna*. Fondo de Cultura Económica, Universidad de los Andes Facultad de Ciencias Sociales.

that keep natural philosophy from reaching truth (Nieto Olarte, 2019). There are four idols: those of the tribe, of the cave, of the market place and of the theatre.

1. "The Idols of the Tribe have their foundation in human nature itself, and in the tribe or race of men. For it is a false assertion that the sense of man is the measure of things. On the contrary, all perceptions as well of the sense as of the mind are according to the measure of the individual and not according to the measure of the universe" (Bacon, 1863, 54). These are individual natural mental flaws and limitations that humans have due to being trapped in a body that does not allow them complete comprehension of the world, for senses only provide perceptions.
2. "The Idols of the Cave are the idols of the individual man. For everyone (besides the errors common to human nature in general) has a cave or den of his own, which refracts and discolors the light of nature, owing either to his own proper and peculiar nature; or to his education and conversation with others; or to the reading of books, and the authority of those whom he esteems and admires; or to the differences of impressions, accordingly as they take place in a mind preoccupied and predisposed or in a mind indifferent and settled; or the like" (Bacon, 1863, 54). These are flaws or limitations related to personal experiences and individual preferences.
3. "There are also Idols formed by the intercourse and association of men with each other, which I call Idols of the Market Place, on account of the commerce and consort of men there. For it is by discourse that men associate, and words are imposed according to the apprehension of the vulgar. And therefore the ill and unfit choice of words wonderfully obstructs the understanding" (Bacon, 1863, 55). These limitations come with language and with the fact that the words used by a particular collectivity limit its understanding of the world.
4. "Lastly, there are Idols which have immigrated into men's minds from the various dogmas of philosophies, and also from wrong laws of demonstration. These I call Idols of the Theater, because in my judgment all the received systems are but so many stage plays, representing worlds of their own creation after an unreal and scenic fashion" (Bacon, 1863, 55). These are the prejudices that individuals acquire by adopting particular philosophical systems.

Despite the presence of these idols, following the inductive methodology proposed by Bacon, humans might attenuate the effects of idols based on experiments and controlled observations. According to this inductive method, the systematic observation of particular facts frees thought from biases and avoids hasty and unfounded general conclusions (Nieto Olarte, 2019). This method is consistent with the meticulous observation of particular facts in order to increase the level of generalisation. It is not a simple enumeration of facts, but an attempt to reach generalisations able to collate with experimentations. Evident in the following quotation, Bacon's methodology, more than a list of the natural attributes of things, is an attempt to derive universal generalisations from experiments and observations, to marry

empiricist with rationalist postures. This is something that, in the author's perspective, had never been done:

> Those who have handled sciences have been either men of experiment or men of dogmas. The men of experiment are like the ant, they only collect and use; the reasoners resemble spiders, who make cobwebs out of their own substance. But the bee takes a middle course: it gathers its material from the flowers of the garden and of the field, but transforms and digests it by a power of its own. Not unlike this is the true business of philosophy; for it neither relies solely or chiefly on the powers of the mind, nor does it take the matter which it gathers from natural history and mechanical experiments and lay it up in the memory whole, as it finds it, but lays it up in the understanding altered and digested. Therefore from a closer and purer league between these two faculties, the experimental and the rational (such as has never yet been made), much may be hoped (Bacon, 1863, 93).

The focus on experiments to reach knowledge finds restrictions not only in the idols of the mind, but also in the physical limitations of the human body's capacity to observe. For this reason, it is necessary to resort to instruments and experiments that sharpen and elevate human physical faculties. The main purpose of experimentation through technology and new instruments is to reveal the secrets of nature, to unveil its hidden enigmas. Reaching those hidden secrets through experimentation carries with it two main ontological elements: first, the dualism between humans/nature, representative also of Descartes and of every other modern scientist and philosopher; second, the superior position of humans against nature. To Bacon, it is not a neutral separation between humans and nature, but an affirmation of the divine right of humans over nature:

> Only let the human race recover that right over nature which belongs to it by divine bequest, and let power be given it; the exercise thereof will be governed by sound reason and true religion (Bacon, 1863, 115).

According to Merchant (2006), Bacon's notion of the superiority of humans over nature is revealed through the language he uses to refer to experimentation and the unveiling of nature's secrets. His terminology relates to torture and contemporary witch trials, the latter of which served as "models of interrogation to reveal hidden secrets that could be used to convict the accused and levy the death sentence" (Merchant, 525, 2006). Although, in his texts, Bacon did not advocate the use of torture on human beings, he nevertheless drew upon the imagery of torture to describe the interactions that scientists should have with nature in order to reveal its secrets:

> The use of torture rhetoric condones a transfer of methodological approaches used to extract information from the accused to extracting secrets from nature. The method

> of confining, controlling, and interrogating the human being becomes the method of the confined, controlled experiment used to interrogate nature. Torture should be used not on witches but on nature itself. The experimental method is superior to that developed by magicians to control nature (Merchant, 2006, 524).

As Merchant also points out, linguistic similitudes are evident:

> In promoting his experimental method he used rhetoric that implied and even condoned torture—verbs such as "vex," "hound," "drive," "constrain," "straiten," "mold," "bind," "enslave," "spy on," and "transmute" were applied to nature. Such words were metaphors for the interrogation of nature (putting nature to the question), intended to reveal the truths of nature through experimentation (Merchant, 2006, 525).

In addition, the Baconian relation between human/nature, in which the former have the divine right to dominate and experiment on the latter in order to reach the absolute truth, implies the conception of nature as a mere instrument for human progress. To Bacon, the production of knowledge is not contemplative, but, rather, it is operative in that it works towards technical development. Furthermore, Nieto Olarte argues that within this line of reasoning the level of operability of knowledge is an indicator of its level of legitimacy, "because the power to make, reproduce or improve some natural action, in an artificial way, guarantees the validity of the knowledge" (Nieto Olarte, 2019, 450).

The importance of scientific knowledge production's practical reflects on the emergence of scientific societies in the seventeenth century.[20] With the precedents of the Casa de Índia of Lisbon and the Casa de la Contratación of Sevilla, both of which held the same purposes and imperial interests in the production of knowledge, the proliferation of this type of scientific society echoes the Baconian use of science – not as contemplation but as a mechanism for progress. According to Nieto Olarte (2019), the first statutes of the Royal Society of London for Improving Natural Knowledge, officially founded in 1663, stated that the purpose of the organisation was to promote the knowledge of natural things, manufactures, mechanical practices, machines, and inventions through experiments, without meddling in theological, metaphysical, moral, political, grammatical, rhetorical or logical issues.

Interestingly, besides acting as the head philosopher of the Royal Society of London and promoting the practical uses of sciences for human progress, Bacon was one of the most important promoters of the colonisation of North America. Under the rule of King James I, the Virginia Company of London, founded in 1606, was responsible for establishing a

[20] Interestingly, besides being the head philosopher of the Royal Society of London and promoting the practical uses of sciences for human progress, Francis Bacon was one of the most important promoters of the colonization of North America. Under the rule of King James I, the Virginia Company of London was the responsible of establishing a colonial settlement in Virginia.

colonial settlement in the region by means of plantations. To some extent, Bacon represents the epitome of the conjugation of science, colonisation and capitalism, the modern triad that became the fundament of the expansion of modernity after the sixteenth century.

The notion of knowledge, not as mere contemplation but as a mechanism to provide progress and benefits for humans, reflects on the approach that late-twentieth-century technocrats of developmentalism take regarding the reduction of poverty (see Chapter 3). In addition, as will become clear throughout this text, the type of relationship between humans and nature advocated by the Baconian method also reflects the ontological separation between both. Moreover, it promotes the positioning nature as an instrument for human progress and expansion:

> The human has undeniably been privileged above all else in the Eurocentric tradition. Francis Bacon boiled this idea down to its essence when, in connection to the Renaissance, he argued that the universe serves the human species. With existence, this privileging is displaced. It is not removed altogether from people per se but is instead limited to that which people recognize or even perceive. At the same time, it is applied to other life-forms that are likewise present (Rehbein, 2015, 128).

Moving forward to the last author, it is important to highlight that, rather than providing methodical guidance on how to reach absolute truth, Kant (2009) defines Enlightenment. According to him, "Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one's own understanding without the guidance of another" (Kant, 2009, 1).

Although Kant argues that every person has the capacity to escape his or her immaturity through critical thinking and questioning every dogma, he suggests that it is not easy to get rid of it. The incorporation of preconceived dogmas and ideas in individuals' explanations of the world ties them to immaturity because it is not "thought" in and of itself.

> Thus it is difficult for each separate individual to work his way out of the immaturity which has become almost second nature to him. He has even grown fond of it and is really incapable for the time being of using his own understanding, because he was never allowed to make the attempt (Kant, 2009, 2).

Finally, Kant concludes that, although there are many individuals who are still in the stage of immaturity, the time in which he lived was "an age of Enlightenment" (Kant, 2009, 8), for every individual could work towards their Enlightenment. This means that, even though not everyone is free of dogmas, the historical moment is the perfect opportunity to reach maturity and adulthood:

> As things are at present, we still have a long way to go before men as a whole can be in a position (or can ever be put into a position) of using their own understanding confidently and well in religious matters, without outside guidance. But we do have distinct indications that the way is now being cleared for them to work freely in this direction, and that the obstacles to universal enlightenment, to man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity, are gradually becoming fewer (Kant, 2009, 8).

This definition of reaching Enlightenment as reaching adulthood closely relates to two main notions already discussed. First, the idea posed by Hegel, in which he claims that the adulthood of being (so far only reached in Germany), means achieving subjective freedom (Hegel, 2001). In other words, Hegel's notion of the adulthood of "the Spirit" echoes Kant's (2009) definition of maturity. This relationship resides in the idea that a specific kind of thinking is the only way to reach maturity or, in Hegel's words, to reach "the spirit." As analysed above, what Hegel suggests is that freedom of the subject (adulthood or maturity) means self-control over the natural will and the possibility of reaching the "ideal of reason" (Hegel, 2001).

Second, in line with Descartes and Bacon, Kant (2009) argues for the importance of getting rid of any previous knowledge or dogmas in order to reach truth. Questioning everything is the only way to reach Enlightenment or absolute truth:

> But it is absolutely impermissible to agree, even for a single lifetime, to a permanent religious constitution which no-one might publicly question. For this would virtually nullify a phase in man's upward progress, thus making it fruitless and even detrimental to subsequent generations (Kant, 2009, 7).

The contributions of Descartes, Bacon and Kant in modern thought represent a significant and defining shift in the constitution of the European subject. According to Toulmin (1990), the constitution of modernity entailed four movements that changed the minds of philosophers and scientists:

1. There was a shift from the oral to the written. Before 1600, both rhetoric and logic were legitimate fields of philosophy because they had a practical function linked to the oral transmission of knowledge (Toulmin, 1990, 31).
2. There was a change from the practical to the universal in law and ethics. From that moment on, philosophers tried to find a general, abstract theory in order to understand the good, the bad and the just (Toulmin, 1990, 32).
3. The sources of knowledge turn from the local to the general. Since the epistemological shift around 1600, finding the truth implied a need to seek universal ideas to connect to particular cases (Toulmin, 1990, 33).

4. After the shift, the role of the philosophers was to take distance from spatial and temporal constraints and try to find permanent structures underlying changeable phenomena in nature (Toulmin, 1990, 34).

Similarly, Rehbein (2015) highlights four aspects in which such an epistemological shift influenced science and philosophy. In his analysis, this epistemic shift had important consequences for the study of societies and the human realm:

1. Mathematics and universal laws became the fundament for reaching absolute truth. This means that experience and "empirical examination of casual laws was not verification but rather some kind of illustration. Reality and knowledge were viewed as ephemeral symptoms of mathematical laws" (Rehbein, 2015, 26)
2. A translation of Cartesian epistemology into the understanding of individuals and social phenomenon. As the author poses, "human and society were thought of as machines, and following the model of Cartesian science, became objects of natural-scientific knowledge […] people were the basic elements of the state, as they were the active agents within the realm of the state. Just as the laws of nature have their origins in the movements of atoms, the laws of the state are composed of the movements of people" (Rehbein, 2015, 28-29).
3. The introduction of notions such as universality in the study and understanding of societies. As Rehbein points out, "one law is valid independently of all phenomena. Ideally, the world could be explained via a few universal laws, and its future could be predicted and altered through technical means. The abstraction from history and phenomena has led to the impression of some kind of universal validity" (Rehbein, 2015, 32).
4. The pretension to "uncover the invariant structures of the spirit independently of social coincidences" (Rehbein, 35, 2015). This suggests that, notwithstanding possible differences among cultures, there is innate "Spirit" or structure within every human being and society. As Rehbein poses, this epistemological shift suggests that "the human spirit is the same everywhere [and at any time of history] and that its basic structures are unalterable" (Rehbein, 2015, 35).

Summing up, according to Rehbein (2015), the epistemological shift that led to Eurocentrism consisted of the following:

> Our assumptions regarding omniscience; the recognition of the movement from the known and unvarying to the unknown and contingent; mathematical and formal modes of thinking; super-temporalness or objectivism; reductionism; thinking in terms of causality; the belief in the producibility of the world; and the existence of an unchanging, objectively predetermined truth (Rehbein, 2015, 36).

This idea of objectivity, besides being illusory, positions the scientist in an almost sacred spot from which he would be able to understand the world. Just as the quasi-divine position from which the *ego conquiro* had the right to dominate the "other," the Cartesian notion of knowledge suggests that the *ego cogito* stands in a privileged position from which it can explain the world. This belief suggest that, once the scientist objectively identifies predetermined truth, he or she can understand the world without any uncertainty because the deduction of new knowledge came from an almost sacred position. Moreover, beginning from zero – establishing absolute truth and the substance of the object under study – meant the power to name everything for the first time, to define what kinds of knowledge are valid and legitimate and which are not and to normalise or exclude strategies for understanding the world. This shift, besides being at the core of the modern epistemology, also represents the beginning of the modern project of controlling the natural, economic and social spheres.

On top of that, this epistemological shift defined the relation between subject and object. This relation suggests that the person standing from the almost sacred position has the power and the faculty to understand and explain the world. This position, called the Archimedean Point, endorses the scientist to name, understand, transform and use every object under study inasmuch as everything that is under study becomes an object detached from the subject. According to Adorno & Horkheimer (2002), this dialectical relation between subject and object, in which one cannot exist without the other, derives from the manipulation and the comprehension of the object not for what it *is* but for its *use*:

> Human beings purchase the increase in their power with estrangement from that over which it is exerted. Enlightenment stands in the same relationship to things as the dictator to human beings. He knows them to the extent that he can manipulate them. The man of science knows things to the extent that he can make them. Their 'in-itself' becomes "for him." In their transformation the essence of things is revealed as always the same, a substrate of domination. This identity constitutes the unity of nature (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002, 9).

This dialectical separation of subject and object is just one of the multiple separations inherent to modern epistemology. According to Edgardo Lander (2005), the fundamental separation in Western epistemology comes from the Judaeo-Christian tradition that distinguishes between the sacred, the human and nature (Lander, 2005). This epistemological and ontological separation leads to the objectification of the world because, if God created it, the world is not the same as God and, therefore, it is not sacred. In contrast with some other systems of religious beliefs, the Judaeo-Christian tradition does not place limitations on human control over and transform of nature (Lander, 2005):

> A significant milestone in these successive separation processes constitutes the ontological rupture between body and mind, between reason and the world […] the

> ontological rupture between reason and the world means that the world is no longer a meaningful order, is expressly dead. Understanding the world is no longer a matter of being in tune with the cosmos, as it was for classical Greek thinkers. The world became what it is for the citizens the modern world, a de-spiritualized mechanism that can be captured by concepts and representations constructed by reason (Lander, 2005, 5).[21]

Henceforth, with the second stage of modernity, the world became a de-spiritualised mechanism that reason can grasp and control with its own concepts and representations. As Adorno & Horkheimer (2002) argue, with the *ego cogito,* the relationship between humans and nature switches from a mystified and sacred relationship to an objectified one in which "nature is no longer to be influenced by likeness but mastered through work" (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002, 19).

Moreover, De Sousa Santos (2015) identifies another separation of modern science: he suggests that modern thinking created the distinction between scientific knowledge and "common sense" knowledge. This distinction is a response to the Cartesian distrust in experience. The gap between rationality and the world of experiences has the consequence of deterritorialising knowledge. This means that the constitution of scientific knowledge, more that excluding the possibility of any other kind of rationality in its pretension to universalism and in its denial of experience, pretends to de-localise and deterritorialise knowledge.

This ontological separation means that the *ego cogito* conceives of itself as that which has the power to classify and dominate every entity, human and non-human, considered an object of study. This dialectical dualism between subject and object positions the scientific subject in contraposition to non-European collectivities. The rest of the world's cultures become the alterity of the modern subject and the object of classification and control:

> The 'happy match' between human understanding and the nature of things that he (the authors are referring to Bacon) envisaged is a patriarchal one: the mind, conquering superstition, is to rule over disenchanted nature (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002, 4).

In this sense, the shift from *ego conquiro* to *ego cogito* as the configuration of the second stage of modernity meant the epistemological legitimation of the control, domination and transformation of every collectivity with epistemologies not related to that developed in Europe. Lander (2005) argues that the construction of this illusory universalism from the

[21] Henceforth, my own translation from: Lander, E. (2005). Ciencias Sociales: Saberes coloniales y Eurocentrismo. In *La Colonialidad del saber: Eurocentrismo y ciencias sociales. Perspectivas latinoamericanas* (pp. 4–23). Lander, Edgardo (comp.), UNESCO-CLACSO.

particular experience of Europe derives from a universality that is radically exclusive – a universality that has exclusion as its condition of possibility.

According to Adorno & Hockheimer (2002), the exclusion of nature from modern thought makes it totalitarian in as much as "the multiplicity of forms is reduced to position and arrangement, history to fact, things to matter" (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002, 4). Moreover, it is totalitarian because it does not recognise any other form of understanding or approaching reality. As posed by these authors, "despite the pluralism of the different fields of research, Bacon's postulate of a *Scientia universalis* is as hostile to anything which cannot be connected as Leibniz's *mathesis universalis* is to discontinuity" (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002, 4).[22] This means that modern western rationality is totalitarian to the extent that it does not recognise its limits and tends to abolish any other kind of rationality or reasoning that seeks to give meaning to the world.

In the same vein, questioning modern thought and its limitations, De Sousa Santos (2015) argues that the modern reasoning, or the indolent reasons as the author calls it, consists of four main types of reasoning:

1. Impotent reason: reason that does not expands itself because it thinks there is nothing it can do against a necessity conceived as external to itself.
2. Arrogant reason: reason that does not see the need to exert itself because it imagines itself as unconditionally free and, therefore, free of the need to prove its own freedom.
3. Metonymic reason: reason that claims to be the only form of rationality and, therefore, it does not work to find other kinds of rationalities.
4. Proleptic reason: reason that does not think in the future because it believes it knows all about the future and conceives it as a linear, automatic and infinite overcoming of the present (De Sousa Santos, 2015, 101).

Summing up

This chapter described and analysed the theoretical framework of the rest of this research. Decoding modernity from the decolonial perspective helps understand modernity as a global process rather than as an inner-European one. Provincialising (Chakrabarty, 2008) the Eurocentric perspective of the emergence of capitalist modernity demystifies capitalist modernity as the end of history. Taking 1492, the beginning of the European expansion, as the outbreak of modernity and the definitive moment in the constitution of capitalism as the world economy, sheds some light on the lacunas of the Eurocentric perspective on the emergence of the modern world-system.

[22] Italics in the original text.

In this vein, by dividing this chapter into two main sections – *Modernity as a worldwide process* and *A brief epistemological and ontological characterization of western modernity* – it seeks to answer the question that stands as the title of the chapter: *Understanding modernity. Notes on its definition, scope and implications.*

The first section highlighted the Mongolian, Muslim and Jewish influences present in the emergence of capitalism and the role of the Americas in the consolidation of capitalism as the world economy. Moreover, it emphasises the role of the "discovery" of Americas and the trade of enslaved Africans in the constitution of the modern world-system as a racialised division of labour.

Additionally, the first section described capitalism as the configuration of new social relations in which every interaction is reduced to capital. This description of capitalism stressed the alienation carried by the commodification of labour. To the extent that, under capitalism, workers are just one more means of production, it disconnects workers from the products they produce and the space they inhabit. Of great importance for the purpose of this research is the alienation of workers from nature, following Cartesian dualism, which implies both the ontological separation of nature and workers and their dehistoricisation.

The second part analysed some of the most important elements of western modern thought, such as its teleological understanding of history in which Europe stands at the end and its shift from the *ego conquiro* to the *ego cogito.* As for the notion of Europe as the end of history, this section examined Hegel's idea of the evolution of "the Spirit" that travelled from East to West until it reached Northern Europe and managed to fully develop itself. As for the transition from the *ego conquiro* to the *ego cogito,* this section analysed how this shift positions the European subjectivity as superior and with the right to dominate, understand, control and transform difference.

Overall, this chapter attempted to break down the hegemonic idea of the emergence and consolidation of the modern world-system for its exclusive, colonial and racial fundaments.

To close, after identifying the most important fundaments of European epistemology and ontology, the subsequent chapter focuses on some of the mechanisms used by western modernity to deal with difference. Hence, the following pages analyse how the western subject defines, problematises, controls and tries to transform the "other" in order to incorporate it into European logic.

2. Alterity and exclusion: colonising difference

After agreeing on the scope and implications of the project of western modernity, as well as its imperative to bring every collectivity into the same narrative, such project developed material and discursive mechanism to problematise, intervene and transform those collectivities that do not share its own epistemology. In order to understand the economic, political and cultural strategies used by the contemporary hegemonic powers to include every collectivity in the same narrative, it is important to analyse the differences between colonialism and coloniality in terms of content and scope.

On the one hand, colonialism refers to the economic and political spheres. Colonialism is a society-controlling power relation and economic means of production. Under a colonial system, a hegemonic collectivity exercises power to gain and maintain control over the institutions, economy and social relations of a dominated collectivity. On the other hand, coloniality refers to the subjugation of common sense, imaginaries, expectations and sensitivities of dominated communities. Moreover, coloniality is the production and reproduction of colonial subjectivities by means of bringing each and every colonial subject into the international division of labour (coloniality of power), colonising epistemologies to prevent the reproduction of "other" strategies of understanding the world (coloniality of knowledge) and shaping the lived experiences of colonial subjects and their relations to their surroundings (coloniality of being). In the end, coloniality is a phenomenon in which a colonial power prevents the production or reproduction of non-western cultures when physical violence ceases to be the strategy of exercising power (Quijano, 1992).

Questioning the relationship between colonialism as the macro level of power and coloniality as the micro level of power helps reveal the complexity of the colonial system, as well as its heterarchical nature. Arguing that power is heterarchical does not deny the hierarchical power relations within it but, rather, suggests that one level of power does not necessarily produce or condition the other. This means that interactions between both levels of power are dialectical and reproduce both colonial subjectivities and capitalism as the economic system of the modern world-system.

For this reason, colonial history can be read as a process under which economic relations forge the international division of labour, discursive representations naturalise political and economic structures and, with a heterarchical perspective, power is revealed as a complex dialectical relation between the macro and the micro levels of power. As Grosfoguel (2018) puts it, capitalism as the economic system of the modern world-system operates within the logic of modernity because it is part of it:

> We cannot reduce capitalism as base and modernity as superstructure, that is, modernity as a simple epiphenomenon of the economic. Likewise, we cannot think

> of modernity as totally autonomous and separate from capitalism. On the contrary, historical capitalism, really existing capitalism, is the economic system of modernity (Grosfoguel, 2018, 38).

To understand coloniality, this research analyses three main nodes used by colonial powers to problematise difference and legitimise domination over "other" populations. "Other" territories, "other" races and "other" cultures become the battlegrounds of colonial dispute. Following the pretension to universalism set by western epistemology, hegemonic powers of western modernity labelled those populations living in certain territories where the economic, social and environmental structures do not fit European standards as "barbarians," "savages" and "sub-humans." Ultimately, western epistemology problematises difference and legitimises definitions of the colour line (Du Bois, 2012) or the zone of being (Fanon, 2009) by measuring the proximity that territories, cultures and races have to the Western "standard."

Overall, after questioning the idea of modernity as an inner-European process, the economic and political characteristics of capitalism as the economic system of the modern world-system and the main characteristics of western epistemology (Section 1.2), drawing upon the idea of coloniality, the present chapter enquires into the micro level of power (Foucault, 1980a, 2008). Specifically, this chapter considers the insertion of colonial logic and "common sense" into the subjectivities of colonial populations by problematising them and legitimising biopolitical interventions in order to normalise hegemonic power relations.

To this end, this chapter has two main sections. First, *Colonialism and coloniality as the dark side of modernity* examines the nature of coloniality as a power dynamic that seeks to reproduce the hegemonic order by shaping colonial subjectivities. Second, in *Problematising difference: legitimising discourses of modernity*, questions the main colonial nodes and legitimising discourses used by colonial epistemology to problematise non-western collectivities and justify colonialism and coloniality through socio-ontological difference.

2.1. Colonialism, coloniality and the dark side of modernity

In order to understand coloniality and the dark side of modernity (Mignolo, 2005, 2009a, 2009b), it is important to clarify the meanings of the terms "colony," "colonialism" and "coloniality." As for the first, in trying to disconnect the notion of "colony" from that defined by European expansion of the sixteenth century, Stein (1999) suggests that a neutral and general understanding of the notion of "colony" should be as follows:

> An implanted settlement established by one society in either inhabited territory or the territory of another society. The implanted settlement is established for long-term residence by all or part of the population and is both spatially and socially distinguishable from the community of the host society. The settlement on set by a

> distinct formal corporate identity as a community with cultural/ritual, economic, military or political ties to its homeland, but the home land need not politically dominate the implanted settlement (Stein, 1999, 30).

As the author poses, his definition of a "colony," in order to take into account pre-modern forms of the phenomenon, does not necessarily entail the power relations between the host and the settlers. This means that Stein (1999) treats the notion of "colony" as an "open issue to be the determined empirically, rather than assuming a priori that these are structures to fit in, as in the European colonialism model" (Stein, 1999, 30). The European colonialism model, which monopolised the definition of "colony," would include: "(a) a large-scale emigration from the homeland, (b) the appropriation of local lands through the subjugation of local people, (c) colonial control of the local labour force, or (d) formal political and economic control of the implanted settlement by the homeland or metropolises" (Stein, 1999, 29).

Furthermore, according to Gosden (2004), the word "colony" is a direct translation of the Latin word *colonia,* which "was used to refer to a farm, settlement or landed estate, deriving from the noun *colonus* (tiller farmer, planter or settler in a new country) linked to the verb *colere* (to cultivate, till or inhabit)" (Gosden, 2004, 1). Moreover, the fact that the concept of "colony" in its ancient meaning related to the activity of cultivating, resonates with its future interpretation and use in terms of European expansion since the sixteenth century.

To the explorers, scientist and philosophers of European expansion, one of the legitimating discourses of the conquest of and colonial settlements on "new" territories was that the local communities did not "improve" the land in a European manner. According to European rationality, a non-cultivated territory was an uninhabited territory. Here begins the notions of "colony" and "colonisation" that legitimated the discourse of the expansion of Europe. Limiting the general idea of using land to specific idea of using land in the European manner led to the seizure of territories and the consequent expropriation and displacement of local communities from their lands. As Gosden (2004) puts it, the "native inhabitants were denied rights to the land as they did not till or improve it, a doctrine of law known as *terra nullis* and only recently overturned as the legal basis of land ownership in places like Australia" (Gosden, 2004, 2).

Although *Problematising difference: legitimising discourses of modernity* analyses how colonial powers problematised difference, it is important to highlight the philosophical background of the postures that legitimated the European appropriation of land in the Americas. Besides incorporating local communities in North America into the teleological perspective of history, John Locke, in his 1689 text *Two Treatises of Government,* bases the notion of land property and use in divine mandate. This idea would eventually leave every indigenous community in the Americas excluded from land ownership:

> God gave the world to men in common, but since He gave it them for their benefit and the greatest conveniences of life they were capable to draw from it, it cannot be supposed He meant it should always remain common and uncultivated. He gave it to the use of the industrious and rational (and labour was to be his title to it); not to the fancy or covetousness of the quarrelsome and contentious (Locke, 1823, 118).

The modern linkage between colony, cultivation and appropriation leads to the idea of modern colonialism. As stated by Gosden (2004), the forms of colonialism prior to 1492 and those after the expansion of Europe vary in the sense that modern colonialism was, and still is, "a gradual incorporation of the whole world into colonial structures" (Gosden, 2004, 113). On the contrary, colonialism before the emergence of capitalist modernity was the dynamic in which a metropolitan power "sen[t] out people to a geographically distant and culturally different area" (Gosden, 2004, 2) without universal claims. Considering this, the relationship between western universality and the western definition of land ownership set the basis for legitimating the expansion, appropriation and colonisation of every corner of the world by European powers.

In this vein, using González Casanova's notion of "internal colonialism" (2006), the definition of colonialism is linked to the phenomenon of conquest. Consequently, the author portrays the conditions of colonised populations as follows:

1. They inhabit a territory without their own government.
2. They are in a situation of inequality compared to the elites of dominant ethnic groups and of the classes that compose them.
3. The colonised administration and legal-political responsibility are under control of the dominant ethnic groups, the bourgeoisies and oligarchies of the central government or its allies and subordinates.
4. The colonised inhabitants do not participate in the highest political and military positions of the central government, except in the condition of "assimilated."
5. The central government imposes and regulates the rights of its inhabitants and their economic, political, social and cultural situation.
6. Usually, the colonised belong to a "race" different from the one in power. The colonisers consider the colonised "race" to be "inferior."
7. Most of the colonised belong to a different culture and speak a language other than that spoken in the core of the world-system (González Casanova, 2006).

Modern colonies and colonialism are the historical phenomena of the expansion of capitalism by European powers "by extending its control over the Americas, Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia from the sixteenth through the mid-twentieth century" (Stein, 1999, 28). Therefore, a definition of modern colonialism implies the constitution and expansion of the modern world-system. The "encounter" with the "New World" meant the consolidation of

capitalism as a global economic system and defined a new form of ruling the world. As stated in the definition of modernity (see Chapter 1), the role of the Americas in the constitution of modernity was vital. Moreover, the expansion of Europe towards the Americas determined what scholars, experts and intellectuals from every discipline understand as colonialism (Stein, 1999, 28). In other words, the expansion of European control as colonialism, drawing upon González Casanova (2006), is "the domination of an alien minority, asserting racial and cultural superiority over a materially inferior native majority" (Stein, 1999, 28).

Domination of a population by means of asserting racial and cultural superiority entails the will to colonise beyond territory and economic means of production. As analysed in Chapter 1, modernity entails the universal urge to include every individual and collectivity in its system of classification, meanings and values. With important variations according to geographical and temporal locations, the successful colonisation of values, epistemologies and "common senses" is what the decolonial approach defines as "coloniality." In other words, the difference between colonialism and coloniality is that the first deals with the economic and political spheres of power relations between the core and the periphery, while the second deals with the disciplinary technologies, as well as the regulatory and normative devices, that forge colonial subjectivities (Castro-Gómez, 2007).

The phenomenon of modern colonisation refers to the intertwined power relationship between colonialism and coloniality. From that moment on, different processes of colonisation made by European powers have not been only over territories, institutions and social orders – as the definition given by González Casanova (2006) and Stein (1999) – but also over the subjectivities, identities and modes of expression of the colonised. According to Castro-Gómez (2005b), coloniality is a cultural imagery, it is "discourses that are not only objectified in disciplinary 'apparatuses' (laws, institutions, colonial bureaucracies) but were translated into concrete forms of subjectivity. (…) It is not simply 'ideologies' (in the narrow sense of Marx) but ways of life, structures of thought and action incorporated into the habitus of social actors. The category 'coloniality' refers to that symbolic and cognitive sphere where the ethnic identity of the actors is configured" (Castro-Gómez, 2005b, 57).[23]

Coloniality means the subjugation of the imaginaries of dominated communities through a systematic repression of "ways of knowing, of producing knowledge, of producing perspectives, images and systems of images, symbols, modes of meaning; of the resources, patterns and instruments of formalised and objectified expression, visual or intellectual" (Quijano, 1992, 12).[24] The repression of cultural universes of dominated populations also entails the imposition of patterns of expression, systems of belief and supernatural images of the dominant power. This imposition not only aims to prevent the cultural production of

[23] Henceforth, my own translation from: Castro-Gómez, S. (2005b). *La postcolonialidad explicada a los niños*. Popayán: Editorial Universidad del Cauca & Instituto Pensar, Universidad Javeriana.

[24] Henceforth, my own translation from: Quijano, A. (1992). Colonialidad y Modernidad/Racionalidad. *Perú Indígena*, *13*(29), 11-20.

subjugated communities, but it also acts as mean of social and cultural control after the physical repression ceases to be constant and systematic (Quijano, 1992).

Additionally, colonisers impose, by force and persuasion, a mystified, quasi-sacred image of their own patterns and systems of meaning and belief. After military domination, the strategy starts by denying local populations access to the colonial system of knowledge and meanings. Then, colonial power teaches its own system of knowledge and values in a partial and selective way in order to co-opt some of the dominated. Finally, European culture becomes a seduction, a way to reach power. It becomes an aspiration to achieve the same material benefits and power as colonisers. Through conditioning the subjectivities of colonised populations, European culture became the universal model of progress. Ultimately, after European culture became the universal model, the social and cultural imaginary of non-Europeans could hardly exist, or even reproduce itself, without a reference to the western system of beliefs (Quijano, 1992).

According to this perspective, modern colonisation is a dual process under which colonialism and coloniality are in constant relation. This dialectical relation between coloniality and colonialism reveals the importance of understanding the phenomenon as a complex system rather than as a top-down power relation in which economic and political needs define the guidelines of social relations and subjectivities.

In this vein, drawing upon Castro-Gómez (2007), the colonial power consists of two main dialectical dimensions. First, the geopolitical dimension deals with the economic and political conditions under which the modern world-system as a colonial phenomenon became (and remains) hegemonic. Second, on the subjective level, characterised by the concept of coloniality, colonial powers dedicate significant resources to shape and forge the subjectivities of colonised individuals and collectivities. That is to say that coloniality, within the frame of colonialism, is the result of devoted colonial efforts to structure the *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1990) and life-worlds of non-western collectivities.

To understand the interactions between both spheres of power, there are two main contradicting traditions. On the one hand, historical materialism suggests that the economic and material conditions determine ideologies and social consciousness. On the other hand, the post-structuralist and post-colonial approaches suggest that discourses, rather than material conditions, are the main source of the production and reproduction of power.

According to Marx (1904), economic structures determine the social and cultural characteristics of societies. According to this perspective, production relations determine the subjectivities of individuals because “with the change of the economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed” (Marx, 1904, 12).

> The mode of production in material life determines the general character of the social, political and spiritual processes of life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence that determines their consciousness (Marx, 1904, 11-12).

The main critique of this posture, coming from post-colonialism and post-structuralism, is that it denies that power goes beyond physical violence and economic relations, neglecting the epistemological and ontological power ingredients. The post-colonial critique argues that, in peripheral territories, colonialism and racialised social and economic relations are more than a pre-capitalist stage before the emergence of a bourgeoisie, the only class able to break the feudal order of production (Castro-Gómez, 2005b).

The main argument of the post-colonial approach is that power mainly resides in representations of the "other" and in the ability of hegemonic powers to shape ideologies, *habitus* and subjectivities. Accordingly, this posture suggest that, without the construction of an imaginary of the "other" and of the dichotomy "Orient-Occident" (not as geographical spaces, but as concrete epistemologies, life-worlds and *habitus*), colonialism would have not happened (Castro-Gómez, 2005b; Said, 2003). In short, the representational sphere is the condition of possibility of colonialism.

The main critique of this approach is that the post-structural perspective strips away the historical and material references of colonialism. With the post-structural approach, it seems as if representations of the "other" (orientalism) were originally produced colonialism, not the other way around. Additionally, historical materialism argues, if reality is only a set of discourses, representations and metaphors, where are the opportunities to intervene in and change the world (Castro-Gómez, 2005b)?

In other words, using the terminology of the present section, these two theoretical streams seek to address the question of the nature of power by defining which came first: colonialism or coloniality. However, a heterarchical perspective suggests that power is a dialectical relationship between base and superstructure – a dialectical relationship between economic relations and subjectivities. This approach does not understand power only as a hierarchical relation in which global economic and political structures shape the conditions under which micro levels of power operate, nor as power reduced to a discursive and representational mechanism, but as an interrelation of both levels.

In this regard, the notion of coloniality discloses and materialises the relationship between macro and micro powers to the extent that it exposes the normalisation of bringing every subject, collectivity and territory into the international division of labour. Furthermore, the interaction between colonialism and coloniality in the constitution of the modern world-system reflects the importance of thinking power as a dialectical heterarchy rather than a

hierarchy between macro and micro powers, for it operates in both spheres complementary and simultaneously.

A theoretical response to the interaction between the macro and micro levels of power is modern world-system theory (Wallerstein, 1974). This theory exposes the dialectical relation between colonialism and capitalism as an economic system, as well as coloniality as the constitution of colonial subjectivities. Put differently, modern world-system theory, although it reflects a hierarchical relationship between core and periphery as it takes into account the economic, cultural, social and historical aspects of capitalism, works as a non-hierarchical structure of power and manages to reconcile its macro and micro levels. This means that modern world-system theory, due to its implications in both base and superstructure, represents the most realistic approximation of the scope and materialisation of colonial power.

Taking into account the heterarchical definition of power, coloniality – as the forging of subjectivities – has three main characteristics. First, it does not dominate exclusively through coercive means. Coloniality tries to change the affectional and cognitive structures of colonised subjects by means of turning them into a "new people," made in the image and likeness of the western individual. In the case of the Americas, this strategy materialised through institutions such as the *encomienda* (see Footnote 14), the main objective of which was to integrate indigenous communities into the cultural patterns of the dominant group (Castro-Gómez, 2005b). What is more, the role of the *encomendero*, besides controlling the economic production of its *encomienda,* was the following:

> The role of the *encomendero* was to watch, diligently, for the 'integral conversion' of the Indian through systematic evangelization and hard physical work. Both instruments, evangelization and work, were directed towards the transformation of intimacy, seeking that the Indian could leave his condition of "under age" and access, finally, to the modes of thought and action proper to civilized life (Castro-Gómez, 2005a, 41).[25]

Second, coloniality means the delegitimisation of local forms of knowledge and systems of belief. The refusal to acknowledge "other" epistemologies has the aim of positioning European epistemology as the fascination, the desires, the aspirations and wills of colonised subjects (Castro-Gómez, 2005a; Quijano, 1992).

Last, coloniality is the pretension to objectivity, scientificity and universality that western epistemology claims for itself. To understand this component of coloniality, it is important to highlight some of the features of modern epistemologies already analysed in Section 1.2:

[25] Henceforth, my own translation from: Castro-Gómez, S. (2005a). *La hybris del punto cero*. Pontificia Universidad Javeriana.

namely, the separations between mind-body, subject-object and humanity-nature; the illusion of universalism; and the quasi-sacred position from where scientists claim to understand the world.

In brief, coloniality is the result of a systematic, planned and structured strategy to shape the subjectivities, life-worlds and *habitus* of colonised subjects, ergo their conduct and "common sense." This means forging the perspective of colonial subjects with regard to the production and reproduction of the macro and micro levels of power: the production and reproduction of the modern world-system and, simultaneously, the production and reproduction of specific subjectivities that respond to the international division of labour.

Mignolo (2009b) identified twelve historical-structural nodes that coloniality forged in the construction of colonial difference. These colonial nodes, in one form or another, remain today:

1. A global racial formation with a double and simultaneous classification: the Moors and the Jews in Europe and the Indians and Africans across the Atlantic.
2. A particular global class formation where a diversity of forms of labour co-exists and is organised by capital as a source of production of surplus value through the sale of commodities for profit on the world market.
3. An international division of labour of core and periphery where capital organised labour at the periphery around coerced and authoritarian forms.
4. An inter-state system of politico-military organisations controlled by Euro-American males and institutionalised in colonial administrations.
5. A global racial/ethnic hierarchy that privileged European people over non-European people.
6. A global gender/sex hierarchy that privileged males over females and European patriarchy over other forms of gender configuration and sexual relations. A system that imposed the concept of "woman" to reorganise gender/sexual relations in the European colonies, effectively introducing regulations for "normal" relations among the sexes and the hierarchical distinctions between "man" and "woman."
7. Consequently, the colonial system also invented the categories "homosexual" and "heterosexual," just as it invented the category "man" and "woman." This invention makes "homophobia" irrelevant in describing Maya, Aztec, or Inca civilisations since, in these civilisations, gender/sexual organisations were cast in different categories, which Spaniards (and Europeans in general, whether Christian or secular) were either unable to see or unwilling to accept. There was no homophobia, as indigenous people did not think in these types of categories.
8. A spiritual/religious hierarchy that privileged Christian over non-Christian/non-western spiritualties was institutionalised in the globalisation of the Christian (Catholic and later Protestant) Church; by the same token, coloniality of knowledge

translated other ethical and spiritual practices around the world into "religion," an invention that was also accepted by "natives" (Hinduism was only invented as a religion in the eighteenth century).

9. An aesthetic hierarchy that, through respective institutions, manages the senses and shapes sensibilities by establishing norms of the beautiful and the sublime, of what art is and what it is not, what shall be included and what shall be excluded, what shall be rewarded and what shall be ignored.
10. An epistemic hierarchy that privileged western knowledge and cosmology over non-western knowledge and cosmologies was institutionalised in the global university system, publishing houses, and *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, on paper and online.
11. A linguistic hierarchy between European languages and non-European languages, privileging communication and knowledge/theoretical production in the former and subalternising the latter as producers of folklore or culture, but not of knowledge or theory.
12. A particular conception of the "modern subject," an idea of "Man," introduced in the European Renaissance, became the model for the "Human" and for "Humanity," as well as the point of reference for racial classification and global racism (Mignolo, 2009b, 17-18-19).

For purposes of this research (while recognising the risks of grouping colonial nodes), it is helpful to cluster multiple nodes into three intertwined components as it allows for different levels of articulation of each of these twelve historical-structural nodes. These three levels of articulation may help clarify the macro and micro dimensions of coloniality because they have direct implications for colonial subjectivities – of both colonised and coloniser – and for the reproduction of colonial power in the modern world-system.

The first cluster is "coloniality of power." This cluster refers to the biopolitical mechanisms through which hegemonic power intercedes in the subjectivities of colonised peoples in order to maintain a racialised social classification and the colonial international division of labour (Quijano, 1992, 2000a, 2005).

Second, "coloniality of knowledge" refers to the stratification of knowledges in order to position western epistemology, not only as superior, but also as the only valid form of understanding reality. With the coloniality of knowledge, mythological claims of western epistemic universalism lead to the delegitimisation, decrease and extinction of an extensive variety of strategies and forms of reaching or producing knowledge. This process is what De Sousa Santos (2013) calls "epistemicide" and seeks to maintain a division between valid and not valid knowledges in order to eliminate non-western epistemologies.

Last, "coloniality of being" refers to the lived experience of colonised subjects and to the disciplinary toolset used by colonial powers to shape the ontologies of dominated

populations. In particular, shaping ontologies means forging the *habitus* and life-worlds of colonised subjects. As Maldonado-Torres (2007a) argues, the "emergence of the concept 'coloniality of Being' responded to the need to thematise the question of the effects of coloniality in lived experience and not only in the mind" (Maldonado-Torres, 2007a).

Coloniality of power

"Coloniality of power" refers the normalisation of a specific structure of domination, initially, over the indigenous communities of the Americas since 1492, but later over the rest of the world. Castro-Gómez (2005), in his analysis of the post-colonial debate, affirms that Spanish conquerors in the Americas established a power relation over indigenous communities based on the imposed ethnic and epistemic superiority of Europeans. He argues, "it was not just a matter of militarily disarming the Indians and destroying them by force, but of transforming their souls, of radically changing their traditional ways of knowing the world and of knowing themselves, adopting as their own the cognitive universe of the colonizer" (Castro-Gómez, 2005b, 58).

Particularly, "coloniality of power" refers to the domination, transformation and incorporation of indigenous and African communities into the hierarchical and racialised colonial power structure. Following Quijano (1992, 2000, 2005), power relations between Europe and its colonies are no longer "colonial" in the sense of a direct political, social and cultural domination over the colonised by Europeans. From the "discovery" of the "New World" until today, modern colonial strategies imply what Quijano called "coloniality of power," which consists in the normalisation of placing each collectivity in a specific location in the racialised, hierarchical social structure.

The consolidation of capitalism as the global economic system meant the social classification of the world according to ethnic and racial features. As capitalism, Eurocentrism and colonialism are constitutive of European expansion, the "coloniality of power" and the creation of new subjectivities bought about the racialised division of labour characteristic of the modern world-system. Henceforth, it is through the coloniality of power that hegemonic power naturalises and normalises the allocation of populations in specific roles in the world's economy and in its global social hierarchy.

Although coloniality of power has been a worldwide phenomenon, its manifestations have varied between different regions and historical moments. In the case of the Americas, it came with an extreme extermination of the population.[26] Furthermore, survivors became marginalised subcultures due to acculturating processes that stripped them of their own forms and patterns of formal and intellectual of expression. Henceforth, survivors would not have

[26] According to Quijano (1992) between the Aztec-Mayan-Caribbean area and the Tawantinsuyana area around 35 million inhabitants were exterminated, in a period of less than 50 years.

alternative forms of intellectual or plastic expressions, only those of the coloniser (Quijano, 1992). For those reasons, "Latin America is, without doubt, the extreme case of cultural colonization by Europe" (Quijano, 1992, 13).

In Asia and the Middle East, Europe did not destroy the local cultures with the same intensity in Latin America, but they were enmeshed in a subaltern relation with those of Western Europe. European culture, due to its political, military and technological power, imposed its paradigmatic images and cognitive elements as the norm for all cultural, intellectual and artistic production. Consequently, the power relation in which the western paradigm is superior became hegemonic and facilitated the Europeanisation of these regions. As for Africa, although the cultural destruction was intense, Europeans did not manage to completely exterminate local expressive patterns – European hegemonic power stripped away the cultural legitimacy of African expressive patterns and labelled them "exotic" (Quijano, 1992).[27]

To sum up, one of the effects of coloniality as a strategy to diminish or exterminate non-western epistemologies is the normalisation of a racialised social classification. The coloniality of power is the result of naturalising a social division of labour based on racial and ethnic characteristics. Furthermore, colonial efforts to entrench European epistemologies as superior sought to secure control over "other" territories, systems of production, desires and aspirations. In other words, the materialisation of coloniality of power is the racialised, geographical distribution of capitalism in the modern world-system (Wallerstein, 1974).

Coloniality of knowledge

One of the most important characteristics of modern thought is its pretension to absolute truth and its conception of scientific thinking as universal (see Section 1.2). This illusion positions the scientist in an almost sacred place, from where he or she can name, transform and control every object under study. Moreover, as it has the pretension of universality, it assumes that any other strategy, mode or form of reaching knowledge is wrong. The modern assumption that every non-western knowledge is wrong, plus its self-conception as the "superior" obliged to "improve" savages, meant the inculcation of modern thought as a new form of salvation. After hegemonic powers tried to convert the souls of indigenous and African communities in the Americas to Christianity, and formalised the language of colonial settlers as the only legitimate one, it sought to embed belief in modern science as the new source of redemption.

Along with the consolidation of capitalism as the economy of the modern world-system, the expansion and imposition of western epistemology as the only possible mode of generating

[27] According to Quijano, the "exoticism" of the African modes of expressions reveals the colonial perspective of the hegemonic power. To European and African Europeanised artists, the products of African plastic expression are just a motive, a starting point, a source of inspiration, but not a proper and complete mode of artistic expression. Nothing comparable or equivalent to the European norm (Quijano, 1992).

knowledge depicts the idea of modernity as a synonym for salvation, novelty and emancipation. Since the sixteenth century, modernity had used Christian theology, Renaissance secular humanism and scientific discourse as its spearhead. When England and France displaced Spain as the leaders of European imperial/colonial expansion, the rhetoric of salvation through conversion to Christianity transformed into the rhetoric of salvation through the civilising mission of the eighteenth century (Mignolo, 2009b).

Overall, the coloniality of knowledge is a constitutive part of coloniality. It is the contempt and delegitimisation of any other mode of generating knowledge and explaining reality. Besides the disparagement of any other epistemology, it is the allocation of the European mode of explaining reality as the only valid one. As previously stated, one of the characteristics of "indolent reason" (De Sousa Santos, 2015) is the impossibility of its expansion because it does not conceive of anything beyond its limits or its own rationality. This means that the colonial subject – both colonised and coloniser – take as false any other epistemology, strategy or form of organising, explaining or embracing reality and has the almost scared obligation of identifying, controlling and eliminating them.

According to Gómez-Quintero (2010), the coloniality of knowledge "led to the hegemonisation of a system of representation and knowledge of Europe and from Europe. Therefore, this device of power, once universalised and naturalised, subalternised other representations and knowledges now relegated to mere objects of knowledge. Hence, silenced and without power of enunciation" (Gómez-Quintero, 2010).[28]

Considering that modern epistemology does not conceive of any type of knowledge beside its own, the modern project necessary entails the elimination of epistemic difference. Unlike the coloniality of power, which racialises every collectivity and places them within the modern world-system, the coloniality of knowledge does not hierarchise epistemologies but eliminates them. Under the coloniality of knowledge, there is a Manichaean conception of valid and non-valid knowledges. Since the constitution of the *ego cogito*, western scientists position themselves on the quasi-sacred Archimedean Point, from where they can judge everything from their perspective. This means that the almost sacred Archimedean Point is available only to those who apply European principles in the generation of knowledge.

According to Lander (2005), the coloniality of knowledge reached its pick during the eighteenth and nineteenth century, when the totality of time and space, of every culture, society, population, territory, memory and history – past and present – was included in a grand, universal narrative (Lander, 2005). Modern rationality, the western teleological understanding of history, the perspective of Europe as the geographical and historical core

[28] Henceforth my own translation of: Gómez-Quintero, J. D. (2010). La colonialidad del ser y del saber: la mitologización del desarrollo en América Latina. *El Ágora USB*, *10*(1), 87-105.

and the idea of epistemic universalism became the framework in which the world was organised, defined and classified.

The triumph of the coloniality of knowledge came along with a delineation of languages, memories and representation of spaces that were valid or invalid (Mignolo, 2003, 2009a). Since the expansion of Europe in the sixteenth century, the coloniality of knowledge has had the task of assessing, controlling and denigrating any other form of understanding time, space or memory. Therefore, conceptions of time and knowledge as a spiral, non-dualistic or relational human-nature interactions, non-linear ideas of progress and any other form of organising time, space or human experiences became the object of religious and secular intervention.

In sum, the coloniality of knowledge is the normalisation and naturalisation of a hierarchy between European and non-European languages, aesthetics, forms of artistic and intellectual representation and epistemologies (Mignolo, 2009b). It is the colonial task of producing and naturalising certain knowledges in order to reproduce colonial power by the invisibilisation and elimination of the epistemic difference.

Coloniality of being

The Manichaean features of the coloniality of knowledge, where there is only one possible rationality or form of understanding the world, has a direct relationship with the idea of the coloniality of being. As the Cartesian formulation of *cogito ergo sum* ("I think, therefore I am") implies that only through rational thinking is it possible to exist, it follows that those people who do not reason do not exist. Under this affirmation, epistemological colonisation becomes an ontological problem. In this sense, the link between the coloniality of knowledge and the coloniality of being resides in the idea that the human condition is only possible when an individual reasons in the European manner. Any person with a non-western epistemology does not exist or does not reach the human condition. As Maldonado-Torres (2007a) argues, the "Cartesian formulation privileges epistemology, which simultaneously hides both what could be regarded as the coloniality of knowledge (others do not think) and the coloniality of Being (others are not)" (Maldonado-Torres, 2007a, 252).

The fact that western epistemology relates one particular way of reasoning to the possibility of human existence denies the humanity of every non-European collectivity. The negation of the existence of the "other" emerges from – or relates to – the negation of its own epistemology:

> In what was unmentioned and presupposed in Descartes's formulation we find thus the fundamental link between the "colonialidad del saber" (coloniality of knowledge) and the "colonialidad del ser" (coloniality of being). The absent of rationality is

> articulated in modernity with the idea of the absence of Being in others. Misanthropic skepticism and racism work together with ontological exclusion (Maldonado-Torres, 2007a, 247).

To understand the implications of the coloniality of being, Maldonado-Torres (2007a, 2007b) uses Heidegger's (1962) concept of *Dasein* (being there) for its contribution to understanding ontology as contextual. Rather than thinking ontology under a theological prism that "is seeking a more primordial interpretation of man's Being towards God, prescribed by the meaning of faith itself and remaining within it" (Heidegger, 1962, 30), Heidegger takes existence as grounded in particular spaces and historical moments. Therefore, it is necessary to think human existence within an historical and social structure as the *a priori* condition under which being exists. There is no being without space and time, and there is no being without being-in-the-world:

> From what we have been saying, it follows that Being-in is not a "property" which *Dasein* sometimes has and sometimes does not have, and without which it could be just as well as it could with it. It is not the case that man "is" and then has, by way of an extra, a relationship-of-Being towards the "world" – a world with which he provides himself occasionally. *Dasein* is never "proximally" an entity which is, so to speak, free from Being-in, but which sometimes has the inclination to take up a "relationship" towards the world. Taking up relationships towards the world is possible only because *Dasein*, as Being-in-the-world, is as it is. This state of Being does not arise just because some other entity is present-at-hand outside of *Dasein* and meets up with it. Such an entity can "meet up with" *Dasein* only in so far as it can, of its own accord, show itself within a world (Heidegger, 1962, 84).

Assuming that being is immersed in its context (*Dasein*) helps clarify the phenomenon of coloniality of being inasmuch as the colonial condition forges the lived experiences and life-worlds of colonial subjects. Taking time and space as determinant in the ontological formation of individuals and social groups allows existence beyond (in a colonial context, the existence would be "below") the modern subject. This colonised lived experience is below the colour line (Du Bois, 2012) set by the modern discourse and represents what Fanon (2001) called "wretched" or *damnés* (Maldonado-Torres, 2007a).

Moreover, considering that the racialised idea of "Man" introduced by modernity became the model for "Humans" and "Humanity" (Mignolo, 2009b), the lived experiences of subjects are defined by the colour of their skin. As Maldonado-Torres (2007a) suggests, the "'lighter' one's skin is, the closer to full humanity one is, and vice versa" (Maldonado-Torres, 2007a, 244). The racialised social hierarchy, product of the coloniality of power, defines the lived experiences of every subject. As the context defines the ontological condition of every individual and collectivity (*Dasein*), circumstances created under colonial power such as the

coloniality of power and the coloniality of knowledge, determine the lived experience of the colonised subject and portrays it as less human or, to some degree, lacking humanity.

The modern Manichean attitude towards ontological and epistemological difference justifies the elimination of colonised and racialised people, for they are "below the zone of being" (Fanon, 2009). In other words, in the eyes of European *Dasein*, the "wretched of the earth" are beings that are "not there" due to their racialised condition and non-western epistemologies. This "not being there" of colonised subjectivities implies a greater ontological difference than between beings and their exteriority (trans-ontological difference) or between beings and other beings (ontological difference). It implies an ontological difference between beings and what lies below, or "semi-being," or what is "dispensable" (Maldonado-Torres, 2007a). This last ontological difference, called the "sub-ontological" or "ontological colonial" difference, is the relationship between a fully human, modern *Dasein* and a "sub-other." This ontological condition embraces a different relationship than the one between one *Dasein* and another *Dasein,* or between *Dasein* and an object or tool (Maldonado-Torres, 2007b).

Summing up, there is a complex and heterarchical relationship between the three colonial clusters previously described. The allocation of the "other" in the international division of labour (coloniality of power) responds to both the denial of non-western epistemologies (coloniality of knowledge) and the non-acknowledgment of the "other" as fully human (coloniality of being). Simultaneously, the coloniality of power and the coloniality of knowledge define the lived experience of the colonised subject. As Maldonado-Torres (2007a) summarises:

> The coloniality of Being indicates those aspects that produce exception from the order of Being; it is as it were, the product of the excess of Being that in order to maintain its integrity and inhibit the interruption by what lies beyond Being produces its contrary, not nothing, but a non-human or rather an inhuman world. The coloniality of Being refers not merely to the reduction of the particular to the generality of the concept or any given horizon of meaning, but to the violation of the meaning of human alterity to the point where the alter-ego becomes a sub-alter (Maldonado-Torres, 2007a, 257).

To close, the coloniality of being reflects the impossibility of the modern condition to recognise epistemic, cultural, economic or social difference. Moreover, following its pretension to universalism, the coloniality of being reflects the modern incapacity to conceive of something outside its limits by denying the humanity of the "other" and creating a zone of being and a zone of not-being – those beneath the line are non-human or sub-human. Modernity denies their humanity and so their systems of belief, economic practices, and religions (Grosfoguel, 2012b).

2.2. Problematising difference: legitimising discourses of modernity.

After analysing the implications of the colonial system since the sixteenth century, with the scope of not only the political and the economic but also the ontological and epistemological, the present section discusses the discursive strategies that legitimised the colonisation of territories, cultures and souls of populations "beneath" the zone of being. According to the universalising premise of western modernity, the European subject does not only have the right, but the duty to intervene these "sub-human other" populations in order to incorporate them into their supposedly superior discourse and praxis.

Following the idea of Todorov (2010), these non-European sub-human populations would be considered barbarians due to their lack of human features. In his book *The Fear of Barbarians* (Todorov, 2010), he suggests that the idea of "barbarism" has responded to different historical moments, but that it has always been used to label those who behave outside the hegemonic norm (supposedly "normal" human behaviour). In this sense, the author identifies four sets of intertwined individual and societal "barbaric" characteristics. First, that person or group "who transgress the most fundamental laws of common life, being unable to find the right distance to observe between themselves and their relatives: matricide, parricide, infanticide on the one side, and incest on the other, are definite signs of barbarism" (Todorov, 2010, 15). Second, those who "systematically resort to violence and war in order to settle differences between them are perceived as being close to barbarism" (Todorov, 2010, 15). Third, barbarism relates to those who, when "performing the most intimate acts, […] ignore the fact that they be visible to others" (Todorov, 2010, 16). Last, barbaric groups are those "who live in isolated groups instead of gathering in common habitats or, even better, forming societies ruled by laws adopted in common" (Todorov, 2010, 16).

With the expansion of coloniality since the sixteenth century, hegemonic powers established a more-or-less fixed idea of the barbarian. This process led to the classification of most of the world's population as "other," as sub-human. As Mignolo (2009b) argues, the last colonial node is the conception of a "modern subject" that became the model for every human being and for "Humanity." In this sense, since the Enlightenment, colonial difference encompasses any social, cultural or economic feature that does not fit into the racial, institutional, economic and social standards establish by the western subject.

Universalising the standards of western experience implied that scientific discourse appropriated the discussion of the "Human" realm and conceived of individuals and societies as machines. As Rehbein (2015) argues, "Enlightenment spread the Cartesian notion of science, and this notion was expanded to matters of the human world. Human and society were thought of as machines and, following the model of Cartesian science, became objects of natural-scientific knowledge" (Rehbein, 2015, 28).

Including the "Human" realm in scientific epistemology relates to the emergence of the notion of class. Quijano (2000) suggests that, in order to classify plants according to their number and disposition of the stamen of flowers (something that remain unchanging during the course of evolution), Linnaeus was the first scientist to use the concept of "class." Just as if societies were flowers, European philosophers tried to classify them according to differential characteristics of social groups, such as poverty, wealth or level of obedience. Furthermore, in the transition from botanical to societal classification of individuals and collectivities, societies became an "organism, a given and closed order. Social classes were thought as categories given in 'society,' as with the classes of plants in 'Nature'" (Quijano, 2000, 364).[29]

Naturalisation and normalisation of certain human behaviours due to the translation of Cartesian epistemology into the "Human" realm, led to the establishment of absolute notions of how individuals and societies should conduct themselves. The illusory idea of an absolute, human natural law led to the pretension to understand and classify human behaviour according to its proximity to the ideal modern "Man." As the law that shapes conducts of modern "Man" is natural and intrinsic to humanity, every individual or society that does not rule itself accordingly becomes abnormal to the modern eye – not fully human. Just as western modernity claims an absolute and unique rationality, it claims an illusory and absolute human nature. Moreover, as modernity claim to be the carrier of human natural law and rationality, it has the power and duty to distinguish right from wrong. As Todorov (1994) argues:

> In the first place, human nature is the same everywhere; since our rational faculty constitutes part of human nature, this faculty is therefore likewise universal. In the second place, only reason is capable of distinguishing what is just from what is unjust, therefore it is incumbent upon universal reason to formulate the principle of justice that are valid everywhere and for everyone (Todorov, 1994, 24).

Taking into account Todorov's definition of barbarians and the transposition of scientific epistemology to the human realm, there are three intertwined spheres to which modernity tries to materialise its idea of superiority: notions of race, culture and territory reflect the scientific position of the time. In this regard, Élisée Reclus (1992, 1995, 2007), one of the most relevant anarchists and geographers of the nineteenth century, argues that "whatever our relative freedom, won by our intelligence and our own will, we remain, nonetheless, products of the planet attached to her surface as imperceptible animalcules we are carried along in her movements and are subject to all her laws" (Reclus, 1995, 5). According to this position, territories define not only our physical condition but also our epistemologies,

[29] Henceforth, my own translation from: Quijano, A. (2000). Colonialidad del Poder y Clasificación Social. *Journal of World-Systems Research*, *VI*(2), 342–386.

subjectivities and the distance from where every society stands in relation to the modern hegemonic idea of "Man."

These depictions of territories, cultures and races as existing in zones of non-being have been at the heart of European expansion since the sixteenth century. Considering that the western identity holds itself apart from representations of these "other" spaces, epistemologies and subjectivities, only with its expansion did Europe "discover" itself in opposition to that "other." In this regard, the notion of western modernity as the backbone of the European identity has grown in antagonism with non-European ideas of humanity, social organisations, values, economies and ethics. The "contact zone" (Pratt, 1992) between Europe and the "New World" did not only constitute every non-European as peripheral and as part of the zone of non-being, but it also defined European identity as we know it today.

The ideological construction of the "other" and of Europe itself "hinged on the attempt to bind the Americas to Europe in an essentialised relationship of negativity, [it is] the pivot of colonial semantics" (Pratt,1992, 140). Furthermore, when these representations of the "other" become institutional praxis, to distinguish the zone of being and zone of non-being takes place in what Edward Said (2003) calls *orientalism*:

> In other words this universal practice of designating in one's mind a familiar space which is "ours" and an unfamiliar space beyond "ours" which is "theirs" is a way of making geographical distinctions that can be entirely arbitrary. I use the word "arbitrary" here because imaginative geography of the "our land—barbarian land" variety does not require that the barbarians acknowledge the distinction. It is enough for "us" to set up these boundaries in our own minds; "they" become "they" accordingly, and both their territory and their mentality are designated as different from "ours" (Said, 2003, 54).

Notwithstanding the importance of colonialism and colonial discourses not only as a "fictional reality" (Said, 2003, 54) but as concrete actions, the relevance of Said's notion of *orientalism* resides in understanding power not only as violence and force but also as ideological (as occurring on the micro level of power). This suggests that European expansion and domination would not have been possible only through violence, but it needed a colonised subject to incorporate modern discourses and tolerate – by persuasion and force – its role in the modern world-system:

> Said began to show what for Marx constituted a "blind spot": the centrality of two "superstructural" elements – knowledge and subjectivity – for the consolidation of Europe's imperial domination (Castro-Gómez, 2005b, 21).

Summing up, with the expansion Europe and its consolidation as the core of the modern world-system since the sixteenth century, western epistemology defined a new conception of humanity based on the European experience. A conception that "differentiated between inferior and superior, irrational, rational, primitive and civilized, traditional and modern" (Quijano, 2000, 322). As stated in the analyses of the coloniality of power, this differentiation allocated every collectivity geographically and temporally. From that moment on, every collectivity had a specific role in the modern world-system. Likewise, since the consolidation of western epistemology as hegemonic, every collectivity supposedly materialised a moment in a teleological understanding of the course of history.

Classifying every collectivity according to their culture, race and territory divided the world into zones of being and non-being. This allocation responded to the closeness of every society to the European phenotypical, epistemological, economic and social standard. For instance, in regard to the Americas, Hegel (2001), in *The Philosophy of History*, states that:

> America has always shown itself physically and psychically powerless, and still shows itself so. For the aborigines, after the landing of the Europeans in America, gradually vanished at the breath of European activity (Hegel, 2001, 98).

Moreover, in reference to African peoples, in a clear allusion to their lack of humanity, Hegel (2001) argues that African individuals and collectivities have not yet reached consciousness – that is, they are not fully human:

> In Negro life the characteristic point is the fact that consciousness has not yet attained to the realization of any substantial objective existence — as for example, God, or Law — in which the interest of man's volition is involved and in which he realizes his own being. This distinction between himself as an individual and the universality of his essential being, the African in the uniform, undeveloped oneness of his existence has not yet attained; so that the Knowledge of an absolute Being, an Other and a Higher than his individual self, is entirely wanting. The Negro, as already observed, exhibits the natural man in his completely wild and untamed state (Hegel, 2001, 110-111).

The construction of the "other" resided in what Western epistemology defines as "us" and what defines as "them." This naturalisation of difference is the result of coloniality and the discursive struggle that shaped the subjectivities of colonial subjects, both colonised and colonisers. Since then, modernity established an absolute idea of "Humans" and "Humanity." That means that "existing a 'natural' form of being of society and of human beings, the other

cultural expressions are seen as essential or ontologically inferior and thus unable to 'surpass' themselves and become modern (due mainly to racial inferiority)" (Lander, 2005, 10).[30]

Now, as stated above, the ontological differentiation of humans between zones of being and non-being emerged from three main intertwined representations of the difference: "other" races, "other" territories and "other" cultures became the legitimising discourses of conquest and colonisation in what would become the periphery of the modern world-system.

Non-European races

Since the expansion of the European race became the backbone of the coloniality of power and the racialised modern world-system. Additionally, with the coloniality of power, race became something beyond skin colour and became the defining tool of forging identities, subjectivities and economic and political roles in the modern world-system:

> Thus terms such as Spanish and Portuguese, later European, which until then indicated only geographical origin or country of origin, since then, also carried in reference to the new identities, a racial connotation. Moreover, to the extent that the configuring social relations were relations of domination, such identities were associated with the hierarchies, places and corresponding social roles, as constitutive of them and, consequently, the pattern of colonial domination imposed. In other words, race and racial identity were established as instruments of basic social classification of the population (Quijano, 2005, 202).[31]

Racial classification responds to the medieval tripartite construction of the world, in which the European-known world only entailed Europe, Asia and Africa (see Figure 2). This map, called the T and O map, portrays Jerusalem as the centre and, drawing upon the Bible, represents each of Noah's sons: Shem in Asia, Japheth in Europe, Ham in Africa (Mignolo, 2003). This conception of the world entails a hierarchical, ethnic division in which Africans and Asians represent the sons that fell in disgrace in the eyes of their father while Europe represents Japheth, Noah's beloved son (Castro-Gómez, 2005b).

Figure 2. T/O map. The earth divided in three

[30] Henceforth, my own translation from: Lander, E. (2005). Ciencias Sociales: Saberes coloniales y Eurocentrismo. In *La Colonialidad del saber: Eurocentrismo y ciencias sociales. Perspectivas latinoamericanas* (pp. 4–23). Lander, Edgardo (comp.), UNESCO-CLACSO.

[31] Henceforth, my own translation from: Quijano, A. (2005). Colonialidad del poder, eurocentrismo y América Latina. In *La colonialidad del saber: Eurocentrismo y ciencias sociales. Perspectivas Latinoamericanas* (pp. 201–246). Lander, Edgardo (comp.), UNESCO-CLACSO.

Source: https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mapa_de_T_en_O (accessed 26.10.2018).

According to this understanding, the world was a big island (*orbis terrarium*) divided into three parts inhabited by humans. Following Castro-Gómez (2005b), according to Saint Augustine of Hippo, in the case of presence of islands beyond the *orbis terrarium,* their inhabitants could not be "classified as 'men' because the potential inhabitants of the 'City of God' could only be found in Europe, Asia or Africa" (Castro-Gómez, 2005b, 53). For that reason, with the expansion of Europe in the sixteenth century, there was a transcendental discussion about the nature of the inhabitants of the Americas. In the end, since changing the Christian map was inconceivable, the "New World" became a prolongation of Europe (Mignolo, 2003). This meant that the colonisation and exploitation of natural resources in the Americas was legitimate, for God's light could only come from Europe. This representation of the Americas as an extension of Europe also implied that only Christians without Arab, African or Jewish blood could legally travel to the Americas because only they represented Japheth (Castro-Gómez, 2005b).

This classification of humans based on race responds not only to the aforementioned theological foundation of the tripartite conception of the world but also to the idea of environmental determinism. Due to the characteristic dualism of modernity and the division between subject-object and human-nature (see Section 1.2), non-western collectivities became the objects of study, as they were seen as part of the natural world. As Jackson Jr. & Weidman (2006) argue, it is during the Enlightenment that humanity was scientifically classified. Although racial classification varied among European scientists, all of them establish that the place of origin and the colour of the skin were relevant in defining the capacity of these collectivities to reach the European standard. Their place of origin and skin colour would scientifically legitimate placing every social group in the racialised modern world-system, due to their different positions in the linear understanding of history.

As an illustrative example, Carl Linnaeus organised humanity into four fixed and separated racial and behavioural categories. *Americanus* had "reddish skin, black hair, scanty beard,

obstinate, merry, regulated by costume" (Jackson Jr. & Weidman, 2006, 16). *Asiaticus* had "sallow skin, black hair, dark eyes, sever, greedy, covered with loose garments, ruled by opinion" (Jackson Jr. & Weidman, 2006, 16). *Africanus* had "black skin, frizzled hair, indolent, women without shame, governed by caprice" (Jackson Jr. & Weidman, 2006, 16). Last, *Europeaus* had "white, long flowing hair, blue eyes, gentle, inventive, covers himself with close-fitting clothing, governed by laws" (Jackson Jr. & Weidman, 2006, 16).

On the other hand, Comte de Buffon imagined racial classification as a more flexible group of individuals that "exist on a continuum and cannot be fit into Linnaeus' strict and unyielding classification system" (Jackson Jr. & Weidman, 2006, 18). Additionally, as part of Buffon's flexible and non-fixed racial characteristics, the scientist argued that every human being came from the European white race and the "others could be understood as 'degenerations' from that norm" (Jackson Jr. & Weidman, 2006, 18). The pretended superiority of western modernity becomes evident in Buffon's argumentation: "Americans were perhaps the least degenerates by the climate in which they live, Africans and Lapps [Sami people] perhaps the most" (Jackson Jr. & Weidman, 2006, 18).

In Buffon's (1807) distribution and characterisation of race, besides the evident notion of European superiority, there are two main elements in highlight: first, the causality between territory and behaviour; second, the relationship between colour of skin, place of origin and economic role – the relationship between some populations and the racialised international division of labour – or, in terms of this research, the coloniality of power. Here are some of his perspectives on different races:

Regarding African communities, Buffon (1807) states that:

> The Negroes of Guinea are well qualified for the office of tillage, and other laborious employments; those of Senegal are less vigorous, yet are good domestic servants, and very ingenious. Father Charlevoix, says, that of all negroes the Senegal ones are the most shapely, most tractable, and as domestic the most useful; that the Bambarasare the tallest, but they are all idle and knavish; that the Aradas best understand the culture of the earth; that the Congos are the smallest, but most expert swimmers; that the Nagos are the most humane, the Mondongos the most cruel; the Mimes the most resolute, the most capricious and the most subject to despair; that the Creole negroes, from whatever nation they derive ther [sic] origin, inherit nothing from their parents but the spirit of servitude and colour; they are more ingenious, rational, and adroit, but more idle and debauched than those of Africa (Barr's Buffon, 1807, 290-291).

As for the population in the Americans, Buffon presents two main characteristics: first, the author portrays Americans as "stupid, ignorant, unacquainted with the arts, and destitute for

industry" (Barr's Buffon, 1807, 312); second, the author describes them all as "savage" for their lack of government, law and common interests:

> All these stories, on which travellers have so much enlarged, mean nothing more than that one individual savage had devoured his enemy, another had burned or mutilated him, and a third had killed and eaten his child. All these things may happen in every savage nation; for a people among whom there is no regular government, no law, no habitual society, ought rather to be termed a tumultuous assemblage of barbarous and independent individuals, who obey nothing but their own private passions, and who have no common interest, are incapable of pursuing owe object, and submitting to settled usages which supposes general designs, founded on reason, and approved of by the majority (Barr's Buffon,1807, 313).

As for the Sami people of Northern Europe, Buffon argues that they are related to some North American indigenous communities and share the "incivility, superstition, and ignorance, are alike conspicuous in them all" (Barr's Buffon,1807, 194). The author says:

> Examined in a moral sense, the Laplanders have few virtues, and all the vices of ignorance. Immersed in superstition and idolatry, of a Supreme Being they have no conception; nor is it easy to determine which is most conspicuous, the grossness of their understandings, or the barbarity of their manners, being equally destitute of courage and shame. Boys and girls, mothers and sons, brothers and sisters, bathe together naked, without being in the smallest degree ashamed. When they come out of their baths, which are warm, they immediately go into the rivers. It is the custom among all these people to offer their wives and daughters to strangers, and are much offended if the offer is not accepted (Barr's Buffon, 1807, 195-196).

Additionally, Buffon (1807) extends his commentary to modern Europe where, according to his conception, the weather and geographical conditions make the model of the modern human being:

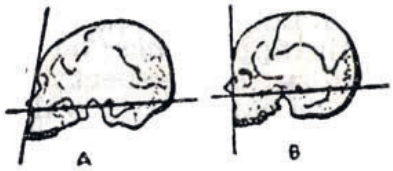
> The most temperate climate is between the degrees of 40 and 50; where the human form is in its greatest perfection; and where we ought to form our ideas of the real and natural colour of man. Situated under this Zone the civilized countries are, Georgia, Circassia, the Ukraine, Turkey in Europe, Hungary, South Germany, Italy, Switzerland, France, and the North of Spain; of all which the inhabitants are the most beautiful people in the world (Barr's Buffon, 1807, 350).

In line with the environmental determinism of the time, comparing sizes and characteristics of skulls between Africans and Europeans, Francisco José de Caldas (1808) suggest that the difference in capabilities and the justification for the racialised division of labour resides in

the "camper angle" (see Figure 3). According to the author, each race has a different facial angle that defines its strengths and weaknesses, justifying their allocation in the economic structure of the modern world-system:

> Instinct, docility, and in a word, the character of all animals depend on the dimensions, and the capacity of their skull and brain. Man himself is subject to this general law of Nature. Intelligence, depth, vast sights and sciences, like stupidity, and barbarism: like love, humanity, peace, all virtues, like hate, revenge and all vices, have constant relations with the skull and the face. (…) The facial angle, the angle of Camper, so famous among naturalists, meets almost all the moral and qualities of the individual (...) The European has 85 gr. and the African 70. What a difference these two races of humankind! The arts, sciences, humanity, the empire on earth is the heritage of the first, stolidity, barbarism and ignorance are the qualities of the latter (Caldas, 1808).[32]

Figure 3. Camper angle to determine capabilities of each race



FACIAL ANGLE
A, New Guinea native;
B, European woman

Source: http://encyclopedian-dictionary.blogspot.com/2013/07/facial-angle.html (accessed 31.10.2018).

To close, the mythological features of modernity positioned Europe as the standard for the rest of humanity. This conception of the European subject as "superior" and of non-European races as "degenerates" relates to both western epistemology and a teleological understanding of history. These relationships are founded on the idea of Europe as the end of history and the impossibility of western epistemology of conceive anything beyond its own limits. Just as Hegel (2001) would later argue, Buffon considers Europe to be the final stage of humanity – its adulthood.

[32] Henceforth my own translation from: Caldas, F. J. de. (1808). El influxo del clima sobre seres organizados. *Semanario Nuevo Reyno de Granada*, *22-30*, 200-273.

Non-western territories

Just as the absolute notion of "Man" and human natural law labelled some populations "sub-human," the expansion of modernity also entails the conception of spaces that are not suitable for the complete development of human beings – these are the "other" spaces. These territories, portrayed as "savage," "uncivilised," "insalubrious" and "unexplored," became objects of study in order to exploit their natural resources and bring modernity to these territories and their inhabitants. According to Serje (2005), there are two interconnected representations of these territories: first, travellers, explorers and scientist depicted these spaces as abundant and full of natural wealth waiting to be exploited; second, modernity portrayed these territories as conflictual and inhabited by "backward," not-fully-human peoples with a violent past and present. Furthermore, to the project of western modernity, these conflictual territories opposed the course of history and progress that, if necessary, must by controlled using violence (Dussel, 2005).

One of the strongest influences in the construction of these "other" territories is the work of Alexander von Humboldt and his "reinvention of South America" (Pratt, 1992, 120). According to the Pratt (1992), von Humboldt represented South American nature as "not accessible, collectible, recognisable, categorisable nature of the Linnaeans, however, but a dramatic, extraordinary nature, a spectacle capable of overwhelming human knowledge and understanding" (Pratt, 1992, 120). Along with von Humboldt's representation of South American nature, European explorers in Asia and Africa portrayed nature in the same way as the German botanist.

To illustrate this argument, the Association of Promoting the Discovery of the Interior Parts of Africa founded in London in 1788 published the Adolphe Linant's journal in 1832. In this work, the explorer of the White Nile describes the region as both abundant and dangerous:

> The whole district of Atbara abounds in game, but especially hares, antelopes, and wild asses; I have frequently also heard lions. The wild asses are chiefly found below Gous Regeip; I have often seen twenty-five at a time, and antelopes in hundreds. […] All the country above Gous and Shendy is unhealthy and even the Arabs fear it. As to myself, I sufficiently witnessed its effects. […] I was forced to act with firmness, and even to tie some of their dromedaries, pushing on constantly by forced marches. I was afraid of being taken ill myself, and, in fact, was seized the very day after arriving at Shendy (Linant, 1832, 190).

With this in mind, the idea of abundant nature comes along with a notion of readiness and disposition of the "other" territories. Just like the first explorers and conquerors in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, travellers in this stage of western modernity also saw "other" territories as new, unexplored and ready to be conquered. This corresponds to the

ideology behind the voyages and to the notion of discovering something "new." As Pratt (1992) argues, "nineteenth century Europeans reinvented America as Nature in part because this is how sixteenth- and seventeenth-century European had invented America for them in the first place, and for the same reasons. Thought deeply rooted in eighteenth-century construction of Nature and Man, Humboldt's seeing man is also a self-conscious double of the first European inventors of America, Columbus, Vespucci, Raleigh, and the others" (Pratt, 1992, 126).

Just as travellers in the sixteenth century found new territories ready to be conquered by the European *ego conquiro,* explorers in the second stage of modernity represented nature as ready to be known by the European *ego cogito* (see Section 1.2). The re-invention or re-appropriation of nature in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries corresponds to the idea of "other" territories as timeless, pristine and untouched spaces ready to receive western interventions. In his book *Viaje a la Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta* from 1861, Élisée Reclus (1992) suggest that the land he chose to develop "is only waiting for the axe and plough to become fields of incomparable fertility" (Reclus, 1992, 225).[33]

As analysed throughout the thesis, colonial subjects, both *ego conquiro* and *ego cogito,* approach other territories from a quasi-sacred position. This position gives explorers and travellers the faculty to conquer, appropriate and transform the land as they please. This relationship between the European subject and "other" territories echoes with the human-nature dualism intrinsic in western modern epistemology.

Besides portraying "other" territories as abundant, uncontrollable forces, the second characteristic of the European depiction of non-western spaces is their representation as conflictual, unhealthy and immature. For hegemonic discursive practice, along with commerce and military strategies, these representations have been the keystone and main argument for colonial settlements and remain so today.

Among others, one of the most important featuring tools to problematise "other" territories has been the climatic characteristics of each territory. Although it varies from place to place, from problematic highlands to problematic lowlands, through scientific studies of climate and atmospheric conditions, modernity has tried to problematise non-western spaces in order to justify its interventions.

In this vein, Francisco José de Caldas (1909), in one of his letters to José Celestino Mutis, leader of the Royal Botanical Expedition to New Granada (1783-1808 and 1812-1816),

[33] Henceforth, my own translation from: Reclus, É. (1992). *Viaje a la Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta*. Bogotá: Biblioteca V Centenario Colcultura. Viajeros por Colombia.

suggests that lowlands in today's Colombia are not only unhealthy, but they also do not allow scientific production:

> Every night and every afternoon rained without intermission. Humidity has no limits, everything gets corrupted, and nothing can resist a climate so contrary to human health and to the progress of science (Caldas,1909, 222).[34]

Since the eighteenth century, scientific discourse, as one of the instrumental branches of the hegemonic power, has portrayed the lowlands of today's Colombia as "savage," "godless" and "uncivilised." In contrast, the highlands are where civilisation and western modernity take place and where individuals and societies can reach maturity. Combining Hegel's idea of maturity, environmental determinism, a patriarchal idea of progress, western universalisms and the idea the modern "Man," José María Samper (1853), one of the most important intellectuals in the United States of Colombia[35] compares the antagonism between the lowlands and highlands:

> Barbarism was the constitution of the indigenous society on the coasts and the banks of the rivers, and civilization had risen to the high plains of our mountain ranges. […] Thus, in the fiery valleys of the great rivers and on the coasts of the Atlantic and the Pacific indigenous people hunt and fish, rarely seed, live in absolute independence, sleep climbing over the trees, lack love and respect for women. Does not know the government, does not know what is common to foreigners. It is distrustful, indomitable, vengeful, stupid and bellicose. Ignores, vegetating in indolence, all arts, all industries, and the demands of the domestic home. It lacks temples and religious ceremonies, its notions concerning God and relations with man are wrapped in the veil of immense ignorance and stupid superstition (Samper, 1853, 165-166)[36].

Moreover, in line with Hegel (2001), the author states that the lack of modern practices and the lack of his own "common sense" is a lack of maturity:

> It is that societies, when they are in their infancy, as well as the child who looks for what pleases him the most, without meditating on what is best for him, sets himself preferably in the places where he finds solace and the delights of a feminine life. Because, ignoring the powerful influence of wealth and large industries, they avoid

[34] Henceforth, my own translation from: Caldas, F. J. de. (1909). Carta de caldas dirigida a Mutis. Ibarra Octubre 6 de 1803. En *Expedición Botánica de José Celestino Mutis al Nuevo Reino de Granada y Memorias Inéditas de Francisco José de Caldas* ((Diego Mendoza Ed.) Librería General de Victoriano Suárez). Madrid.

[35] Today Colombia from 1863 to 1886.

[36] Henceforth, my own translation from: Samper, J. M. (1853). *Apuntamientos para la Historia Política i Social de la Nueva Granada. Desde 1810, i especialmente de la administración del 7 de Marzo*. Bogotá: Imprenta del Neo-granadino.

> work where the climate causes them suffering, even if that work gives them an abundant retribution of production, independence and comfort (Samper, 1853, 165).

Moreover, the atmospheric insalubrity of non-western territories is presented as not only affecting human being, but also animals and plants:

> And this general fact, as to size, is further corroborated, by all the animals which have been transported from Europe having become less, and also those common to both continents being much smaller in America than those of Europe. In this this world, then, there must be something in the combination of the elements, and other physical causes, which opposes the aggrandisement of animated nature; there must be obstacles to the development, and perhaps to the formation of the principles of life. Under this sky, and on this vacant land, even those which, from the benign influence of other climates, had received their full form and complete extension, lose both, and become shrivelled and diminished (Barr's Buffon, 38, 1807b).

Non-western cultures

According to environmental determinism, culture, the third element that problematises difference and positions European experience as "superior," is supposedly the result of environmental conditions of the area and the phenotypical characteristics of its peoples. The main argument is that hegemonic power partially externalises those cultural features and expressions that do not fit with European epistemic and ontological standards, allocating them to the peripheries of the international division of labour. As part of the coloniality of power, knowledge and being, problematising religions, economies and social organisations leads to a process of disparaging "others" and justifying their colonisation.

With a few exceptions, western modernity has labelled "other" cultures as "savage" and temporally "behind" Europe. This condition of "backwardness" and "barbarity" condemns those non-western collectivities to a "sub-human" condition. At the same time, not acknowledging humanity in "other" collectivities justifies and legitimises violent interventions made by western modernity. As an example, in 1866, Reclus (2007) suggested that indigenous communities from the South of the United States of Colombia lack everything that a "civilised" man should have. According to the author, the indigenous condition of "backwardness" derives from the environment inhabited by these collectivities. The most important cultural gaps identified by Reclus (2007) relate to their lack of "ambition," "will to progress" and "the intention to move forward in the course of history":

> Life is easy and passes quietly for the indigenous man. The Pastuso lives happily in the midst of abundance, and, without needs as without culture, he is not interested in civilization or progress. He is a sedentary savage who speaks Spanish. He believes

> that the world does not go beyond the horizon of its jungles and dreams of nothing more beautiful than in its parochial celebrations. It is small in body and round. His complexion is bronzed, his look distrustful. Malicious, cunning, suspicious and sometimes perfidious, indolent of thought, but indefatigable for physical work, fanatical and superstitious in the extreme, the indigenous man from Pasto is usually a docile being under the hand of priests as indomitable once it has been revealed (Reclus, 2007, 204).[37]

Different cultures, with their *habitus,* life-worlds, particular interactions with their territories, religions, festivities, epistemologies and social ontologies, become the object of study and intervention by western modernity. The intention of "normalising" these collectivities responds to the mythological call of modernity, its pretended superiority and its inability to conceive of anything beyond its limits. This singular conception of humanity present in European epistemology carries with it the problematisation of difference all over the world.

First, the problematisation of the "other" took place in the Americas with the expansion of Europe to the Americas in the sixteenth century. Later, in the second stage of modernity, the consolidation of the modern world-system implied the problematisation of almost every non-western collectivity. Due to its worldwide scope, problematising difference took a variety of discursive tools performed by the hegemonic powers to legitimise the interventions to no-western cultures. Following that premise, in the case of today's Colombia, even today the hegemonic environmental determinism has portrayed the collectivities living in the lowlands as "other." On the contrary, in the case of Thailand, "others" are different communities living in the mountains – called "hill tribes" by the central power located in Bangkok, these collectivities become the "other," for they are supposedly "static" in time, "superstitious" and run "backwards" economies:

> With few exceptions, these non-Thai ethnic peoples are slash-and-burn hill farmers, believing in animistic religions, and having changed little from the social customs and mores practiced by their forefathers centuries ago (Young, 1982, iii).

In this vein, echoing notions of the coloniality of knowledge and the coloniality of being, the relationship between regional hegemonic powers and non-western cultures has been one of denial and non-acknowledgment of difference since the sixteenth century. This non-acknowledgment of epistemological and socio-ontological difference responds to the fact that "indolent reason" cannot conceive of any other form of reasoning or being apart from its own. This impossibility of conceiving anything but itself, plus its pretension to superiority,

[37] Henceforth, my own translation from: Reclus, É. (2007). Ensayo sobre las revoluciones políticas y la condición social de las repúblicas colombianas por José María Samper. *Revista de Estudios Sociales*, *27*, 201–2015.

obliges the project of modernity to justify every intervention that seeks to transform non-western collectivities.

Some legitimising discourses find their fundament in the idea of natural law, which suggests that there are certain rights endowed by God that are innate to every human being. It also suggests that there is a standardised morality that determines how humanity behaves, or should behave. According to Christopher Wolfe (2009), there are four main meanings of natural law:

1. Natural law as an objective value: this approach "implies the existence of some sort of objective moral law knowable through reason. It is implicit in what is perhaps the most basic intuition giving rise to natural law, namely, the sense that there must be some general standard in light of which it is possible to judge human laws or conventions" (Wolfe, 2009, 164).
2. Natural law rooted in human nature: this approach implies "the idea that there is a stable human nature that at least sets limits to how men should act in order to maximize the conditions for achieving a satisfactory existence" (Wolfe, 2009, 165).
3. Natural law as a natural order of ends: this understanding of natural law holds the notion that "a natural order, with various kinds of beings whose fulfilment or realization consists in developing and perfecting immanent capacities. This order is discovered, not created, by human beings. Human beings achieve a good life by living in accord with the natural order, and specifically by developing the capacities inherent in and distinctive of human nature" (Wolfe, 2009, 167).
4. Classical Thomistic natural law: this approach argues that "human beings flourish and achieve such happiness as is possible in this life by living good lives, following a law inscribed in their being: above all, lives of virtue or excellence, and especially intellectual virtue. They choose particular ways of living well, guided by the self-evident basic principles of natural law, which they grasp through practical reason and by right desire" (Wolfe, 2009, 169).

The common thread in all four definitions is the shared idea of a quasi-divine intrinsic power that defines morality, right and wrong, and that establishes the way that every society should behave, organise, produce, reproduce and relate to its surrounding world in order to have a good live and fulfil its sacred mandates.

Additionally, natural law set the basis of constructing "positive law" (human-made law), for it is the mundane interpretation of the Holy Writings (Castilla Urbano, 2014). In this view, God's rationality gave European men a moral and standardised yardstick to define how close to divinity every collectivity and every individual is. Natural law, as given by God, delegitimises and denaturalises any non-western culture in every corner of the world.

Based on natural law, one of the main discourses that legitimised conquest was discrediting non-European mechanisms of using and owning land. According to John Locke (1823), in his text *Two Treatises of Government* from 1689, because American indigenous collectivities did not work the land in the European fashion, they did not work the land at all. In this case, acknowledging the fertility of the land, Locke suggests that indigenous populations are poor because they do not know how or are not keen to work the land properly:

> There cannot be a clearer demonstration of anything than several nations of the Americans are of this, who are rich in land and poor in all the comforts of life; whom Nature, having furnished as liberally as any other people with the materials of plenty – i.e., a fruitful soil, apt to produce in abundance what might serve for food, raiment, and delight; yet, for want of improving it by labour, have not one hundredth part of the conveniences we enjoy, and a king of a large and fruitful territory there feeds, lodges, and is clad worse than a day labourer in England (Locke, 1823, 122).

Following Locke's argumentation, as American indigenous collectivities did not work the land – which explained the lack of conveniences enjoyed in England – they did not own the land. According to Francisco Castilla Urbano (2014), there are two main tangled approaches to the problem of land ownership in Locke's perspective. First, that land ownership is a direct consequence of working it. Under Locke's universalist approach to the idea of natural law, only Europeans, by divine mandate, had the rightful system of cultivating land and were the rightful owners of such territories as long as they ploughed, planted, improved and cultivated the land:

> God commanded, and his wants forced him to labour. That was his property, which could not be taken from him wherever he had fixed it. And hence subduing or cultivating the earth and having dominion, we see, are joined together. The one gave title to the other. So that God, by commanding to subdue, gave authority so far to appropriate. And the condition of human life, which requires labour and materials to work on, necessarily introduce private possessions (Locke, 1823, 119).

Second, collective ownership of land is seen as inadequate – an illegitimate kind of ownership. As the indigenous communities in the Americas had a collective system of land use, Locke considered this communitarian system as not based in natural law, which meant that European settlers could appropriate territories formerly occupied by indigenous communities for themselves. Locke's position is that, given that a person works land individually, its ownership should be individual. In other words, only individual work – not communitarian or collective – could lead to land ownership:

> But the chief matter of property being now not the fruits of the earth and the beasts that subsist on it, but the earth itself, as that which takes in and carries with it all the

> rest, I think it is plain that property in that too is acquired as the former. As much land as a man tills, plants, improves, cultivates, and can use the product of, so much is his property. He by his labour does, as it were, enclose it from the common. Nor will it invalidate his right to say everybody else has an equal title to it, and therefore he cannot appropriate, he cannot enclose, without the consent of all his fellow-commoners, all mankind. God, when He gave the world in common to all mankind, commanded man also to labour, and the penury of his condition required it of him. God and his reason commanded him to subdue the earth – i.e., improve it for the benefit of life and therein lay out something upon it that was his own, his labour. He that, in obedience to this command of God, subdued, tilled, and sowed any part of it, thereby annexed to it something that was his property, which another had no title to, nor could without injury take from him (Locke, 1823, 118).

Castilla Urbano (2014) suggests that settlers, inasmuch as they were expanding the European way of life, had the divine (natural) and mundane (positive) right to appropriate land. From the European perspective, indigenous collectivities, attached to hunting and gathering, attributed three main defective characteristics to the land use: i) they did not take advantage of the land properly because their land use was not considered "work" in the strict sense; ii) their use of land did not show any connection to the designs of the Lord and seemed to be against His desires; iii) due to the above, settlers could not consider indigenous collectivities to be the rightful owners of the land on which they had been living for thousand years (Castilla Urbano, 2014).

Locke's interpretation of natural law is one of the most important legitimising discourses used by settlers to expel indigenous communities from their territories, appropriate their land, and establish a standardised morality and social organisation. In a broad sense, along with the coloniality of being and the coloniality of knowledge, discourses of natural law – and its mundane reflection, positive law – contributed to the judicial elements that justified and divinised the violent territorial expropriation and expansion of capitalisms in newly occupied territories:

> Hence, it [natural law] plays a fundamental role both to justify the rejection of atheists and to establish the unique validity of European family or social organization forms. Both to establish the legitimacy and superiority of private property over collective ownership, as well as that of individual forms of production over communal ones and that of sedentary forms of life over nomads (Castilla Urbano, 45, 2014).[38]

[38] Henceforth, my own translation from: Castilla Urbano, F. (2014). Francisco de Vitoria y John Locke: Sobre la justificación de la conquista de América del sur al norte del continente. In *Discursos legitimadores de la conquista y la colonización de América* (pp. 37–58). (Francisco Castilla Urbano Ed.) Universidad de Alcalá.

In this regard, it is important to see Locke's position under the lens of two features of western modernity formerly analysed in Section 1.2. First, the modern justification of violence when the "other" opposes the civilising process. This means expelling indigenous collectivities when they do not share the European system of individual property, imposing social relations, religion, epistemology and power structures and, finally, inserting these collectivities into the racialised modern World-System. Briefly, imposing European logic in order to colonise knowledges and beings, and to introduce new elements to the international division of labour.

Second, western modernity conceives of itself as the most developed social, economic and cultural configuration. In this case, modernity does not only consider itself to be the most advanced, but that which follows the commands of God. As western modernity takes the development of positive law in Europe as the interpretation of the Holy Texts, settlers in the Americas did not see themselves only as the most advanced or superior but also as those who had the sacred right to expropriate and exploit land. As the only people able to reach "adulthood" and find its support in the almost sacred natural law, European colonisers understood their role in the invasion of the Americas as responding to the manifest destiny established in the interpretation of God's call.

With this last section, the three main components of legitimising the colonisation of the "other" make clear the complexity of the power relations between hegemonic social ontology and "other" social ontologies. By problematising non-western social organisations, forms of being-in-the-world, economies and so on, western modernity developed a discourse that worked towards the disdain, transformation and elimination of difference. The result of hierarchising difference, in which the Europe is seen as the end of history, is the coloniality of power, as every collectivity is, at some point, allocated in the structure of capitalism as the economic system of the racialised, modern world-system.

Summing up

This chapter analysed the nature and scope of coloniality as a phenomenon that goes beyond the economic and political realms. Its field of action are the imaginaries, expectations and "common senses" of colonised subjects and its main purpose is the reproduction of the racialised, modern world-system. By shaping desires and subjectivities, hegemonic powers ensure that every subject naturalises its position in a hierarchical and racialised international division of labour, in which every collectivity, according to skin colour and culture, has a specific role.

In this regard, the two main sections – *Colonialism, coloniality and the dark side of modernity* and *Problematising difference: legitimising discourse of conquest* – consider the colonial nature of western modernity and its strategies and discourses that problematise difference and operate on the subjective level.

The first section analysed the differences between colonialism and coloniality as two realms of power. On the one hand, "colonialism" refers to the macro level of power as the economic and political sphere, as well as the international division of labour. On the other hand, "coloniality" refers to the subjectivity and the naturalisation of certain individual and collective roles according their place of origin, race and culture.

Additionally, forging subjectivities that reproduce the international division of labour requires thinking power as a heterarchical dynamic that dialectically connects the macro and micro levels of power. In this sense, this research takes power as the complex interaction between the economic and political spheres – such as the international division of labour – and the subjective sphere – such as epistemologies, lived experiences, aesthetics and aspirations.

The second section analysed the legitimising discourses of western modernity that problematised and justified the appropriation and transformation of non-western economies, social organisations, epistemologies, *habitus* and relationships with their surroundings. Founded on its pretension to universalism, western scientists defined a standardised notion of territories, phenotypical features and cultures, measuring every collectivity according to its proximity to the western standard.

To sum up, this section analysed colonialism and coloniality as dialectical phenomena after the expansion of Europe since the sixteenth century. Moreover, this chapter suggests that, to understand modern colonialism, it is necessary to understand coloniality, for they are two sides of the same coin. To close, after understanding the consolidation of the modern world-system and its economic system as the macro level of power in Chapter 1, and analysing the micro level of power as forging subjectivities in the present Chapter 2, the following section (Chapter 3) focuses on some of the current hegemonic strategies that strive to normalise difference and incorporate it into the western narrative. This means that, if Chapter 2 examined the discursive strategies that problematise the "other," Chapter 3 considers some of today's disciplinary technologies deployed to conduct the conduct of non-western collectivities.

3. Developmentalism as a discursive shift of modernity

Considering the differences between colonialism and coloniality, the present chapter analyses developmentalism as a discursive shift in western modernity that manages to combine the macro and the micro realms of power into one single narrative. Following the universalistic pretension of modern epistemology, after the Second World War and the creation of the United Nations, the discourse over "other" territories, cultures and races slightly changed its focus to the economic conditions of non-western collectivities. Although direct allusions to race, territory and culture decreased, places and collectivities that the European eye considered "backward," "uncivilised" or "savage" now became "economically disadvantaged" and "underdeveloped." The universalising nature of western modernity turned its "othering" discourse from cultural, territorial and racial features of collectivities to notions of economic progress, income and accumulation. Although this new discourse maintains the racialised international division of labour, it turns its attention from intrinsic racial, cultural and territorial conditions that defined the "otherness" to modifiable economic, social and cultural elements of non-western societies.

This discursive variation from intrinsic collective conditions to modifiable economic characteristics does not eliminate the racialised distinction between hegemonic epistemology and those of the "others." Considering that "indolent reason" does not conceive of knowledge outside its own, collectivities that do not share western rationality become "underdeveloped." The linkage between both discourses – before and after the Second World War – reveals the continuity of racialised notion of alterity.

Complex phenomena such as Nazism and national independences of African and Asian colonies forced the core of the modern world-system to change its discourses towards "difference." If, in the first and second stages of western modernity, alongside disciplinary technologies, violence and repression were the main strategies of domination, developmentalism, at least on the discursive level, rejects any use of physical violence and focuses its efforts on shaping subjectivities in order to reproduce and naturalise capital liberalism as the panacea for humanity.

In this sense, developmentalism as the new metaphor for the western teleological understanding of history required the redefinition and revaluation of certain notions such as development, income and poverty. First, the concept of "development" became the new metaphorical goal towards which every society should aim. It became a synonym of modernity. Second, income became the measurement strategy that defines the proximity of countries and collectivities to development. Last, poverty, in opposition to well-being or prosperity, represented the condition of in-need-of-development and high income that developmentalism aims to transform. Accordingly, the discursive relationship between underdevelopment, low income and poverty defined the new difference that the modern

world-system problematises in order to reproduce and expand capitalism as it economic system.

Unlike previous forms of "othering" – difference through unmodifiable characteristics such as race and territory – developmentalism gives the "other" the promise of reaching modernity if it follows specific steps. In this regard, by problematising difference and abnormalising certain living standards, developmentalism spreads the notion that by changing economic, social and political practices, every collectivity can reach modernity. Moreover, the abnormalisation of certain living standards legitimises developmental programs and interventions, as well as their quest to include every collectivity into a liberal capitalist narrative.

The problematisation of certain living standards entails the deployment of a series of interventions that share the main objective of transforming "other" epistemologies and ontologies. In other words, non-European lived experiences, their strategies to interact with their surroundings and their own definitions of well-being and poverty became the new objective of disciplinary efforts in order to inculcate developmentalist values and practices into individual and collective subjectivities.

Overall, after analysing the nature of developmentalism as the new discursive shift of western modernity and its scope in both the micro and macro levels of power, this section considers the construction of this new "other" and the new strategies that problematise difference. Last, once the "other" is established, this chapter questions the range and limitations of developmental programs as the materialisation of the new discourse of modernity.

To do so, the chapter has two main sections. *Developmentalism and its alterities: continuities and discontinuities in the idea of difference* analyses the discursive shift of modernity and tries to shed some light on the meanings and implications of the notions of development and poverty. The second section, *Development as a disciplinary toolset: problematising and normalising difference* analyses the new discursive strategies used to problematise difference and the institutional efforts to transform non-western collectivities through developmental programs.

3.1. Developmentalism and its alterities: continuities and discontinuities in the idea of difference

This shift in the nature of the western narrative responds to two main intertwined aspects that shaped the micro and macro levels of power. First, with the Second World War, colonial subjects in the metropole experienced first-hand the barbaric nature of colonialism. Second, willing to become the undisputed core of the world after the war, the United States questioned "old imperialism-exploitation for foreign profit" (Truman, 1949) and proposed economic

development based on "more vigorous application of modern scientific and technical knowledge" (Truman, 1949), in which the United States had the leading role.

As for the first cause of the discursive shift, the Martinican poet and politician Aimé Césaire (1972), suggests that, since the expansion of Europe in the sixteenth century, the dominant powers have dominated non-western collectivities with tactics that would later on be identified as Nazi practices. He argues that the main difference between the nature of colonial practices and Nazi practices are its victims. In the first case, the victims are non-European societies in the "zone of non-being." In the case of Nazism, the victims are Europeans, part of the end of history and living in the "zone of being." Moreover, in his *Discourse on Colonialism*, the author suggests that while violence, dispossession, exploitation and mass murders happened in non-western territories for more than three centuries, the white European bourgeoisie did not see it a problem and enjoyed the economic wealth of colonial metropoles but, when it happened in Northern Europe itself, these phenomena became problematic:

> They say: "How strange! But never mind-it's Nazism, it will pass!" And they wait, and they hope; and they hide the truth from themselves, that it is barbarism, but the supreme barbarism, the crowning barbarism that sums up all the daily barbarisms; that it is Nazism, yes, but that before they were its victims, they were its accomplices; that they tolerated that Nazism before it was inflicted on them, that they absolved it, shut their eyes to it, legitimized it, because, until then, it had been applied only to non-European peoples; that they have cultivated that Nazism, that they are responsible for it, and that before engulfing the whole of Western, Christian civilization in its reddened waters, it oozes, seeps, and trickles from every crack (Césaire, 1972, 3).

In his analysis, Césaire (1972) identifys violent colonial practices in non-western territories as practices allowed, promoted and justified by those who would later become victims of Nazism in Europe. This means that, to the European subjectivity, what is condemnable in Nazism is not the crime itself, but the fact that the crime was committed against western collectivities. Although Nazi practices have been the *modus operandi* of colonialism since the sixteenth century, modernity labels it "problematic" only when the victims reside within the "zone of being" – that is, when violence is executed against the racialised model of humans and humanity:

> Yes, it would be worthwhile to study clinically, in detail, the steps taken by Hitler and Hitlerism and to reveal to the very distinguished, very humanistic, very Christian bourgeois of the twentieth century that without his being aware of it, he has a Hitler inside him, that Hitler *inhabits* him, that Hitler is his *demon*, that if he rails against him, he is being inconsistent and that, at bottom, what he cannot forgive Hitler for is not *crime* in itself, the *crime against man*, it is not the *humiliation of man as such*, it is the crime

> against the white man, the humiliation of the white man, and the fact that he applied to Europe colonialist procedures which until then had been reserved exclusively for the Arabs of Algeria, the coolies of India, and the blacks of Africa. […] And that is the great thing I hold against pseudo-humanism: that for too long it has diminished the rights of man, that its concept of those rights has been – and still is – narrow and fragmentary, incomplete and biased and, all things considered, sordidly racist (Césaire, 1972, 3).[39]

As part of this dehumanisation of difference analysed in Chapter 2, Césaire (1972) argues that, as non-western collectivities are not considered "fully human," their lives are disposable and replaceable such that their elimination is not problematic. As long as colonial territories and collectivities provide cheap raw materials, extensive land and forced/cheap labour to colonial metropoles, the European subject does not identify colonialism as "violence" because it does not identify the "other" as fully human.

As for the second cause of this discursive shift, lamenting the barbaric nature of "old-imperialism" and offering itself as the undisputed core of the modern world-system after the Second World War, the United States created a global campaign that bore its seal and economic purpose. As part of the program to stop communism, Truman (1949) argued that the struggle belonged not only to the United States, but that it is a world-wide problem to be eliminated. To do so, Truman (1949) proposed four concrete initiatives that would change the way the hegemonic power addresses the "other."

First, he proposed strengthening multinational agencies such as the United Nations in order stop communism and promote western values. In this vein, Esteva (2010) suggests that most international institutions created after the Second World War corresponded to the purpose of making the United States the undisputed core of the modern world-system. Further, the author argues that "the United Nations Charter echoed the United States Constitution" (Esteva, 2010, 1).

Second, Truman argued for continuing with the European economic recovery program and reducing "the barriers to world trade and increasing its volume. Economic recovery and peace itself depend on increased world trade" (Truman, 1949). In this regard, Berthoud (2010) suggests that the faith in the market as the only perfect tool to solve the problems of the world is part of a narrative that suggests that market capitalism is directly linked to democracy. In this sense, "market principles are quite explicitly contrasted with the totalitarian experience, and considered as the only way to escape insufferable bureaucracy and to guarantee a minimally decent material life for all" (Berthoud, 2010, 74). Because of this unquestionable link between market capitalism and democracy present in the macro level of power, developmentalism has the ultimate aim of making market principles the regulating standards

[39] Italics are present in the original text.

of society as a whole. Additionally, it seeks to make them the leading principles that guide individual and collective action (Berthoud, 2010).

The third action proposed by Truman was the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in order to provide security to the "Western Hemisphere" (Truman, 1949). In his terms, this was the creation of long-term cooperation among "freedom-loving nations" to "provide military advice and equipment to free nations which will cooperate with us in the maintenance of peace and security" (Truman, 1949).

The fourth initiative represented the heart of this discursive shift, defined the agenda of developmentalism and established the label "other" that endures today. Summarised in five points, developmentalism became the discourse used to shape both the macro and micro levels of power:

1. Non-European collectivities would stop being labelled as "savage" or "uncivilised" and would, instead, become "underdeveloped." According to the universalist western narrative, from that moment on, those with ontological and epistemological differences become unacceptable and their poverty represents a threat to developed countries. As Truman (1949) suggests, "more than half the people of the world are living in conditions approaching misery. Their food is inadequate. They are victims of disease. Their economic life is primitive and stagnant. Their poverty is a handicap and a threat both to them and to more prosperous areas" (Truman, 1949).
2. Only capitalism would "help the free peoples of the world, through their own efforts, to produce more food, more clothing, more materials for housing, and more mechanical power to lighten their burdens" (Truman, 1949). With the aim of changing those underdeveloped conditions and incorporating formerly "uncivilised" regions into market capitalism, Truman (1949) trusts western epistemology and its pretension to universalism. The former president suggests that countries in the core, especially the United States, "must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas" (Truman, 1949).
3. The incorporation of the "other" into the western narrative would be under the conditions set by the modern world-system and its racialised international division of labour. This means that cooperation among countries is based on the use of industrial technologies from countries in the core because these resources "are constantly growing and are inexhaustible" (Truman, 1949). Furthermore, the United States invites countries in the core to cooperate under the umbrella of the United Nations to achieve "peace, plenty, and freedom" (Truman, 1949). In the same vein, Truman's speech suggests that "with the cooperation of business, private capital, agriculture, and labor [sic] in this country [countries in the core], this program can greatly increase

the industrial activity in other nations and can raise substantially their standards of living" (Truman, 1949).

4. The United States would "make available to peace-loving peoples the benefits of our store of technical knowledge in order to help them realize their aspirations for a better life" (Truman, 1949). In other words, non-western desires and aspirations become the objective of developmentalist interventions, for they are neither legitimate nor valid. Moreover, in this logic, non-western aspirations for better lives should become the object of intervention through "capital investment in areas needing development" (Truman, 1949).
5. The moral obligation of improving "others'" lives, characteristic of the expansive nature of modernity, corresponds to fact that, "for the first time in history, humanity possesses the knowledge and skill to relieve the suffering of these people" (Truman, 1949).

This Truman speech suggests that industrial countries, with the United States on top, are the most modern and superior, and, therefore, have the obligation to improve the "other," the underdeveloped. Moreover, just as Hegel (2001) did with Northern Europe, Truman considers the United States to be the territory that sets the path of development, for they have the "most advanced" technical knowledge. Furthermore, if difference stands in the way of western purpose, it "can be corrected only by violence" (Truman, 1949), even thought it could also bring suffering. For Truman, the "other" is to blame for their faults and for not knowing either the importance or the advantages of liberal capitalism as the economic system of the modern world-system. For this reason, market capitalism would "help them realize their aspirations for a better life" (Truman, 1949).

The end of the Second World War set new political lines from which the modern world-system would begin its discursive shift. According to Fontana (2017), a series of conferences during the forties in Moscow, Teheran, Yalta, Potsdam, San Francisco and Bretton Woods set the economic, cultural, political and social skeleton that continues to govern the world today. Among different topics, such as the location of Polish borders and the amount of compensation that Germany had to pay after the war, the hegemonic powers created the United Nations in order to promote western values and expand market capitalism with the United States as it pinnacle:

> Human rights, democracy and the improvement of living standards would serve as legitimization for the constitution of a broad informal empire of countries with governments favourable to 'our lifestyle and to free enterprise,' as Eisenhower would

> later say, that would not put obstacles to the North American economic expansion (Fontana, 2017, 262).[40]

In particular, during the Bretton Woods Conference of July 1944, the hegemonic powers created the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (later known as the World Bank) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as the entities tasked with guaranteeing "freedom of international trade, eliminating all restrictions, which was essential to establish the supremacy of the United States" (Fontana, 2017, 264). This conference represented the origin of the economic bastion that would define the fate of what are now termed "underdeveloped countries."

To sum up, the discursive shift after the Second World War represented the configuration of a new order on top of which stood the United States and Northern Europe, in which market capitalism reigned as its economic system, liberal democracy as its political system and western epistemology and ontology as its socio-ontological framework. Although this new configuration on the macro level of power divided the world into "developed" and "underdeveloped," the socio-economic hegemony established by the colonial expansion of Europe did not change with either the end of colonialism or the formation of peripheral nation-states (Grosfoguel & Castro-Gómez, 2007).

Understanding development

Since the configuration of the new order on the macro level of power, ontological difference in western modernity changed from cultural, territorial and racial features of the "other" to one based on levels of industrialisation, urbanisation and income. Considering that *orientalism* reflects the dichotomy "Orient-Occident" on top of which coloniality problematises difference and tries to shape the *habitus* and life-world of the "other," developmentalism as a colonial continuity separates the "zone of being" and the "zone of non-being" according to levels of industrialisation and their proximity to western living standards. According to Gustavo Esteva (2010):

> On that day, 2 billion people became underdeveloped. In a real sense, from that time on, they ceased being what they were, in all their diversity, and were transmogrified into an inverted mirror of others' reality: a mirror that belittles them and sends them off to the end of the queue, a mirror that defines their identity, which is really that of a heterogeneous and diverse majority, simply in the terms of a homogenizing and narrow minority (Esteva, 2010, 2).

[40] Henceforth, my own translation from: Fontana, J. (2017). *El Siglo de la Revolución: Una historia del mundo desde 1914 a 2017*. Barcelona: Editorial Crítica.

According to Rahnema (2010), after the Second World War, "for the first time in history, entire nations and countries came to be considered (and consider themselves) as poor, on the grounds that their overall income is insignificant in comparison with those now dominating the world economy" (Rahnema, 2010, 178). This meant the economisation of everyday life and a "forceful integration of vernacular societies into the world economy" (Rahnema, 2010, 178).

Echoing the idea of scientific universalisms, the Truman doctrine was very soon adopted by the elites of "underdeveloped countries" with the specific purpose of reproducing the standards of industrialised, developed countries (Escobar, 2007). Following a series of mythological traits of western modernity, the notion of "development" situates Europe and the United States as the pinnacle of every collectivity and the end of history. Additionally, it exclusively trusts in "indolent reason" and in its epistemological strategies to name, categorise, control and transform human and non-human nature. In sum, it asks vernacular collectivities to "consider that the world has changed, and to learn from the experience of those who have finally made it" (Rahnema, 2010, 185). Moreover, it presents itself as the "only transcultural and universal road for all would-be travellers to reach their modern destination" (Rahnema, 2010, 185).

Although the concept of "development" dates much farther back in time, it is only after the end of the Second World War that it acquired its colonial nature. Considering colonialism to be the dark side of modernity (Mignolo, 2003, 2009b), as soon as developmentalism came to be the new narrative of western modernity, it incorporated western mythological features and began problematising difference. In addition, the dichotomy between "development" and "underdevelopment" became the updated version of the western differentiation between "us" and "them":

> According to the same learned white man, the concept that is currently termed "development" has gone through six stages of metamorphosis since late antiquity. The perception of the outsider as the one who needs help has taken on the successive forms of the barbarian, the pagan, the infidel, the wild man, the "native", and the underdeveloped. Needless to say, these forms whose meanings helplessly keep on decomposing can only exist in relation to their opposites (Minh-Ha, 1989, 54).

With this in mind, developmentalism became the most recent materialisation of the macro and micro levels of power, for it intervenes in global economic and political dimensions while also forging subjectivities. Developmentalism became the new narrative of modernity and continues to reproduce colonial patterns, practices and discourses to this day.

Likewise, the *ego conquiro* and *ego cogito* positioned themselves as superior to the subjectivities of non-European collectivities. After the Second World War, the differentiating

element evolved into income and level of development. This does not mean that "invention of the Third World" (Escobar, 2007) meant the abolition of the racialised international division of labour, but that there was a discursive shift in the definition and identification of difference. From that moment on, under the new discourse, the periphery of the modern world-system became the object of interventions, not due to the characteristics of their territories, races and cultures but because of their standards of living and their levels of income.

As a continuation of the nature of *ego cogito* that keeps western subjects from the ability to look beyond their own perspective, developmentalism reveals the incapacity of western epistemology to genuinely recognise difference. Developmentalism reproduces the Manichean attitude of western modernity towards ontological and epistemological difference – it is unable to recognise a feasible life beyond western standards. Briefly, the relationship that developmentalism has with difference is the same ontological relationship that western subjects had with non-western collectivities in the past. It is a "sub-ontological" or "ontological-colonial" difference, for it is a relationship between a fully human and developed *Dasein* in contrast with an "other" underdeveloped subject that has not fully reached its "human" condition.

However, contrary to previous forms of modernity under which the "other" would never reach a complete *Dasein*, developmentalism includes the unfulfilled promise of reaching the "zone of being." Meanwhile, before developmentalism, the aspirational chances to become "modern" were null, for the "other" had certain unmodifiable characteristics. After the Second World War, following specific steps, difference had the supposed chance to develop and reach the "zone of being."

According to Esteva (2010), developmentalism is a metaphor that "describes a process through which the potentialities of an object or organism are released, until it reaches its natural, complete, full-fledged form" (Esteva, 2010, 3). In this sense, just as Hegel suggested more than one century before, the new discourse of modernity argues that the west fully mature and that, following certain steps, "other" regions of the world would be able to reach its adulthood. Moreover, as the biological metaphor indicates, whenever a non-western collectivity does not follow the path set by developmentalism, it becomes pathological and anti-natural:

> Development was frustrated whenever the plant or the animal failed to fulfil its genetic programme, or substituted for it another. In such cases of failure, its growth was not development but rather an anomaly: pathological, and even anti-natural, behaviour. The study of these "monsters" became critical for the formulation of the first biological theories (Esteva, 2010, 3).

Considering that developmentalism supposedly does not found itself on fixed conditions such as race or territory, it may appear that any collectivity could reach its maturity, regardless of its epistemology or ontology. However, what developmentalism does not clarify is that following the modern path invariably means becoming a peripheral pawn of the modern capitalist world-system, plus losing vernacular epistemologies and ontologies. In other words, as developmentalism cannot conceive of difference – the race to the end of history invariably implies losing vernacular forms of being-in-the-world and relating to uninhabited spaces.

In this sense, the success and main innovation of developmentalism is that it manages to hide its racialised and colonial nature. In addition, as its focus are income and wealth, it does not seem concerned with epistemic or ontological difference as long as they contribute to the economic growth. However, a closer look identifies the mythological, racial and colonial nature of developmentalism.

Following Hegel (2001) and the idea that civilisation had to travel from East to West until it reached northern Europe, where it developed its subjective freedom and full humanity, Rostow (1959) suggests that societies can achieve maturity only through economic growth. Moreover, illustrating the manners through which the macro and micro levels of power configure "other" economies and political relations, Rostow's six stages of economic growth show the path that every collectivity should follow to reach adulthood, to overcome its "sub-human" condition and enter western modernity. These teleological stages are:

1. **Traditional societies:** These collectivities represent the origins of modern civilisation because, although they have inventiveness, they "lack a systematic understanding of their physical environment capable of making invention a more or less regular current flow, rather than a stock of ad hoc achievements inherited from the past. They lacked, in short, the tools and the outlook towards the physical world of the post-Newtonian era" (Rostow, 1959, 4).
2. **Preconditions for take-off:** These preconditions are the development of a strong transport network that allows for the exploitation of natural resources, technological revolution in agriculture to increase productivity and the expansion of imports of capital by economies that are more efficient. Additionally, "framed by these three forms of sectoral development, yielding both new markets and new inputs for industry, the initially small enclaves of modern industrial activity could begin to expand, and then sustain expansion, mainly by the plough-back of profits" (Rostow, 1959, 5).
3. **Take-off:** This stage consists of the "achievement of rapid growth in a limited group of sectors, where modern industrial techniques are applied" (Rostow, 1959, 7). Furthermore, it distinguishes itself from the previous stage by the fact that this stage

make the "application of modern industrial techniques a self-sustained rather than an abortive process" (Rostow, 1959, 7).

4. **Drive to maturity:** This is the "period when a society has effectively applied the range of (then) modern technology to the bulk of its resources" (Rostow, 1959, 8). Additionally, in this stage, "the industrial process is differentiated, with new leading sectors gathering momentum to supplant the older leading sectors of the take-off, where deceleration has increasingly slowed the pace of expansion" (Rostow, 1959, 8).
5. **Age of high mass consumption:** Once a country has reached a mature economy, there are three possibilities regarding its socioeconomic future: first, provide social and public services; second, expand private consumption on a mass basis; third, enlarge power on the world scene (Rostow, 1959). The age of high mass consumption (the second option), is the one followed by the United States and is the one that every collectivity should take in order to expand its economy. As stated by the author, "after a brief and superficial flirtation with the attractions of world power at the turn of the century and after imposing a set of mild measures of social reform, during the Progressive period, the United States opted whole-heartedly in the 1920's for the second choice" (Rostow, 1959, 11).
6. **Dark matter consumption:** The last stage, with the United States as the closest country to reaching it at the time that Rostow was writing, consists of "the point where the pursuit of food, shelter, clothing, as well as durable consumers goods and public and private services, may no longer dominate their lives. A new and revolutionary set of choices is being confronted, or is a mere generation or so over the horizon […] [it is] the era when the problem and human agenda imposed by the fact of scarcity is coming towards an end" (Rostow, 1959, 14).

In the same vein, the United Nations (UN) document entitled *Measures for the Economic Development of Underdeveloped Countries* (United Nations, 1951) describes the preconditions that every country should meet in order to reach development. Similar to Rostow (1959), the UN establishes a series of characteristics in order to reach the "zone of being." Although the conditions for economic development set by the UN (1951) vary from the economic and contextual characteristics that collectivities should have, the third chapter of this report focuses on the "psychological and social pre-requisites of progress" (United Nations, 1951, 13).

Considering the analysis of coloniality as the process through which hegemonic powers shape *habitus* and subjectivities of non-European collectivities, the UN suggests that development would only happen if people *want* it to happen (United Nations, 1951). This means that development is only possible if aspirations and desires of individuals and collectivities concur with those set by hegemonic power.

Although Rostow (1959) argues that only the United States managed to achieve "full maturity," for the UN (1951), there are a few countries that have reached development due to their high levels of income. In the UN's words:

> We have had some difficulty in interpreting the term "underdeveloped countries." We use it to mean countries in which per capita real income is low when compared with the per capita real incomes of the United States of America, Canada, Australasia and Western Europe. In this sense, an adequate synonym would be "poor countries" (United Nations, 1951, 3).

To put in another way, after Second World War, the countries that had reached "adulthood" were those in the core of the modern world-system. These countries became the representations of development and the role model for every "other" country or collectivity that had not yet managed to reach the "zone of being."

Rostow's (1959) six stages of economic growth and the idea of development as the "end of history" naturalises the racialised international division of labour set by the modern World-System and denies its colonial imperative. The naturalisation of the international division of labour implies denying the historical structures produced and reproduced by capitalism. Echoing on the liberal illusion that every person and collectivity is a free competitor in the market system, the six stages of economic growth misacknowledges the intrinsic exploitation, dispossession and multiple types of alienation of workers under capitalism (see section 1.1). Rostow's (1959) teleological process of economic growth find its limits in the utopian nature of the idea of a self-regulated market and on the devastating effects global capitalism carries for those collectivities and individuals in the zone of non-being. As Polanyi (1944) puts it,

> Such an institution [liberal capitalism] could not exist for any length of time without annihilating the human and natural substance of society; it would have physically destroyed man and transformed his surroundings into a wilderness (Polanyi, 1944, 3).

Invisibilising the structural positions that stablishes the modern World-System deepens the categories of domination that emerged with the expansion of capitalism as the historical, economic system of western modernity. According to Rodney (1983), the dialectical relationship between the core and the periphery of the modern World-System in which the second provides raw materials and cheap or free labour reproduces in the relationship between developed and underdeveloped countries, for it is based on exploitation of humans and nature. Just as capitalism in the micro level reduces workers to a commodity and alienates them from nature, from themselves and from the product them produces, the exploitative relationship between developed and underdeveloped countries also alienates the seconds from their resources, means of subsistence and their production. That means that the

dialectical classification of countries as developed and underdeveloped impoverishes the second by alienating them from their population and from the territory itself, for they become just commodities in the market system.

> All of the countries named as "underdeveloped" in the world are exploited by others; and the underdevelopment with which the world is now pre-occupied is a product of capitalist, imperialist and colonialist exploitation. African and Asian societies were developing independently until they were taken over directly or indirectly by the capitalist powers. When that happened, exploitation increased and *the export of surplus ensued*, depriving the societies of the benefit of their natural resources and labour. That is an integral part of underdevelopment in the contemporary sense (Rodney, 1983, 22) [41].

As a continuation of the racialised international division of labour, the dialectical relationship between developed and underdeveloped countries presents two main features. On the one hand, it naturalises the position and economic role of every country in the modern World System. On the other, it allocates every territory and collectivity into a teleological understanding of history where Europe, and now the United States are at the end. Overall, the discursive shift of modernity after the Second World War is the prolongation of the colonial and racialised vision of the world described in the sections 1.1 and 2.1. If the first and second stages of western modernity dehumanised the "other" for its cultural, racial and territorial characteristics, developmentalism dehumanises the "other" for its ontological distance to industrial modernity.

Additionally, Rodney (1983) suggest that although the discursive shift focused on economic growth, there is a racial component on the Manichaean division between developed and underdeveloped countries. The author argues that denying a relationship of exploitation and dependency, developmentalists interpret underdevelopment as a lack of capacities of certain collectivities.

> It is in line with racist prejudice to say openly or to imply that their countries are more developed because their people are innately superior, and that the responsibility for the economic backwardness of Africa lies in the generic backwardness of the race of black Africans (Rodney, 1983, 30).

Gaining independence during the nineteenth century, in the case of Latin America, and after the Second World War, for most of the colonies in Africa and Asia, meant integration into the international market as peripheral states of the modern world-system. As Cardoso (1982) suggest, inequality and dependency after the Second World War are the results of the

[41] Italics are in the original

prolongation of the imperial relationship between core and periphery – between developed and underdeveloped countries. Dependent relationships correspond to the economic role given to the periphery in the racialised international division of labour in which some countries export manufactured goods and others export raw materials. In other words, dependency theory argues that the modern world-system consists of unequal, opposing binaries such as developed-underdeveloped, centre-periphery, metropole-satellite (Lacher & Nepal, 2010):

> Inequality among nations and economies resulted from imperialism's development to the extent that import of raw materials and export of manufactured goods were the bases of the imperialist-colonial relationship (Cardoso, 1982, 114)

The international division of labour, in which developed and underdeveloped countries have specific roles and positions, represents the continuation of the Manichaean separation between western and non-western ontologies and epistemologies and their allocation in the modern teleological understanding of history.

To sum up, developmentalism, as the discursive shift performed by modernity after the Second World War, represents the new metaphor that problematises the "other" and legitimises interventions and transformations of non-European ontologies and epistemologies. After Truman's 1949 speech, most of the world became "underdeveloped" and the object of a myriad of interventions with two main goals: first, the expansion of capitalism and liberalism as the economic and political systems; second, the transformation of non-western subjectivities in order to naturalise the racialised international division of labour and incorporate aspirations and desires to reproduce the modern world-system as the social, political and economic order. To illustrate, Rodney (1983) suggests that:

> An even bigger problem is that the people of Africa and other parts of the colonised world have gone through a cultural and psychological crisis and have accepted at least partially the European version of things. That means that the African himself has doubts about his capacity to transform and develop his natural environment (Rodney, 1983, 30).

Understanding poverty and well-being under developmentalism

To understand the label western modernity gave to the "other" after the Second World War, it is important to understand the complexity of the notion of poverty as the opposite of a specific form of well-being and the discursive tools that developmentalism uses to legitimise its actions. Just as previous discourses of western modernity found their own "otherness," developmentalism finds ontological difference in underdeveloped, low-income collectivities and countries. As stated above, it does not mean that modernity has overcome its racism, but

that, after colonial practices hit Europe, racialised discourses applied to the "other" lost their legitimacy and found their new wildcard in the dialectical relation between "developed" and "underdeveloped" regions of the world.

First of all, it is necessary to accept that poverty is a complex concept with more than one definition and that each definition corresponds to the methodology and discipline that studies it (Øyen, 2009). However, understanding poverty and well-being under developmentalism tends to be closely linked to poverty reduction programs and to strategies to increase income. According to Rahnema (2010), there are four dimensions of poverty that help understand the phenomenon. First, materialities "on which the various constructs of poverty are based are those 'things' the lack of which is perceived as poverty. These lacks, deficiencies or deprivations are either of a non-material and existential kind, or of a material nature" (Rahnema, 2010, 176). Second, the subject's own perception refers to the occasion when "one or a combination of these materialities is perceived by a subject as an expression of poverty that they acquire the particular meaning attached to that word. And that perception is quite a personal and socio-cultural affair" (Rahnema, 2010. 176). Third, how others view the poor is related to the last dimension, for the "poor's perception of their predicament is inevitably affected by how others view them. The two perceptions are seldom identical" (Rahnema, 2010, 177). Finally, a dimension of socio-cultural space-time that affects various perceptions of poverty tries to understand "why, in different communities and at different times, the same materialities are perceived differently, both by those referred to as poor and by society at large" (Rahnema, 2010, 178).

These four dimensions help with the analysis to the extent that poverty and its counterpart, well-being, relate to the lack or possession of various material and non-material "things" that a particular collectivity and its subjects consider indispensable in a particular time and space. This means that supposedly "universal" notions of poverty and well-being deny the multiple experiences and definitions that collectivities in specific time-space locations may attribute to a given situation. Given that every collectivity has own strategies to interact with its particular surroundings, every collectivity also has its own categories to define and deal with conditions of poverty and well-being according to their own lived experience. For this reason, western, universalising notions of poverty and well-being not only deny "other" modes of defining and prioritising categories related to well-being, but they also impose – by force and persuasion – their own definitions as absolute.

In its pretensions to universalise the idea of poverty and well-being, western reason once again denies a myriad of understandings related to prosperity or privation that respond to contextual paradigms and social ontologies. According to Rahnema (2010), in 1948, the World Bank postulated that states of prosperity and poverty were based on countries' gross national products (GNPs). Furthermore, it established that "countries with an average per capita income of less than $100 are, by definition, poor and underdeveloped" (Rahnema,

2010, 178). This implied that, for the first time in history, entire countries and collectivities happened to be poor (and would consider themselves as such) because their overall income was lower than those countries in the core of the modern world-system. Moreover, in order to classify every country of the world according to the same standard, "national income was introduced as a new global measure for expressing the various stages of economic development, the latter process being proposed as the final answer to poverty" (Rahnema, 2010, 178).

Likewise, the definition of poverty and prosperity according to income relates to the country's capacity for consumption. Following Illich (2010), poverty as an economic threshold implies a variation on the conception of humanity. If, according to Rostow (1959), the new goal of the project of modernity is *high mass consumption* and *dark matter consumption*, the more individuals consume, the closer they are to "adulthood." In other words, as the objective of measuring well-being with income is to measure the capacity for consumption, since 1949, reaching the "zone of being" and "full humanity" meant having unlimited purchasing power:

> Poverty became a measure of a person's lack in terms of 'needed' goods, and even more in 'needed services.' By defining the poor as those who lack what money could buy for them to make them 'fully human', poverty, in New York City as well as in Ethiopia, became an abstract universal measure of underconsumption. Those who survive in spite of indexed underconsumption were thereby placed into a new, subhuman category, and perceived as victims of a double bind. Their de facto subsistence became almost inexplicable in economic terminology, while their actual subsistence activities came to be labelled as subhuman, if they were not frankly viewed as inhuman and indecent (Illich, 2010, 102).

In the same vein, to the extent that a universal understanding of poverty and well-being denies very diverse possible lived experiences, so too does the standardisation of needs. That is, developmentalism imposes – by force or persuasion – the particular western experience of scarcity and abundance, suggesting that every collectivity incorporate it. This means that the main task of developmentalism is to inculcate and reproduce specific western needs in "other" collectivities. However, just as in the case of poverty and well-being, collectivities have defined necessities according to their lived experience and to their cultural interpretations of place, time and historical events. Nevertheless, the standardisation of the notion of "need" reduced it to low income and low levels of consumption:

> Poverty was a general concept for a specific cultural interpretation of the necessity to live within very narrow limits, defined differently for each place and time. It was the name for a unique and ecologically sustainable style of coping with historically given, rather than technically construed, necessity, the 'need' to face the unavoidable, not a

> lack. Poverty, in Christian Europe at least, was recognized as the inevitable destiny of the powerless. It denotes the ontological situation of all those who "need to die … but not yet." Certainly, neither power, nor wealth, nor poverty were related to the productivity of groups of people (Illich, 2010, 101).

According to Spicker, Álvarez, & Gordon (2009), the World Bank defines extreme poverty as when a person earns less than 275 US dollars per year. Similarly, according to Rahnema (2010), the same institution argues that a country be considered "poor" or "underdeveloped" when it has an average per capita income of less than 100 US dollars. This means that, following Hegel's idea of history as a process that ends in the west, income defines the proximity every person, territory or country to "adulthood." That is, income defines whether a person or a collectivity belongs to the "zone of being" or if it still belongs to the "sub-human" category.

Although there have been important efforts to identify different expressions of poverty – such as administrative poverty, absolute poverty, chronical poverty, contextual poverty, extreme poverty, relative poverty, rural poverty and many more – they all have the same epistemological imperative. They contribute to a universal and univocal definition of poverty and prosperity that separates traditional collectivities from their own economic rules and dynamics, forcing them into the world economy.

One of the most important efforts that challenges poverty-as-income and broadens the notion of well-being is the "capabilities approach" developed by Amartya Sen (2001) and further articulated by Martha Nussbaum (2011). As for Sen's approach, poverty reduction is the "expansion of the 'capabilities' of the person to lead the kinds of lives they value – and have reasons to value" (Sen, 2001, 18). Furthermore, in his lecture *Equality of What?* from 1979, Sen defines capabilities as the ability to do certain things. Among others, "the ability to move about is the relevant one here, but one can consider others, e.g., the ability to meet one's nutritional requirements, the wherewithal to be clothed and sheltered, the power to participate in the social life of the community" (Sen, 1979, 218).

In his critique of poverty-as-income, Sen argues that "the reduction of income poverty alone cannot possibly be the ultimate motivation of antipoverty policy" (Sen, 2001, 92). Although recognising the importance of income as a means of developing capabilities, Sen (1979, 2001) analyses the dialectical relationship between capabilities and income. On the one hand, the more income a person earns, the more capabilities a person can afford (nutrition, health, education, etc.). On the other hand, the more capacities a person acquires, the more income the person would earn, for they would have better nutrition, health and education. Furthermore, the connection between income and capabilities establishes the "linkage through which capability improvement helps both [income and capabilities] directly and

indirectly in enriching human lives and in making human deprivations more rare and less acute" (Sen, 2001, 92).

Summing up, the notion of poverty and well-being as "capabilities" in Sen's analysis has three main claims, in which the author highlights the importance of questioning income as an end, rather than taking it as an instrumental means:

1. "Poverty can be sensibly identified in terms of capability deprivation; the approach concentrates on deprivations that are *intrinsically* important (unlike low income, which is only *instrumentally* significant)" (Sen, 2001, 87).
2. "There are influences on capability deprivation – and thus on real poverty – *other* than lowness of income (income is not the only instrument in generating capabilities)" (Sen, 2001, 87).
3. The instrumental relation between low income and low capabilities is *variable* between different communities and even between different families and different individuals (the impact of income on capabilities is contingent and conditional)" (Sen, 2001, 87).[42]

As for the capabilities approach proposed by Nussbaum (2011), although similar to Sen's contribution, there is an important difference. According to Nussbaum (2011), in Sen's approach, capabilities are a set of substantial freedoms or opportunities "created by a combination of personal abilities and the political, social, and economic environment" (Nussbaum, 2011, 20). However, for Nussbaum (2011), there are two sets of capabilities: internal capabilities and combined capabilities. Internal capabilities are the characteristics of a person such as "personality traits, intellectual and emotional capacities, states of body fitness and health, internalized learnings, skills of perception and movement" (Nussbaum, 2011, 21). Combined capabilities, on the other hand, are "the social/political/economic conditions in which functioning can actually be chosen" (Nussbaum, 2011, 22).

According to Nussbaum (2011), the importance of distinguishing between internal capabilities and combined capabilities "corresponds to two overlapping but distinct tasks of a decent society" (Nussbaum, 2011, 21). To give an example, a society could do well in terms of internal capabilities but might cut off the means by which people have the opportunity to exercise these internal capabilities.

Succinctly, Nussbaum (2011) suggests that her version of the capabilities approach "focuses on the protection of areas of freedom so central that their removal makes a life not worthy of human dignity" (Nussbaum, 2011, 31). Taken from Nussbaum's work *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach* (2011), central capabilities and their meanings are:

[42] Italics are in the original text.

1. Life: “Being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length” (Nussbaum, 2011, 33).
2. Bodily Health: “Being able to have good health, including reproductive health; to be adequately nourished; to have adequate shelter” (Nussbaum, 2011, 33).
3. Bodily Integrity: “Being able to move freely from place to place; to be secure against violent assault, including sexual assault and domestic violence; having opportunities for sexual satisfaction and for choice in matters of reproduction” (Nussbaum, 2011, 33).
4. Senses, Imagination, and Thought:
    a. “Being able to use the senses, to imagine, think, and reason – and to do these things in a “truly human” way, a way informed and cultivated by an adequate education, including, but by no means limited to, literacy and basic mathematical and scientific training” (Nussbaum, 2011, 33).
    b. “Being able to use imagination and thought in connection with experiencing and producing works and events of one’s own choice, religious, literary, musical, and so forth” (Nussbaum, 2011, 33).
    c. Being able to use one’s mind in ways protected by guarantees of freedom of expression with respect to both political and artistic speech, and freedom of religious exercise (Nussbaum, 2011, 33).
    d. Being able to have pleasurable experiences and to avoid non-beneficial pain (Nussbaum, 2011, 33).
5. Emotions: “Being able to have attachments to things and people outside ourselves; to love those who love and care for us, to grieve at their absence; in general, to love, to grieve, to experience longing, gratitude, and justified anger(Nussbaum, 2011, 33).
6. Practical Reason: Being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning on one’s life (Nussbaum, 2011, 34).
7. Affiliation:
    a. “Being able to live with and toward others, to recognise and show concern for other humans, to engage in various forms of social interaction, to be able to imagine the situation of another” (Nussbaum, 2011, 34).
    b. “Having the social bases of self-respect and non-humiliation, being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others. This entails provisions of non-discrimination based on race, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, caste, religion, national origin and species” (Nussbaum, 2011, 34).
8. Other Species: “Being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants, and the world of nature (Nussbaum, 2011, 34).
9. Play: “Being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities (Nussbaum, 2011, 34).
10. Control over one’s environment:

a. Political: "Being able to participate effectively in political choices that govern one's life; having the right of political participation, protections of free speech and association" (Nussbaum, 2011, 34).
b. Material: "Being able to hold property (both land and movable goods), and having property rights on an equal basis with others; having the right to seek employment on an equal basis with others; having the freedom from unwarranted search and seizure. In work, being able to work as a human, exercising practical reason and entering into meaningful relationships of mutual recognition with other workers. (Nussbaum, 2011, 34).

Despite the difference between the approaches of Sen (1979, 2001) and Nussbaum (2011), the capabilities approach has been the main source used to define a rather recent strategy concerning prosperity and poverty known as "human development." According to the Human Development Report, "human development is the expansion of people's freedoms and capabilities to lead lives that they value and have reason to value. It is about expanding choices" (United Nations, 2011, 1).

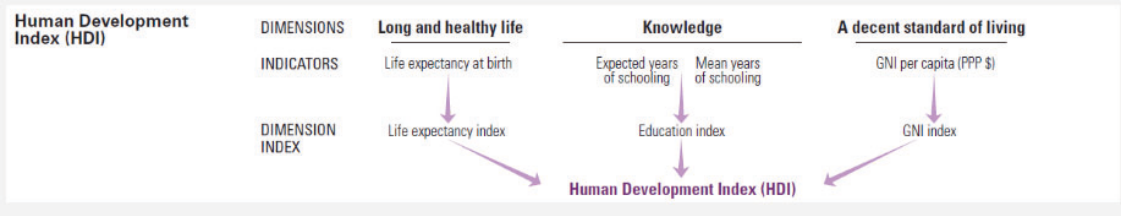
Additionally, the human development approach takes education, health and nutrition not as *means* to achieve certain living standards, but as *ends* in themselves:

> By contrast, proponents of the human development approach would argue for the enhancement of people's ability to read and write, or to be well-nourished and healthy, even if the conventionally measured economic return to investment in literacy, or improved food intakes and health care, were zero (though, of course, they are typically quite high anyway) (Anand & Sen, 1994).

Moreover, one of the most important indices to measure and analyse poverty, the Human Development Index (HDI), based on the human development approach, "was created to emphasize that people and their capabilities should be the ultimate criteria for assessing the development of a country, not economic growth alone" (United Nations, 2019b).

With this in mind, the HDI considers three main dimensions to capture and measure well-being (see Figure 4). First, *Long and healthy life* refers to life expectancy at birth. Second, *Knowledge* refers to expected years of schooling and mean years of schooling. Third, *A decent standard of living* is defined by Gross National Income (GNI) per capita (United Nations, 2019b).

Figure 4. Human Development Index



Source: United Nations. (2019). Human Development Index (HDI). Accessed 22.01.2019 http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-index-hdi.

As a complementary effort, the UN created the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) in 2010 to "[reaffirm] the importance of multi-dimensional approaches to poverty eradication that go beyond economic deprivation" (United Nations, 2019c). This index changes the metric to determine living standards from GNI per capita to six specific parameters:

1. **Cooking Fuel:** The household cooks with dung, wood, charcoal or coal.
2. **Sanitation:** The household's sanitation facility is not improved (according to Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) guidelines) or it is improved but shared with other households.
3. **Drinking water:** The household does not have access to improved drinking water (according to SDG guidelines) or safe drinking water is at least a 30-minute walk from home, round trip.
4. **Electricity:** The household has no electricity.
5. **Housing:** Housing materials for at least one of roof, walls and floor are inadequate: the floor is of natural materials and/or the roof and/or walls are of natural or rudimentary materials.
6. **Assets:** The household does not own more than one of these assets: radio, TV, telephone, computer, animal cart, bicycle, motorbike or refrigerator, and does not own a car or truck (United Nations, 2019c).

Notwithstanding the important contribution of the human development or capabilities approaches and their indices to deepen the analysis and understanding of poverty and prosperity, there are two main questionable elements of these approaches. On the first hand, they limits themselves to a standardised conception of how collectivities and individuals should live. This means that they do not question developmentalism as a universal standard of conceiving well-being. Along this vein, the capabilities approach, with its aspiration to secure a "decent" society or a "decent" life assumes the western standard as the ultimate life that collectivities should aim for. As part of western modernity, the capabilities approach sets universal ideas about humanity that deny ontological and epistemological differences because it does not consider "other" living standards to be decent or dignified. It sets a universal model of the western subject, just as the previous manifestations of western modernity did.

On the other hand, the central capabilities approach proposed by Nussbaum (2011) focus only on the individual and does not recognise the importance of the social world in non-western collectivities. Each of the ten central capabilities that Nussbaum (2011) proposes is aimed at the individual. One's own life, bodily integrity, bodily health, senses, imagination, emotion, affiliation, practical reason, recreational activities, political choices and property are directed at the individual and this scheme does not recognise "other" forms of being-in-the-world that do not conceive of the self as an autonomous entity but, rather, as an intrinsic part of a collectivity with both human and non-human beings.

Considering that the capabilities approach is part of developmentalist discourse, it reproduces the individualistic starting point of liberalism and conceives of singularity as the beginning and end of every political and economic effort.[43] For this reason, the HDI and the MPI, as part of the capabilities approach, cannot break with universal conceptions of well-being, nor with income-centred conceptions of poverty. Additionally, like income-centred conceptions of poverty, this approach treats difference as abnormal and pathological:

> The new construct no longer embraces the view that poverty is a multifaceted human predicament. It considers it as a single pathological phenomenon of universal character, but particularly acute in pre-economized societies. Following a consensus reached among the world elites on the diagnosis of the disease (underdevelopment and lack of income) as well as its cure (economic and technological development), armies of experts, politicians, planners, bureaucrats, socio-economists and even anthropologists started acting as pauperologists [sic], seeking to refine the discourse and practices related to world poverty (Rahnema, 2010, 178).

To legitimise the western intervention in the domains of non-western collectivities, developmentalism requires the problematisation and labelling of certain living standards as "impoverished." This implies that developmentalism does not take poverty simply as the lack of something but, also, as a social problem that requires intervention.

[43] Although individualism in the liberal tradition has different meanings (Lukes, 1971), this research draws upon the US-American tradition for its effects on liberalism today. According to Luke (1971), "it was in the United States that 'individualism' primarily came to celebrate capitalism and liberal democracy" (Lukes, 1971, 59). Moreover, besides the fact that it continues to play a major ideological role, it created a set of universal claims that seem incompatible with parallel claims of other social, economic and political orders. The US-American tradition takes some features of the French, English and German traditions and conceives of the individual as the symbolic reference to express values related to the philosophy of natural rights, the belief in free enterprise and the "American Dream" (Lukes, 1971). To sum up, it refers to "the actual or imminent realization of the final stage of human progress in a spontaneously cohesive society of equal individual rights, limited government, *laissez-faire*, natural justice and equal opportunity, and individual freedom, moral development, and dignity" (Lukes, 1971, 59).

3.2. Development as a disciplinary toolset: problematising and normalising living standards

Considering developmentalism as the new narrative of western modernity and its way of "othering" non-western collectivities through income, productivity and living standards, it is important to take into account the continuity of some of the legitimising discourses of modernity. As analysed in Chapter 1, with the expansion of Europe since the sixteenth century, hegemonic powers have tried to establish specific ideas about the "other" to justify intervention in those collectivities. Problematising non-western races, territories and cultures allowed western modernity to appropriate and transform "other" economies, social organisations, epistemologies, *habitus* and relations with their surroundings. In other words, developmentalism inherited the responsibility of changing non-western collectivities.

Considering that developmentalism, through capitalism and political liberalism, operates on the macro level of power, the problematisation of non-western living standards and specific efforts to change "other" subjectivities operates on the micro level of power. In this sense, understanding the complexity of developmentalism requires analysing the dialectical relation between both levels.

To a certain extent, the report *Measures for the Economic Development of Under-Developed Countries* by the UN (1951) reflects the efforts taken by developmentalism in both realms of power. In contrast with the interventions on the macro and micro levels of power, the third chapter of the report suggests that changing people's minds is necessary in order to increase economic growth. With this report, the UN (1951) argues that it is important to change ontologies and epistemologies of non-western collectivities in order to include them in western standards of living. In other words, by denigrating "other" epistemologies and ontologies, the UN continues performing the coloniality of power, the coloniality of knowledge and the coloniality of being (see Chapter 2.1).

To illustrate how developmentalism conceives of transformation on the micro level of power, three points of the report refer to important changes regarding non-western aspirations, non-western social organisation and non-western forms of land property:

1. As the continuity of coloniality, developmentalism aims to change desires and aspirations: "economic progress will not occur unless the atmosphere is favourable to it. The people of a country must desire progress, and, their social, economic, legal and political institutions must be favourable to it" (United Nations, 1951, 13).
2. Developmentalism tries to change collectivities where social prestige is not economic wealth: "in such societies, the production of wealth is frequently held in contempt as a profession for well-bred young men. By contrast, economic progress is rapid in

countries where the successful organizers of economic activity are among the more highly prized members of the community" (United Nations, 1951, 14).

3. Transforming collectivities with common or communitarian use of the land should implement some changes in their social organisation to encourage individual enterprises to produce economic growth: "private enterprise and communal property are not always consistent with each other and with economic progress" (United Nations, 1951, 14).

In short, the UN suggests that non-western *habitus,* life-worlds and lived experiences should adapt to the new narrative of western modernity in order to increase economic growth. The dialectical relation between the macro and micro levels is evident to the extent that developmentalism tries to denigrate collective and individual uses of the land, economies, aspirations and desires. Probably, the most revealing passage of the report is the following:

> There is a sense in which rapid economic progress is impossible without painful readjustments. Ancient philosophies have to be scrapped; old social institutions have to disintegrate; bonds of caste, creed and race have to be burst; and large numbers of persons who cannot keep up with progress have to have their expectations of a comfortable life frustrated. Very few communities are willing to pay the full price of rapid economic progress (United Nations, 1951, 15).

Paying the price of rapid economic growth implies that poverty is a social problem to be solved through the expansion of the market (Escobar, 2007). Approaching poverty as a social problem "meant not only the breaking of traditional relations, but also the establishment of new mechanisms of control. The poor appeared more and more as a social problem that required new forms of intervention in society" (Escobar, 2007, 49).[44]

The problematisation of difference and the conception of poverty as a social issue implies a series of interventions with the intention of transforming the "other." The particular case of developmentalist interventions to generate economic growth and progress in underdeveloped, peripheral countries means the participation of experts and trustees that claim to hold the answers necessary for these countries to reach western modernity. Considering that it is only by taking on western epistemology that it is possible to reach "absolute truth," only a western subject well-versed in the stages of economic growth has the knowledge to lead the process of making poor countries prosperous.

[44] Henceforth my own translation from: Escobar, A. (2007). *La invención del Tercer Mundo: construcción y deconstrucción del desarrollo*. Caracas: Fundación Editorial el perro y la rana.

In this sense, experts seek to transform non-western collectivities by "improving" their living standards. As part of the moral obligation to save "others," modernity-as-developmentalism deploys a series of interventions with two main effects. On the one hand, it defines and establishes economic and political conditions in underdeveloped countries that will supposedly bring them into the "zone of being." On the other hand, it shapes epistemologies and ontologies of "other" collectivities in order to make them aspire to and desire the western lived experience. Such interventions operate on both the micro and macro levels of power, for they have the purpose of shaping the political-economic order and the *habitus* of individuals to facilitate the reproduction and expansion of the modern world-system.

In this context, the idea of "helping" has a long history that varies from the traditional conception of helping someone in need (e.g., the "Good Samaritan") to the modern idea of "assistance in overcoming some kind of deficit" (Gronemeyer, 2010, 56). In this sense, the western variation of the nature of help has three main features.

First, the modern notion of help changes the emissary. In a traditional sense, the one in need cries out for assistance. In the modern sense, the need for help is diagnosed from outside (Gronemeyer, 2010). This means that helping someone no longer means supporting the one who is calling for it but, according to certain standards, defining who needs help and providing it:

> The person who cries out for help is thereby robbed of his or her autonomy as a crier. Even the appropriateness of a cry for help is determined according to this standard of normality (Gronemeyer, 2010, 56).

Second, if "compassion" was the motto of traditional help, "discipline" is the motto of modern help. Considering that modern help seeks to correct an abnormality, the gaze and control of the external expert shapes the conduct of those in need:

> That help might be furnished without first thinking carefully about the person in need hardly exists any more in the modern person's mind, such is the extent to which help has been transformed into an instrument through which one can impose upon others the obligation of good conduct (Gronemeyer, 2010, 56).

Third, helping someone is no longer an effect of unpredictable circumstances. It became an institutionalised and professionalised strategy with universal claims of equality, opportunities, progress and development. Moreover, the modern version of help, with its expansionist nature, has reached every corner of collective and individual life. There is no individual or collectivity free from the diagnosis and further intervention:

> Instead it has become institutionalized and professionalized. It is neither an event nor an act; it is a strategy. Help should no longer be left to chance. The idea of help, now, is charged with the aura of justification. […] Nowadays the idea and practice of help have become boundless in their expansionist drive. Their blessings have made their way into the most distant corners of the world, and no sector of social or individual life is any longer proof against the diagnosis of a need for help (Gronemeyer, 2010, 56-57).

The modern notion of help – diagnosed from outside, disciplinary and institutionalised – has three decisive moments. First, help during the sixteenth century and the expansion of Europe and Christianity consisted of "helping" indigenous collectivities save their souls by transforming them to Christians. Priests, as experts of the Catholic faith, diagnosed the condition of their souls, sought to correct abnormal behaviours and beliefs and systematically calculated interventions with secular and religious institutions behind. This form of assistance represents a fully modern form of help.

A second stage of help during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries consisted not of saving souls but, rather, in making people more productive and competitive. As Gronemeyer (2010) argues, "help became completely the subject matter of educational strategies. The productive person was of a crude make, as if in the raw state, so long as his obedience to the required virtues of labour had to be maintained by external compulsion" (Gronemeyer, 2010, 61). Once again, the emissary and diagnosis of the call for help is external, not the one supposedly in need. Abnormal behaviours such as beggary, vagrancy and unemployment became the object of educational and disciplinary institutional strategies in order to increase production and normalise the population.

The third relevant moment in the modern notion of help inherits elements from both previous forms: it strives for the redemption of the one in need through calculating, institutional and universalistic means. However, its most relevant treat is that it focuses on overcoming a deficit of western modernity. It wants to break with the past and impose a western social ontology. As Gronemeyer (2010) states, since the Second World War, "help is now the mobilisation of the will to break with the past" (Gronemeyer, 2010, 62). Moreover, developmentalist "help can only be understood as help rendered to the process of modernisation. Modern help is the self-help of modernity" (Gronemeyer, 2010, 62):

> Self-interest is now the decisive factor in the provision of help which – to rid itself of the ugly flavour of exploitation – is termed 'enlightened and constructive.' It has inherited universalism from the idea of the Christian mission and accepted the challenge of encompassing the whole world. It has understood its fantastic qualification as an instrument of training and prescribed to itself the demands for labour discipline and productive diligence, which, naturally, are to be worldwide as

> well. And, finally, it has thrown off the ballast of compassion and accepted the necessity of being efficient and supportive of the State (Gronemeyer, 2010, 62).

Considering that this new form of help is part of the discursive shift of western modernity, performing developmentalism requires modern individuals and experts to implement change in terms of both macro and micro levels of power. Among others, international experts, national planning offices, national and international universities and multilateral agencies such as the World Bank have been tasked with helping underdeveloped countries, collectivities and individuals. According to the nature of the institution and its mission, experts strive to change economic and political national practices or collective and individual practices. This means that programs and institutions mainly aim at two dimensions: first, the economic policy of a given "underdeveloped" country: fiscal policy, tax policy, conditions for international market, transport infrastructure and so on; second, the subjectivities of "underdeveloped" collectivities and individuals. Non-western collectivities became the objective of programmes aiming to change economic practices, social organisations, education, aspiration, festivities and other epistemological and ontological manifestations. As Gronemeyer (2010) sarcastically argues, developmentalism changes the S.O.S. sign used by sailors from "Save Our Souls" to "Save Our Standards."

These experts (or "pauperologists," as Rahnema (2010) calls them) represent the subjectivity that carries the information "needed" by non-western collectivities to overcome their "sub-human" stage and reach western modernity. Following the teleological perspective of Rostow's (1959) stages of economic growth, planners and experts believe themselves to be the progressive answer to "others'" problems. To the extent that experts believe that every collectivity aims to emulate western modernity, they claim to know each step necessary to get there. In this sense, Easterly (2007) argues that any given planner, expert or trustee believes that they "already [know] the answers; [they think] of poverty as a technical engineering problem that [their] answers will solve" (Easterly, 2007, 6).

Although Easterly (2007) makes an important effort in questioning the attitude of planners as if they know the path to development, he follows the same developmentalist narrative. In *The White Man's Burden* (Easterly, 2007), Easterly does not question international or national efforts to standardise epistemologies and ontologies but, rather, the specific strategies that modern subjects use to transform non-western collectivities. The author's main objection to the efforts of modernity to bring every collectivity into the same narrative is that it aims to implement big, pre-fixed plans rather than at local, "close to the customer" initiatives (Easterly, 2007). Instead of having planners providing solutions form outside, he proposes finding the answers at the local level: these experts would treat non-western collectivities as customers and their satisfaction would define the success or failure of the program. However, the problem remains for two main reasons. First, Easterly (2007) does not questions the modern imperative to transform the "other" – he just presents a new form

of doing it more efficiently. Second, the objective of these interventions do not fall under the radar of his critique. To Easterly (2007), transforming non-western collectivities and shaping subjectivities is a legitimate pursuit as long as it takes into account some of the local perspectives about the interventions, not their objectives.

Regardless if the intervention is bottom-up or to-down, with planners or searchers, the main objective of developmental programs is to change the "other" and incorporate it into the same narrative. Taking the notion from Li (2007), developmentalist interventions respond to the modern obligation of the "will to improve". Developmentalism has the moral obligation of transforming the difference by intervening it at the macro and the micro levels of power.

As part of the discourse shift of modernity, developmentalism has the conviction its doing is a benevolent action of helping "others". "Colonial officials and missionaries, politicians and bureaucrats, international aid donors, specialist in agriculture, hygiene, credit and conservation and so-called nongovernmental organizations" (Li, 2007, 5) conceive themselves as emancipators, as the superior being who is willing to do sacrifices in order to developed and modernise the sub-human collectivities.

Keeping in mind that, since the Second World War, help has meant the disciplining of abnormalities, developmental interventions can be read as part of the notion of what Michel Foucault (2008) calls "governmentality." He suggests that governmentality materialises as the strategies that hegemonic powers utilise in order to normalise difference and shape individual and collective subjectivities. In other words, the notion of governmentality sheds some light on the production and reproduction of the micro and macro levels of power:

> […] seeing how this grid of governmentality, which we may assume is valid for the analysis of ways of conducting the conduct of mad people, patients, delinquents, and children, may equally be valid when we are dealing with phenomena of a completely different scale, such as an economic policy, for example, or the management of a whole social body, and so on (Foucault, 2008, 186).

The notion of governmentality resonates with the form in which developmentalism deals with economic policy (on the macro level of power) and with the complete social body (on the micro level of power). Moreover, developmentalism belongs to the notion of governmentality in as much as it manages to grasp the complexity of the dialectic of power that intents to reproduce colonial subjectivities through coloniality and liberal capitalism. In other words, if colonialism and coloniality belong to different realms of action, developmentalism manages to unify both macro and micro discourses to reproduce social, economic and cultural hegemonic norms:

> Persuasion might be applied, as authorities attempt to gain consent. But this is not the only course. When power operates at a distance, people are not necessarily aware of how their conduct is being conducted or why, so the question of consent does not arise (Li, 2007, 5).

If power consists of the dialectical interaction between macro and micro levels of power, through which "subjects are gradually, progressively, really and materially constituted through a multiplicity of organisms, forces, energies, materials, desires, thoughts etc." (Foucault, 1980, 97), then developmentalism is the discursive practice through which hegemonic standards reproduce themselves.

In response to the universalist pretension in western epistemology, the reproduction of hegemonic power through developmentalism is evident not only in the aims and intentions of interventions but also in on their means and epistemological resources. Regardless of whether such interventions are bottom-up or try to include "customers'" wills, these interventions intending to modify "other" living standards and lived experiences will always belong to the narrative of western modernity.

The inseparable relationship between the means and aims of modern interventions responds to the link between the problematisation of a certain reality and its technical representation (Li, 2007). According to Li (2007) the problematisation and the technical solution "coemerge within the governmental assemblage in which certain sorts of diagnoses, prescriptions, and techniques are available to the expert who is properly trained" (Li, 2007, 7).

The technologies through which developmentalism becomes a practice, far from being "neutral," as experts claim, are the mechanisms to intervene and transform peripheral subjectivities (Escobar, 2007). Furthermore, the milestone of these interventions is their promise that science and technology are key to bringing well-being and prosperity to non-western collectivities.

To the extent that this "rendering technical" presents itself as non-political (Ferguson, 1994, 2002; Li, 2007), developmentalist interventions do not limit their focus to structural political and economic conditions – they also consider "the capacities of the poor that on the practices through which one social group impoverishes another" (Li, 2007, 7). Moreover, focusing on the practices and capabilities of the "other" evokes a supposedly neutral control over the macro levels of power and a blind faith on liberal economy.

> One striking feature of the 'development' discourse on Lesotho is the way in which the "development" agencies present the country's economy and society as lying within the control of a neutral, unitary and effective national government, and this almost perfectly responsible to the blueprints of planners. The state is seen as an

> impartial instrument for implementing plans and the government as a machine for providing social services and engineering growth (Ferguson, 1994, 178).

Focusing on the capabilities and economic practices of peripheral collectivities means focusing on "other" epistemologies and ontologies rather than on the structural conditions that marginalised such collectivities. Removing economic policy from the picture and concentrating on "other" capabilities and practices has two main implications on both the macro and the micro levels of power.

First, it reproduces and reinforces the idea that European lived experience, political economy, ontologies and epistemologies are the goal to which every collectivity should aim. Not questioning the supremacy of western living standards perpetuates the univocal notion of Europe as the end of history. As a result of this lack of criticism of economic and political structures, following Hegel's conception of history (see Section 1.2), in the late twentieth century, Fukuyama (1989) proclaimed the end of any ideological discrepancy – ergo, the end of history. To the author "that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government" (Fukuyama, 1989, 4).

Second, developmental interventions intended to increase income focus on "other" subjectivities by acting on the peripheral lived experiences and the multiple strategies that individuals and collectivities use to interact with their surroundings. In this sense, developmentalism takes "other" agricultural, religious, market and social practices as "regressive" and makes them the object of intervention.

In spite of the myriad of interventions that seek to transform peripheral collectivities, by taking the macro level of power as a "neutral" dimension, developmentalism limits the effects of its programs significantly (Ferguson, 1994, 2002; Li, 2007). Although acknowledging the problematic idea of working from universal notions of well-being, developmental programs tend to fail because they do not take into account local particularities (Easterly, 2007). In this sense, both approaches assumed by developmentalism – not questioning the macro level of power and not considering local particularities – secure the failure of interventions or, in the best-case scenario, the production of unpredictable effects.

The unpredictable effects of developmental programs due to both elements mentioned above represent what Ferguson (1994, 2002) calls the "anti-politics machine." This concept refers to the side-effects of interventions that become instruments in the exercise of power. Following Foucault's analysis of prisons,[45] Ferguson (1994, 2002) argues that what may

[45] Foucault (2012) suggests that when analysing prisons it is important to question the uses of the failure of these institutions. In the first look, it may appear that prisons produce "the maintenance of delinquency, the encouragement of recidivism, the transformation of the occasional offender into a habitual delinquent, the organization of a closed milieu of delinquency" (Foucault, 2012, 270). However, the penal system, labelling certain population as "delinquent" has disciplinary and selective effects. As Foucault (2012) argues: Penalty would

appear as a failure in the conception and implementation of developmental programs actually becomes an instrument in the reproduction of power. Some developmental programs may not achieve their original aims, but they certainly reproduce hegemonic practices and discourses that undermine and transform "other" collectivities. In other words, even if developmental programs fail, they still help reinforce and reproduce the hegemonic macro and micro levels of power:

> In this perspective, the "development" apparatus in Lesotho [Ferguson's study case] is not a machine for eliminating poverty that is incidentally involved with the state bureaucracy; it is a machine for reinforcing and expanding the exercise of bureaucratic state power, which incidentally takes "poverty" as its points of entry – launching an intervention that may have no effect on the poverty but does in fact have another concrete effects. Such a result may not be part of the planners' intentions – indeed, it almost never is – but results systems have an intelligibility of their own (Ferguson, 2002, 406, 407).

To close, as the latest discursive shift of western modernity, developmentalism misacknowledges epistemological and ontological difference. For this reason, as long as developmentalism does not recognise the possibility of "other" living standards and the wide variety of existence, efforts such as the capabilities approach (Anand & Sen, 1994; Nussbaum, 2011; Sen, 2001) or searched instead of planned interventions (Easterly, 2007) will continue to represent discursive variations of the same homogenising project. As long as modernity problematises and refuses to see full humanity in difference, developmentalism will remain a discursive practice that reproduces the racialised, modern world-system.

Summing up

The chapter analysed developmentalism as the new discourse of modernity, through which the hegemonic, modern world-system seeks to reproduce and expand itself. Unlike colonialism and coloniality, developmentalism manages to gather both realms of power and have a defining influence on the macro and the micro levels of power. By reducing well-being to income and the capacity for consumption, developmentalism succeeded in problematising peripheral living standards and making them the object of disciplinary efforts.

In the first section, this chapter considered the origin and nature of developmentalism as the continuation of modernity and its colonial "dark side." Delving into two of the watchwords of developmentalism – the notion of "development" itself and "well-being" – this chapter

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then appear to be a way of handling illegalities, of laying down the limits of tolerance, of giving free rein to some, of putting pressure on others, of excluding a particular section, of making another useful, of neutralising certain individuals and of profiting from others. In short, penalty does not simply "check" illegalities; it "differentiates" them, it provides them with a general "economy". And, if one can speak of justice, it is not only because the law itself or the way of applying it serves the interests of a class, it is also because the differential administration of illegalities through the mediation of penalty forms part of those mechanisms of domination. Legal punishments are to be resituated in an overall strategy of illegalities. The "failure" of the prison may be understood on this basis" (Foucault, 2012, 272).

analysed the complexity of development as the teleological aim of every collectivity and poverty as the non-contemporary, current stage to be overcome.

In the second section, this chapter questioned the strategies of problematising difference and the discursive practices performed to transform it. The scope of developmental programs extend to both the macro and the micro levels of power and seek to determine the economic and political structures, on the one hand, and transform subjectivities, *habitus* and life-worlds, on the other.

INTERLUDE. METHODOLOGICAL STANCE

Theoretical foundations and methodology

Considering that the idea of social ontology is practice-based (see Section 5.1) and that this analysis focuses on the performances enacted by individuals and collectivities in the Gulf of Tribugá, Bohnsack's (2014) notion of a praxeological sociology of knowledge represents the most accurate approach for purposes of this research. According to Bohnsack (2010, 2014), the main task of social research should be identifying what Mannheim (1980) called "conjunctive knowledge." In Bohnsack's (2010, 2014) analysis, Mannheim suggests that there are two main spaces or layers of knowledge that constitute the manner through which individuals relate themselves to concepts and to reality itself (Bohnsack, 2014). These layers are communicative knowledge and conjunctive experience.

"Communicative knowledge" refers to what the individual knows about a given concept or phenomenon. To exemplify this form of knowledge, Bohnsack (2014) takes the concept of "family." This layer of knowledge refers to what we all, in a general sense, know about the idea of family:

> This concerns the family as an institution, that is the institutionalized or role-guided action, which, among other things, comprises the generalized knowledge about the role-relations between parents and children, knowledge about the legal and the religious tradition of the family in our culture, but also –as a further component– our theories about the family, our theoretical and legitimatory [sic] knowledge concerning the family" (Bohnsack, 2014, 20).

On the other hand, praxeological social research focuses on "conjunctive experiences." This form of knowledge does not only come from the information an individual may have about family but also from the knowledge acquired by means of existing within a family (Bohnsack, 2014). This means that the main methodological challenge is being able to grasp and interpret everyday practices and experiences of individuals existing within the phenomenon under study, rather than on the external information that individuals may have concerning the phenomenon in question.

In order to understand conjunctive knowledge, Mannheim (1980) argues that existence depends on the recognition and interaction with other individuals. Moreover, the author suggest that self-recognition happens only when an individual has existential relations with others. This is due to three main reasons: first, only through social existence can one locate oneself in a human existential relationship; second, each external person brings a different side of oneself into reality; last, one can better see oneself through the eyes and perspectives of others (Mannheim, 1980). In other words, as an individual's existence hangs on its

interactions with other individuals – existence is a constant dualism. This duality reflects the fact that one's perspective is anchored in both existential and relational foundations, for one's social experiences depend on one's existence. As Remmling (1961) suggests, the central theme of Mannheim's sociology of knowledge is the idea of the existential determination of knowledge.

> Thus, the concept of "socio-existential determination of knowledge" expresses the theory that the absolute stratum, i.e., societal life centred around socio-economic orders not only has importance for the realization of judgments *hic et nunc*; that it not only possesses factual relevance (*Faktizitätsrelevanz*); but also that it influences the content, form, and structure of intellectual utterances (Remmling, 1961, 26-27).

In this sense, grasping conjunctive knowledge means focusing on existence as relational and on identifying practices derived from existence and experience in everyday life that reveal visions of the world*, habitus* and subjectivities (Bohnsack, 2014). In this sense, the focus of the methodological approach of this research on the practices and peformances of individuals and collectivities, and the idea that the human existence is interactive, echoes the idea that reality is enacted through practices and performances (see Section 5.2). The relevance of this methodological background resides in the fact that it tries to understand the phenomena under study through the practices performed by collectivities and their multiple entities.

Interpretative approaches: their scope and difficulties

Considering the focus of conjunctive knowledge on existence as a relational experience, with slight variations, different aspects of interpretative approaches (such as symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology) serve as the theoretical and methodological fundaments of this research. It is worth mentioning that Mannheim's contributions strongly influenced each of these theoretical approaches. Before going through each one, it is important to highlight that all of them are anchored in the idea that the formation of knowledge and existence itself is relational. That means that the starting point is the individual and the stimuli that the individual generates in others. These stimuli are symbols, such as language, actions or gestures, that generate further action in other individuals (Joas & Knöbl, 2009). Moreover, these relational approaches suggest that the formation of identities and self-consciousness depends on the specific roles of individuals in a constantly changing process of social structuring.[46]

Notwithstanding the similarities between symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology, it is important to understand their own characteristics and challenges. Symbolic interactionism

[46]The notion of "structuring" comes from Giddens and refers to the process of creating and recreating social structures. According to Joas & Knöbl (2009), "Giddens no longer refers to (fixed) structures, but to structuration, pointing to the fact that dynamic processes are always at work in societies, that seemingly fixed structures come into existence and fade away and are continuously changed by actors" (Joas & Knöbl, 288, 2009).

can be summarised in four main premises: first, individuals act toward symbols (concepts, things, utterances, etc.) based on the meanings that the symbols have for them; second, the meaning of such symbols derives from social interaction between individuals; third, individuals modify and transform such symbols through an interpretative process; last, society is a vast number of simultaneously occurring interactions (Joas & Knöbl, 2009).

On the other hand, ethnomethodology, in an effort to understand western culture, takes phenomenology as its fundament. Ethnomethodology focuses on the normality and "common sense" reproduced by everyday practices and experiences. This approach suggest that reality is a reflexive activity, for it is not automatically given but a process in constant reproduction. Overall, as Joas & Knöbl (2009) suggest that "ethnomethodology as a whole is concerned to analyse the hidden grammar of everyday knowledge and action" (Joas & Knöbl, 2009, 168).

Despite the importance of these interpretative approaches in social research, it is important to highlight some problematic features in order to address the methodological proposal of this research. To begin with, although both social theories consider existence as relational and reflexive processes, neither of them question power relations on the macro level. That means that these social theories strive to analyse individual roles and experiences, but they do not question the macro levels of power that may influence such experiences. In other words, they do not analyse the possible external influence that structures may have on individuals.

Therefore, these theoretical foundations do not conceive the reproduction of reality as a dialectical relation between micro and the macro levels of power, for they focus on the individual as the only agent that reproduces normality and "common sense." As mentioned in Chapter 2, reproduction of power happens through both subjectivities and political and economic conditions. Interpretivist approaches that centre the individual and its interactions lose the chance to identify and analyse the dialectical relation between the constitution of the self and economic, social and political structuring processes.

To sum up, such a focus on the interactions of individuals reduces reality to the individual and misconceives the complexity of the reproduction of power. This reduction of reality implies the misacknowledment of both the influence of economic and political structuring processes on individual interactions and the influence of individual interactions on the structures. The methodological reduction invisibilises the macro level of power, takes it as a given and, thus, loses the capacity to question it.

Intentionality and methodological stance

Acknowledging the importance of interpretative approaches while trying to overcome some of its limitation, this research resorts to two main critical proposals to break with possible

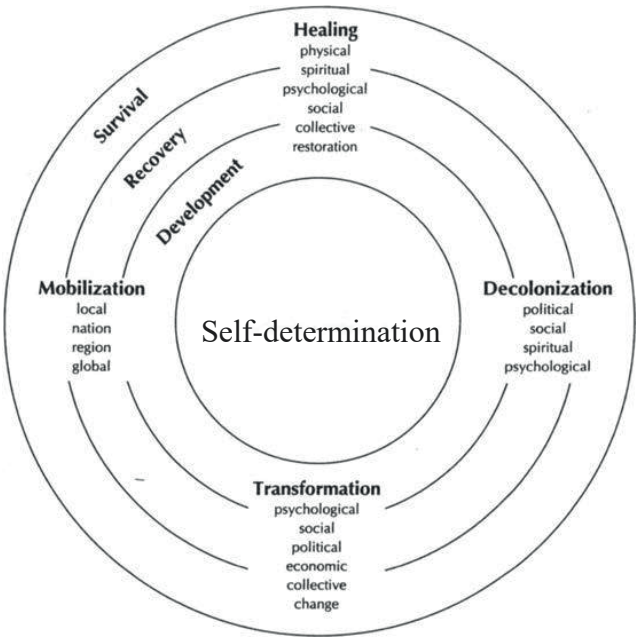
Eurocentric features among interpretivists: Indigenous Research (IR) and Participatory Action Research (PAR). Before describing each of these approaches, it is important to highlight some of their shared features. First, their intention is to transform reality and the living conditions of specific population groups. Second, unlike interpretivists, IR and PAR take into account structural conditions as one of the most decisive determinants in the constitution of local realities. That is, both recognise the dialectical interaction between the macro and the micro levels of power. Last, by recognising the interaction between both levels of power, IR and PAR address the modern world-system as a structuring process that reproduces power through both subjectivities and economic and political structures.

Beginning with IR, according to Tuhiwai Smith (2008), doing research with non-western collectivities implies certain challenges that respond to the current historical condition. In order to tackle the micro and macro levels of power that operate in the modern world-system, she argues that there are four intertwined methodological directions that strengthen the autonomy and self-determination of peripheral collectivities. These four directions – decolonisation, healing, transformation and mobilisation – "are not goals or ends in themselves. They are processes that connect, inform and clarify the tensions between the local, the regional and the global. They are processes which can be incorporated into practices and methodologies" (Tuhiwai Smith 2008, 116). Furthermore, four transversal conditions – survival, recovery, development and self-determination – cross these methodological directions and define the states through which non-western collectivities move towards the transformation, innovation or reproduction of their own social ontology (see Section 5.1). These transversal conditions of existence define the focus of this research in that they respond to the particular economic, social and historical characteristics of specific collectivities (Tuhiwai Smith, 2008).

Each of the four directions deals with both micro and macro levels of power because they each address phenomena related to both economic and political structures, as well as to subjectivities, *habitus*, practices and desires. Working with subjectivities, localities, regions and the global scale allows non-western methodologies to grasp the complexity of the production and reproduction of power (see Figure 5):

> The chart uses the metaphor of ocean tides. From a Pacific peoples' perspective the sea is a giver of life, it sets time and conveys movement. Within the greater ebb and flow of the ocean are smaller localised environments which have enabled Pacific peoples to develop enduring relationships to the sea. For Polynesian peoples the significant deity of the sea is Tangaroa. Although there are many directions that can be named, the chart takes the Maori equivalent of the four directions: the northern, the eastern, the southern and the western. The tides represent movement, change, process, life, inward and outward flows of ideas, reflections and actions (Tuhiwai Smith, 2008, 116).

Figure 5. Non-western collectivities research agenda



Source: Tuhiwai Smith, L. (2008). *Decolonizing Methodologies. Research and indigenous peoples*. London & New York: Zed Books Ltd.

With the intention of grasping the micro and macro levels of power in the reproduction of the racialised modern world-system in the particular case under study, the methodology of the present research focuses on nine of the twenty-nine imperatives that this type of research should bear in mind (Tuhiwai Smith, 2008). The nine imperatives become the roadmap to defining the course, focus and scope of this research regarding the socio-territorial conflict in the Gulf of Tribugá:

1. Claiming: "In a sense colonialism has reduced indigenous peoples to making claims and assertions about our rights and dues. It is an approach that has a certain noisiness to it" (Tuhiwai Smith, 2008, 143).
2. Testimonies: "Testimonies intersect with claiming because they are a means through which oral evidence is presented to a particular type of audience" (Tuhiwai Smith 2008, 144).
3. Celebrating survival: "(…) celebrating survival accentuates not so much our demise but the degree to which indigenous peoples and communities have successfully retained cultural and spiritual values and authenticity" (Tuhiwai Smith, 2008, 145).
4. Remembering: "The remembering of a people relates not so much to an idealized remembering of a golden past but more specifically to the remembering of a painful past and, importantly, people's responses to that pain" (Tuhiwai Smith, 2008, 146).

5. Intervening: “Intervening is directed then at changing institutions which deal with indigenous peoples and not at changing indigenous peoples to fit the structures” (Tuhiwai Smith, 2008, 146).
6. Representing: “Indigenous communities have struggled since colonization to be able to exercise what is viewed as a fundamental right, that is to represent ourselves. The representing project spans both the notion of representation as a political concept and representation as a form of voice and expression” (Tuhiwai Smith, 2008, 150).
7. Envisioning: “One of the strategies which indigenous peoples have employed effectively to bind people together politically is a strategy which asks that people imagine a future, that they rise above present day situations which are generally depressing, dream a new dream and set a new vision” (Tuhiwai Smith, 2008, 152).
8. Reframing: It “is about taking much greater control over the ways in which indigenous issues and social problems are discussed and handled. One of the reasons why so many of the social problems which beset indigenous communities are never solved is that the issues have been framed in a particular way” (Tuhiwai Smith, 2008, 153).
9. Protecting: “This project is multifaceted. It is concerned with protecting peoples, communities, languages, customs and beliefs, art and ideas, natural resources and the things indigenous peoples produce” (Tuhiwai Smith, 2008, 158).

In addition to the four directions of IR – decolonisation, healing, transformation and mobilisation – this road map represents a clear dialogue with the idea of transmodernity and its appropriation of the positive moments of modernity in order to overcome its exploitative, racialist and colonial features. In the end, IR and transmodernity aim for a radical interculturality in which multiple forms of being-in-the-world co-exist.

As for the second methodological approach, the contributions made by Orlando Fals Borda (1995, 2015, 2017a, 2017b) concerning the constitution of PAR as methodology help define the structure of this research. According to Fals Borda, this methodological approach is a mechanism for understanding the historical and social situation of workers, peasants and indigenous groups subject to the impact of capitalist expansion. Moreover, considering that the main task of PAR is transforming realities through research, it is necessary to link theoretical and practical knowledge through a series of challenging methodological orientations. These methodological orientations are the following:

1. “The problem of the relationship between thinking and being – the feeling and the physical – is solved by observing the material that is external to us and independent of our consciousness. In this case, the material includes not only the verifiable nature

of nature but also the fundamental, primary conditions of human existence" (Fals Borda, 2015, 256).[47]

2. "The problem of the formation and reduction of knowledge is not resolved by differentiating the phenomena from things-in-themselves, but by raising the difference between what is known and what is not yet known. All knowledge is unfinished, variable and is subject to dialectical reasoning" (Fals Borda, 2015, 256).
3. "The problem of the relationship between thinking and acting is solved by realizing that the real activity of things can only be seen by the practice that, in this sense, is prior to reflection. There the objective truth is demonstrated, which is the materiality in movement" (Fals Borda, 2015, 256).
4. "The problem of the relationship between form and content is solved by raising the possibility of overcoming their indifference to practice and not only to intuitive or contemplative behaviour. Everything is an inextricable complex of form and content; hence, the theory cannot be separated from the practice, nor the subject of the object" (Fals Borda, 2015, 256-257).

Noting the contributions of these epistemological standpoints in the constitution of praxeological social research, PAR deals with three main strategic tensions in order to make social research a transformative action. First, PAR overcomes the tension between theory and practice by avoiding deductive and linear paradigms such as mechanisms, positivism or functionalism. PAR highlights the importance of paradigms that allow their own transformations and constitutions during the research through the participation of local agents. Furthermore, the purpose of this research becomes an ethical framework that defines the way the research moves through time. Finally, PAR takes the idea of transformative practice as reflection transformed into action, for it strives to transform reality (Fals Borda, 2017a).

Second, PAR solves the tension between subject and object by considering both agents to be people linked by feelings, norms, attitudes, opinions and experiences that should ideally have a shared role in a given project. To establish this sort of relationship and overcome the distance between subject and object, it is necessary to create a horizontal and symmetrical relationship between subjects that recognise each other as equals (Fals Borda, 2017a).

The third tension is between different visions of the world. The two relevant visions of the world are the Eurocentric view of external activists or academics and the telluric, local vision of the world that privileges the everyday and the immediate (Fals Borda, 2017a). To overcome this tension, is necessary to recognise that every social ontology is equal (see Section 5). Overcoming this tension implies overcoming the monologue of Eurocentrism and

[47] Henceforth, my own translation from: Fals Borda, O. (2015). *Una sociología sentipensante para América Latina*. Buenos Aires: Moncayo, Víctor Manuel (Ed.) CLACSO - Siglo XXI

moving towards the constitution of a transmodern and intercultural polylogue towards the pluriverse (see Section 8).

Overall, Fals Borda (1995) sums up the main task of PAR in his plenary address at the Southern Sociological Society Meeting in 1995.

1. "Do not monopolize your knowledge nor impose arrogantly your techniques but respect and combine your skills with the knowledge of the researched or grassroots communities, taking them as full partners and co-researchers. That is, fill in the distance between subject and object.
2. Do not trust elitist versions of history and science that respond to dominant interests, but be receptive to counter-narratives and try to recapture them.
3. Do not depend solely on your culture to interpret facts, but recover local values, traits, beliefs, and arts for action by and with the research organisations.
4. Do not impose your own ponderous scientific style for communicating results, but diffuse and share what you have learned together with the people, in a manner that is wholly understandable and even literary and pleasant, for science should not be necessarily a mystery nor a monopoly of experts and intellectuals" (Fals Borda, 1995, 3).

Working steps

Documentary method

The documentary method, inspired in ethnomethodology (Bohnsack, 2010), strives identify of the hidden grammar of everyday knowledge and action by focusing on the processes through which normality or "common sense" reproduce and create specific practices in specific contexts. More than identifying *what* is "common sense," documentary method enquires as to *how* normality is generated (Bohnsack, 2010). To do so, this approach focuses on the conjunctive experiences and knowledges of individuals reflected in everyday practices. That means that focusing on the practices of certain individuals reveals the mechanisms through which social agents reproduce normality (Bohnsack, 2014). Here resides the call for a praxeological sociology of knowledge or "practical hermeneutics."

The organisation of data under the documentary method has two consecutive steps: formulating interpretation and reflecting interpretation (Bohnsack, 2010, 2014). The first step concerns what the participants explicitly say and organises this data in analytical categories and sub-categories. Bohnsack (2010, 2014) names these categories "paramount topics (PT), subordinated topics (ST), subsubordinated topics (SST) and may be subsubsubordinated topics (SSST)" (Bohnsack, 2010, 115).

The second step transitions from asking *what* to asking *how* (Bohnsack, 2010). According to Bohnsack (2014), considering *how* individuals reproduce practices means identifying the framework of orientation or *habitus*. Moreover, the author highlights that the main objective of interpreting practices is to find different practices between frames of orientations. In the particular case of this research, such frames of orientation that dialectically relate to practices are each of the disputing social ontologies in the Gulf of Tribugá (see Section 6).

In order to grasp different frames of orientation, the documentary method suggests focusing not only on the describing the content of the data but also the manner in which discourses develop (Bohnsack, 2014). This means that the researcher must be able to distinguish forms of sociability and interactions among and between individuals. Supporting, parallelising, opposing and contradicting are part of the focus that such an analysis must include in order identify frames of orientations:

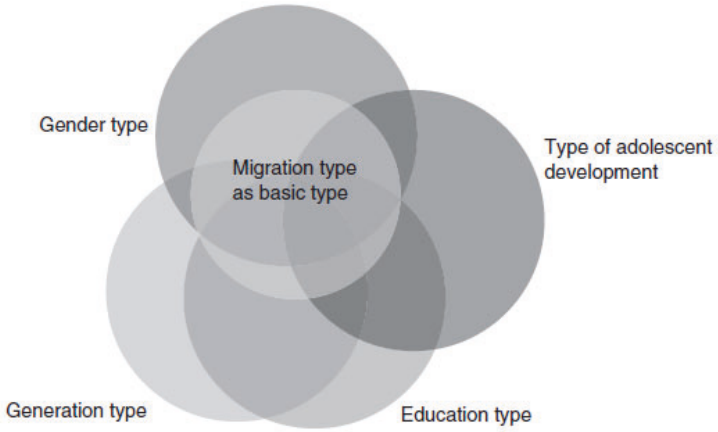
> The reconstruction of the mode of discourse organization can tell us if and by how much the participants share a conjunctive space or experience and thus collective (milieu-specific) orientations (Bohnsack, 2014, 225).

Once the researcher organises their data in topics and frames of orientations or social ontologies, the next step is to identify types or patterns among participants. According to Bohnsack (2014), there are three levels of typification. First, "meaning-genetic typification" is the most general and describes the frames of orientation of the *habitus.*

Second, "socio-genetic typification" tries to identify which specific *habitus* is typical for a specific context. Put differently, socio-genetic typification concerns the spaces where the experiences happens and searches for "the background of socialization and biographical development" (Bohnsack, 2014, 229).

The third form of typification is "multidimensional." Beyond the social-genetic sphere, this last form of typification identifies any other spaces and circumstances that help define the experiences of individuals. For this reason, it adds to the analysis social determinants such as age, educational background and gender in order to determine if and how the separation and particularities of spheres of experiences can be identified when they overlap with other spheres (Bohnsack, 2014). In other words, multidimensional typification seeks to identify and understand how individuals or collectives with a shared space of experience also have multiple spheres that define their practices. As portrayed in Figure 6, the lived experience of an individual or a collectivity depends on a variety of types (Bohnsack, 2014).

Figure 6. Example of typification: determinants of the lived experiences



Taken from: Bohnsack, R. (2014). Documentary Method. In *The Sage handbook of qualitative data analysis* (pp. 217–233). London: (Flick, Uwe Ed.) SAGE Publications.

To close this section, the purpose of documentary method is to identify the multiple variables that define individual and collective practices that reproduce, through discourses and practices, contrasting enactments of reality and particular performances of the idea of well-being (see Section 6.3). Taking documentary method as the analytical strategy of this research allows for the identification of defining typologies in the reproduction of the assemblages, sociocultures and social ontologies that negotiate, dispute, and co-exist in the Gulf of Tribugá (see Section 6).

Description of analytical approach

Considering the amount of information involved in this research, some analytical principles provided by Grounded Theory (GT) are of great relevance. First, its characteristic levels of codification (Straus & Corbin, 1998) help in understanding and finding patterns in the practices performed by collectivities and individuals. Second, GT assumes that relevant information emerges from the data produced in the field. Although GT pretends to construct theory out of qualitative data, such is not the scope of the present research. In particular, this research seeks to give equal importance to both theoretical and empirical sources. That means giving the same value and legitimacy to what the academy says about the phenomenon under study and the lived experiences of individuals and collectivities.

As for the analytical process itself, this research uses Atlas.ti, a software mainly related to GT research practice. Although not restricted to this methodology, Atlas.ti helps organise and analyse qualitative data. For this research, this software has proven useful in the processes of organising, creating typologies and identifying the complex nature of the practices performed by the collectivity in question.

In this sense, the process of analysing the data produced through fieldwork is the following. The first step is transcribing the interviews and recordings in order to introduce them into Atlas.ti. Once the data is in the software, three subsequent codification processes begin:

1. Open coding: Analyses the text in a detailed and descriptive manner. Its main objective is to create a first set of conceptualisations that organise the data and allow a first characterisation of analytical categories.
2. Axial coding: Reduces the initial categories and endows them with depth and analytical structuring. By creating relations and linking their properties and dimensions, it creates hierarchies and complexity among categories. In other words, axial coding creates categories and sub-categories.
3. Selective coding: Integrates broader and more complex categories produced in the axial coding. It is the last step of the codification process and should reflect the phenomenon under study in all its complexity (Straus & Corbin, 1998). To put it in terms of documentary method, this last step reflects multiple typifications of the individual or collectivity under study.

Once the data reflects multiple typifications in the analytical categories, Atlas.ti helps in the creation of filters that respond to each typology identified. This implies that every analytical typology filter has constitutive categories, relations among them and a level of relevance for the scope of its dimension.

The next step is inserting each typologies, with its categorical content, to a concurrency matrix to identify the kinds of relationships that each category has with the others. Such a concurrency matrix allows for the identification of existing relationships between categories. This implies understanding which categories are causes, which are consequences, which are parts of others and how the categories interact with each other.

The fieldwork took place during the months of March, April and November 2019 in the Gulf of Tribugá, particularly in the c*orregimiento*[48] of Coqui that belongs to the municipality of Nuquí. The production of data in Nuquí and Coqui was possible thanks to the generous participation of historical and present social leaders, promoters of community tourism and sustainable fishery, fishermen and the community in general, all of whom opened the doors of their houses, their knowledge and their experiences. In addition, this research benefitted from some interviews with developmental experts, policy makers, environmentalists and promoters of the construction of the Port of Tribugá, all of which took place in Bogotá and Medellin.

[48] The term *corregimiento* is a subdivision of municipalities in Colombia.

PART II. DEVELOPMENTALISM AND SOCIO-TERRITORIAL CONFLICTS: POLITICAL ONTOLOGY IN THE GULF OF TRIBUGÁ, COLOMBIA

"This is what I believe in – flesh-and-blood people, no gods up in the sky or anywhere on the ground. 'Development' – one great big wonderful all-purpose god of machine, eh, Superjuggernaut that's going to make it alright, put everything right if we just get the finance for it. The money and know-how machine. Isn't that with you? The politics are of no concern. The ideology doesn't matter a damn. The poor devils don't know what's good for them, anyway. That's how you justify what condone – that's what lets you off the hook. Isn't it – the great Impartial. Development. Not dirty hands or compromised minds. Neither dirty racist not kaffir-boetie. Neither dirty Commie nor Capitalist pig. It's all going to be decided by computer – look, no struggle between human beings. That'd be too smelly and too close. Let them eat cake, by all means – if production allows for it, and dividends are not affected, in time."

The Conservationist – Nadine Gordimer

4. Introducing black communities in the Gulf of Tribugá: the struggle over territory

As analysed in the last section, developmentalism became the new discourse of modernity and the new strategy used to legitimise interventions from the core of the modern world-system in its periphery. Recognising that racial, territorial and cultural features were no longer a discursive obstacle to modernisation, developmentalism problematised difference under a framework of living standards, income and capacity of consumption. With this in mind, Colombia, as a as a peripheral area of the modern world-system, and its Pacific region, as a peripheral area of the country, have been subject to a series of representations that legitimise developmental interventions and transform local epistemologies and ontologies.

The Pacific region of Colombia was first populated by different indigenous communities and, with the introduction of enslaved populations brought by Spanish settlers to work in mines, later became a territory with a mostly black population. As indigenous communities diminished and the trade of enslaved individuals increased between 1533 and 1810. Additionally, the region was an important place to escape and hide from the colonial rule in order to create free marron communities and break the Spanish yoke. After Colombia abolished slavery in 1851, these black communities reproduced their social, cultural and economic practices in a territory that the hegemonic power considered abundant and wealthy but conflictive and unhealthy.

Throughout the nineteenth and most of the twentieth centuries, black communities of the Pacific region in Colombia faced several challenges in defending the territory that they had inhabited for centuries. It was not until the end of the last century, under the framework of the Constitution of 1991, that black communities managed and establish specific conditions over the ownership of their territories in conjunction with activists and some academics. With a process of ethnicisation of rural black communities in the Pacific basin, collectivities managed to include their lived experiences and their relations with the territory as part of the notion of a multicultural and pluri-ethnic country. The result of the process was provisional Article 55 of the Constitution of 1991 (AT 55) that issued Law 70 of 1993. This law established that the territories occupied by black communities living under certain traditional and ecological practices in the Pacific basin collectively owned the land.

Achievements made with the implementation of the law brought new challenges to black collectivities and marginalised groups in the country. The fact that the law focused its definition on the acknowledgement of black communities living in the rural areas of the Pacific basin meant that black people in urban areas, along the Caribbean coast and in the Archipelago of San Andres did not have the right to claim their own territories unless they engaged in practices the that the state considered "traditional." Similarly, by limiting itself to rural black communities in the Pacific basin, the law set specific standards for other

marginalised groups aiming to achieve collective ownership and particular rights over their territories. This meant that, in order achieve a collective titling of the land, marginalised communities were, and are, encouraged to replicate the practices of black communities in the Pacific and prove the ancestry of their lived experiences.

On the other hand, the law emerged simultaneously with the expansion of neoliberalism in Latin America and is part of a form of multiculturalism that, although highlights cultural folkloric practices, diminishes the transformative political capacity of non-western collectivities. An analysis of multicultural neoliberalism begs the question of whether the status of concessions of certain rights to non-western collectivities strategically limits the potential hegemonic scope of marginalised collectivities. At the same time, neoliberal multiculturalism limits the capacity for action and autonomy among these collectivities because, to the extent that the state retracts of its responsibilities in the territory, it forces the communities to invest all their organisational potential and political capital to finding resources from NGOs, the state and other forms of international cooperation.

Overall, this chapter focuses on the process through which black collectivities in the Colombian Pacific basin achieved recognition and the titles to territories that they had inhabited since they manumitted themselves or escaped the Spanish yoke after their forced arrival in the region. Analysing the process, this chapter considers some features of the ethnicisation and essentialisation strategies that limit the law regarding other black and non-black marginalised communities in the country. Last, this chapter questions the achievements of black communities as part of a multicultural and neoliberal trend that took place at the end of the twentieth century in the Global South, for such achievements may limit the transformative scope of non-western collectivities.

With this purpose in mind, this chapter has three main sections. First, *The Colombian Pacific Region: history of a settlement* shortly introduces the region and the settlement process, its main demographic features and the origins of the enslaved population brought by the Spanish. Second, *Institutional struggle of black communities: the Constitution of 1991 and 70 Law of 1993* narrates the process through which black population in the Department of Choco,[49] after having achieved some visibility administrating the local sphere of the state, organise themselves around new notions of ethnicity and identity that led to their inclusion in Law 70 of 1993. Third, while acknowledging the importance of the law as one of the fundamental achievements of black communities in the country, the section *Looking beyond the achievements: a critical approach to Law 70* considers its limitations and its insertion in the notion of neoliberal multiculturalism that diminishes the scope of identitarian social movements and reduces the transformative scope of marginalised collectivities.

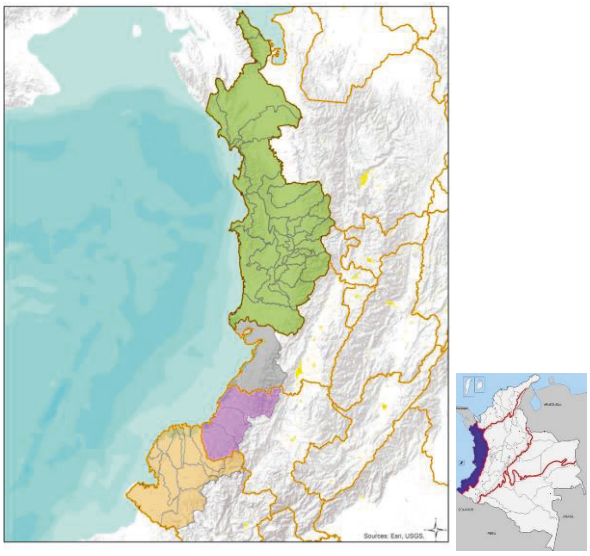
[49] The departments are the political and administrative subdivisions in Colombia.

4.1. The Colombian Pacific Region: history of a settlement

The Republic of Colombia is located on the northeast corner of South America with coasts along both the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea. The Andes Mountains cross the country from south to north in three branches: the West Andes, the Central Andes and the East Andes. The Andean region, with its three branches and valleys, is the most populated area of Colombia as well as its most economically dynamic, and thus represents the "core" of the country. The "periphery" of the country, which includes the peripheries of the Andean region, is constituted by the Amazon region to the southeast, the Orinoquia region to the east, the Caribbean region to the north and the Pacific region to the west. The geographical diversity that spans coastlines and reaches 5,700 meters above sea level has been home to a wide variety of life-worlds, epistemologies and languages that developed in order to understand, give sense to and inhabit the territory (Romero, 2017).

As part of the Chocó biogeographic region that goes from Panamá to Northern Peru, the Pacific region of Colombia, with approximately ten million hectares of tropical forest, holds a worldwide known concentration of biodiversity (Oslender, 2004b). The region has two main territorial subdivision: the south-central area, from Buenaventura in the middle of the region to Tumaco on the border with Ecuador, and the northern area, or sub-region of Chocó, from Buenaventura to the border with Panamá (Romero, 2017). Four departments compose the Pacific region: from south to north, Nariño, Cauca, Valle del Cauca and Chocó (see Map 1). Close to one million Afro-Colombians live in the region, of whom around 40% live in small villages along the rivers and at the river mouths (Oslender, 2004b). Although these communities have multiple interactions with other parts of Colombia and neighbouring countries, they have reproduced particular forms of being in the territory that respond to their own necessities and strategies of understanding the world.

Map 1. Colombian Pacific Region



Source: Defensoría del Pueblo. (2016). *Problemática humanitaria en la región pacífica colombiana*. Bogotá: Defensoría del Pueblo.

The Department of Chocó, with an extension of 46,530 km^2, has 30 municipalities of which 70% are rural (Estrada Álvarez et al., 2013). The department has three main watersheds: the Atrato River runs from south to north and flows into the Atlantic Ocean, the San Juan River runs from north to south and has its mouth at the centre of the Colombian Pacific coast and the Baudó River runs from north to south and flows into the northern Colombian Pacific coast. Additionally, 74% of its population is of afro descent and 12% belong to the Embera and Wounaan indigenous communities (Estrada Álvarez et al., 2013). Between national natural parks, collectively owned territories of black communities and indigenous territories, 90% of the department's land is currently inalienable, imprescriptible and has immunity of seizure.

As for the pre-Columbian indigenous collectivities, studies to identify their characteristics and presence in the territory consist of comparing colonial documentation and their possible relation to and differentiation from existing indigenous settlements. This process is not only challenging but demands identifying which communities are descendants of pre-Columbian social groups and the possible displacements and resettlements these indigenous communities may have had up to their occupation of their current territories (Pardo Rojas, 1987a). Nevertheless, using different sources, Mauricio Pardo Rojas (1987) concludes the following:

> On the basis of the most reiterative and concise documentary information about the Chocó as colonial territory, we know for certain the existence of the following indigenous groups. Chancos in the Garrapatas River, Yacos in the upper Calima, Tootumas and Ingaraes in the Sipí, Noanamás in the lower San Juan (Uaunanas),

> Surucos in the Quito River, Poromeas in the Bojayá River and Cunas in the lower Atrato […] It is also known that the Tatamá and the Sima on the upper San Juan, the Poya from the area of the mouth of the Tamaná on the San Juan and the Citará of the upper Atrato, were Emberá subgroups, identified as Chocó by the Spaniards (Pardo, 1987; 48-49).[50]

According to Pardo Rojas (1987), since Spanish colonisation, the Embera indigenous communities settled on the upper Atrato and San Juan Rivers were identified by the name "Chocó." Later, given sociocultural similarities, the appellative "Chocó" expanded to include the Wounaan indigenous community from the lower San Juan River. Furthermore, since the end of the nineteenth century, the term "Chocó" had designated both the ethnic group "as well as the linguistic group composed of the Embera and Wounaan languages, which are closely related" (Pardo, 1987; 252).

By the time Prado's study was published (1987), the author states that, in the Colombian Pacific region and on the foothills of the surrounding Andes, there were only a few Cuna settlements in the Gulf of Urabá, the Wounaan in the lower San Juan and "innumerable Embera communities of several dialects scattered throughout this area" (Pardo, 1987; 49). The main problem of ethnohistoric research on the pre-Columbian indigenous communities of Chocó, concludes the author, is detecting which of the unidentifiable indigenous groups were also labelled "Chocó" (Pardo Rojas, 1987b).

With the Spanish arrival in the territory, the new settlers founded Santa Maria la Antigua del Darién in 1510, the first colonial town in mainland America (Melo, 1987), with the purpose of exploring and conquering the region. Nevertheless, the Spaniards were expelled a bit more than decade later by resisting indigenous communities, the density of the tropical forest and the climatic adversity (Romero, 2017). Moreover, after the first European sighting of the Pacific Ocean in 1513 by Vasco Núñez de Balboa (Friede, 1963), the foundation of Cali in 1536 and its adjacent Port of Buenaventura (Valencia Llano, 2014), the region became relevant to the New Kingdom of Granada[51] for connecting the Andes with the Pacific Ocean (Valencia Llano, 2014). For these reasons – the expulsion of the Spaniards from the northern Pacific, the foundation of Cali and the incorporations of the south Pacific into the colonial economy – the region of Chocó fell into oblivion and its colonisation had a later development.

Although, for the reasons analysed above, there were few colonial expeditions with the purpose of exploring and exploiting the area during the sixteenth century, it was only in the late seventeenth century that the colonisation of the territory occurred (Romero, 2017). After

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[50] Henceforth, my own translation from: Pardo Rojas, M. (1987a). Indígenas del Chocó. In *Instituto Colombiano de Antropología* (pp. 251–261). Bogotá: Ministerio de Educación Nacional, Instituto Colombiano de Cultura.

[51] New Kingdom of Granada was an administrative division for the northern area of South America during Spanish rule. In the early eighteenth century, the New Kingdom of Granada became the Viceroyalty of New Granada. Its extension corresponds to the areas of today's Venezuela, Colombia and Ecuador.

the Spaniards managed to defeat the indigenous resistance and establish access to Cali and the Port of Buenaventura from Chocó, a new mining economy was established (Romero, 2017). This new phase of occupation was incentivised by the mining wealth of the region and had the New Laws of Indies from 1542 as its juridical framework. Considering that this jurisdiction banned *mita*[52] to exploit the mines, the Spanish colonial power replaced forced indigenous labour with enslaved labour taken from Africa (Molano, 2017). This meant that the colonisation of Chocó took place after the institution of the New Laws of Indies and that most of the labour force was made up of enslaved people violently brought from Africa.

Although discussions about the specific origins of today's black Colombian population "have had different nuances and have also generated widespread controversy" (Romero, 2017; 41), through historical records and African religious, social and economic practices present today in both African countries and Colombia, it is possible to reconstruct the places of origin of the initial enslaved population. Accordingly, Maya (1998) suggests that the enslaved population taken to Colombia had different origins that responded to the geopolitics of the time:

1. From 1533 to 1580, the Guinea People with different ethnic groups such as Mandingas and Yolofos from the current-day Senegal, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Guinea and Sierra Leona.
2. From 1580 to 1640, people from the former Congo Kingdom with different ethnic affiliations such as Congos, Monicongos, Angolas and Anzicos from current-day Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Angola, Gabon and São Tomé and Príncipe.
3. Three main historical moments in the enslaved trade from 1640 to 1810: i) Dutch control between 1640 and 1793, ii) English and French control between 1703 and 1740, iii) the final stage of the legal enslaved trade between 1740 and 1810. During this period, between 1640 and 1810, the main enslaved ethnic groups were the Ewes, Xwla, Akan, Fantis, Igbos, Akan and Ashanti from the Gulf of Benin, Gulf of Guinea and the Gulf of Biafra (Maya, 1998).

In reference to the settlement process of Chocó in particular, Romero (2017) suggests that the late colonisation of the territory materialised along its three main watersheds: the Atrato, San Juan and Baudó Rivers. By 1670, the Spaniards were able to travel from the southern area of the current-day Department of Chocó and establish a mining enclave with the enslaved population as its main labour force. In this context, the Baudó region (see Map 2), towards the Pacific coast where Nuquí is located, became a hub for resistance. This region provided refuge for black communities, indigenous communities, marrons and free people who settled there to escape and resist colonial power (Romero, 2017).

[52] *Mita* was a labour system used by the Incas and later the Spanish in order to secure the supply of silver from mines. Unlike *encomienda* (see Footnote 14), *mita* is not a socio-economic system but, rather, focused exclusively on labour.

In addition to escaping and creating their own marron social structures as form of resistance, some of the enslaved population resorted to the law that allowed their own manumission:

> The Laws of the Indies and the Black Codes governed colonial life and that of the enslaved. Although many of them authorised the inhuman treatment of the captives, others allowed the enslaved the possibility of manumit, that is, to free themselves from slavery. The modalities were multiple. Freedom could be achieved by concession or grace when the owner of an enslaved released it without any consideration or payment. Alternatively, the captive freed himself when he managed to collect the money equivalent to his price and bought his own letter of freedom. The transaction was legal, but carried out only if its owner agreed to the proposal. This modality was known as self-manumission. The third way to achieve freedom through the laws came in 1821, during the first years of the Republic, when the Law of Freedom of Wombs was enacted, according to which the State freed all Africans and their descendants born from that year on. Finally, the Abolition Law of 1851, which eliminated slavery in Colombia (Maya, 2003; 36).[53]

Map 2. Baudó Range

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Serran%C3%ADa_del_Baud%C3%B3 (accessed 18.01.2021).

[53] Henceforth, my own translation from: Maya, A. (2003). Atlas de las culturas afrocolombianas. *Bogotá: Ministerio de Educación.*

That means that the marronage of enslaved populations had different facets, from institutional to religious and armed resistance. As an example of cultural resistance, Maya (2003) suggests that:

> This way of relating the natural with the spiritual, typical of African traditions, was expressed with such force in the colonial society that each of these knowledge was considered dangerous. Since then, civil justice and ecclesiastical power considered that their application infringed established morals. Those who worked this type of botanical, magical-religious and divinatory skills were accused of *curandería*, sorcery and witchcraft before the Court of the Holy Office and received implacable punishments for it (Maya, 2003; 48).

Regarding the settlement process of the Gulf of Tribugá, particularly the present-day municipality of Nuquí, Ramírez Meza (2010) suggests that there are two stages: first, the presence of indigenous communities and maroons described above; second, a settlement process that produced the foundation of the current towns on the gulf. This second process started around 1830 and responded to the demand for connection between the inner areas of Chocó and its coasts. The importance of connection to the coast relates to the extraction and commercialisation of the tagua nut (vegetable ivory) and rubber, and it is responsible for most of the origins of the current towns in the coastal area (Ramírez Meza, 2010).

Moreover, according to the oral history of the inhabitants of Nuquí, the town was originally settled by the Lerma family and Juanico Castro who came from the Baudó Region as traders and merchants to connect the inner parts of Chocó to its coasts and to Panamá:

> Here in Nuquí, the founder, what the elderly people told me, was a man, a Lerma family. Because there is another version that says that Juanico Castro founded Nuquí, but in the version given by the elders at the time we did the investigation they said that it was a Lerma family. That one was Antonio Lerma, the other I do not remember the name. Then they arrived here. Juanico Castro had arrived too, but he did not like Nuquí because he was one of those people who bought boats and went out to sell. He bought in the Baudó and went out to sell […] and here stayed the Lerma who settled down there in a stream. They had their house here and they went fishing in an estuary here for the Ancachi side. That is why the estuary is called the Lerma estuary. They were the first located here, after them it was that other families were arriving [...] (Interview with Cándida García, April 2019).[54]

[54] The interviews were conducted in Spanish. The text presents my own free translation into English.

4.2. Institutional struggle of black communities: the Constitution of 1991 and Law 70 of 1993

According to Villa (2001), two main events defined the history of the struggle of the black population in Chocó during the twentieth century. First, a new black elite began to administer state duties in its local dimension as an effect of its immersion in the traditional bipartisanship of Colombia.[55] Second, the peasant movement ruptured by the end of the century, which led to a notion of identity based on ethnicity.

The emergence of a new black elite responded to the productive and commercial shift in the region. By the end of the nineteenth and in the beginning of the twentieth centuries, the settlement pattern of the Pacific region began to shift from mining and agriculture to products from the rainforest, such as tagua nut and rubber. New demands from the international market brought attention to the rainforest in Chocó. The transformation of economic demands and the new attention brought by the rainforest produced rapid urbanisation focused in Quibdó (the capital of the department today), where the extracted products from the forest were stocked and a new class of traders lived (Villa, 2001).

According to Villa (2001), the urbanisation process of the beginning of the twentieth century produced a new black elite associated with new economic activities related to the extraction of resources from the rainforest. This new urban black elite, with its insertion in the political dynamic on the national level, attained local powers and became the intermediary between the central powers in Bogotá and black communities in the periphery. However, due to extreme dependence on the central powers, access to local power by the black elite did not translate into own projects or visions for the territory but into the execution of a plan designed in and by the core of the country.

The same author argues that, in the case of Chocó, this model of participation of black communities in the modern state "explains the failure of local elites in the construction of their own project, given their marked dependence on central powers as a determining factor throughout the twentieth century and its inability to read its economic and cultural reality. Thus, the articulation of the black elite in State management makes them administrators of a project, which, at the same time, stands in its own denial" (Villa, 2001, 212).[56]

The reduction of the international demand of rubber and vegetable ivory by the end of the Second World War, access to local powers by black people and the emergence of an

[55] From the mid-nineteenth to the beginning of the twenty-first century, the political spectrum in Colombia was reduced to the liberal and the conservative parties. From the late 1840, when the parties were officially founded, until 2002, every president of the country was a member of one of these two parties.

[56] Henceforth, my own translation from: Villa, W. (2001). La sociedad negra en el Chocó. Identidad y movimientos sociales. In *Acción colectiva, Estado y etnicidad en el Pacífico Colombiano* (pp. 207–228). Bogotá: Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia.

intellectual class in the region that claimed a place in national politics established the conditions for the constitutional reform that created the Department of Chocó 1947 (Villa, 2001). Along with the emergence of an educated black elite, the creation of the department represented a shift in social mobility in the region. Considering that the regional upper class were traders from the turn of the twentieth century until the end of the Second World War, towards the middle of the century, social mobility materialised through the access to bureaucratic positions in the local, municipal and departmental administration. In this context, to the extent that political parties commissioned public servers, they became the representatives of social mobility. In other words, the black elite, who recently achieved the creation of their administrative unit, became the organisers and controllers of regional clientelistic networks of the political parties:

> It is important to understand that being an official of a State institution becomes, for this period, the only opportunity for social mobility, an issue that explains the importance of political parties in the social life of black people (Villa, 2001, 216).

In addition to social mobility in terms of access to official positions, by the second half of the twentieth century, a new extractive boom had emerged and represented a new means of social mobility. The extraction of timber became the new route to climb the social hierarchy for black people because it facilitated a network of traders in rural areas and the emergence of a few sawmill owners in the urban areas (Villa, 2001). Despite the changes introduced by the new economic boom, the sawmill economic model did not change social structures in Chocó (Villa, 2001). The sawmill system reproduced the old economic logic in the region based on a modern form of slavery through a debt system that indefinitely ties up the wood cutter to the sawmill owner because the latter provides tools, victuals and food.

The last shift consists of the emergence of alternative discourses and new forms of social organisation in the region. By the 1980s, the failure of the political project consisting of alliances with political parties and the control of regional powers by the black elite led social movements into a new discourse based on identity and the confrontation of the state on the local and national levels.

Jairo Miguel Guerra, a leader involved in the social processes in Chocó since the 1980s, argues that the black social movement in this region originally had two branches: peasant and indigenous. About the peasant branch of the social movement, the interviewee argues:

> The first meeting we did, we did it in Titumate. We filled three boats with afro Colombians from the Atrato River, we went to Titumate, and there was a meeting where the leaders of the ANUC [National Association of Peasants] Sincelejo line came to help us to structure the movement. We are talking about the 80s, the year 82 or 83. That movement arises there. You see that the organizations were called Peasant

> Organization, Peasant Association or Popular Association. For example OBAPO Organization of Popular Neighbourhoods of Quibdó. Or ACIA, Integral Peasant Association of the Atrato or ACABA Peasant Association of the Baudó River (Interview with Jairo Miguel Guerra, March 2019).

On the other hand, the initial indigenous influence came from the organisation OREWA, a regional indigenous organisation with different focuses and influences. Today, OREWA is the Indigenous Council Association – Embera Dobida, Katío, Chamí and Dule Indigenous Traditional Authorities.

> […] the OREWA had two moments. A moment that was the student organization Embera Wounaan, with the same acronym OREWA, Student Organization Embera Wounaan, and then the in the 80s, in the year 80, practically 79, to Regional Organization Embera Wounaan oriented by the CRIC [Indigenous Regional Council of Cauca] (Interview with Jairo Miguel Guerra, March 2019).

Acknowledging the important influence of the indigenous and peasants movements, the demands of black communities differed from both because they focused on access to land and land ownership – but black communities in Chocó, although without titles, had access to land and were not yet threatened by dispossession. Considering that the access to land was not a problem for the black social movement, the struggle focused on two main issues: i) access to public services, such as education, health and energy and ii) defence of natural resources.

In the same vein, Villa (2001) argues that the lived experience of the black peasants has shown that agriculture alone does not secure the subsistence of the community, which requires securing extensive territories for different economic activities. Moreover, the experience has shown black peasants that the "productive model depends on the areas adjacent to the cultivation lots, but that are threatened by the increasing degradation of those areas. The only alternative then is to ensure dominance over these spaces, as the indigenous communities had achieved through their territories" (Villa, 2001, 225).

Under this contextual framework – the defence of natural resources, the influence of peasant and indigenous struggles and the globalising discourses of the Pacific as a strategic region for the international market – black communities of Colombia configure an "unprecedented historical process: the emergence of ethnic collective identities and their strategic positioning in the culture-territory relationship" (Escobar, 1999, 169).[57] In this sense, as Villa (2001) concludes, the socioeconomic and identitarian struggle of black communities, before its

[57] Henceforth my own translation from: Escobar, A. (1999). *El final del salvaje: Naturaleza, cultura y política en la antropología contemporánea*. Bogotá: Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia - Cerec.

inclusion as an ethnic group in the Constitution of 1991, took elements from different social groups and discourses:

> At the end of the century, towards the eighties, the black peasant society returns to discover ethnicity, recognizes itself mediated by the discourse elaborated in social sciences, looks in the peasant's mirror, in the ethnicization finds an opportunity, Africa is too far away but useful as a contextual element. In its new reading, it takes the fragments and amalgams them to remake their identity (Villa, 2001, 208).

The identitarian search of black communities led to an alliance with indigenous communities and to the discourse of the "defence" of the territory. The struggle over a particular black social ontology, which took elements from the indigenous and the peasant social movements, took place in a specific national and international conjuncture and materialises in the Pacific basin of Colombia:

> "At the national level, the conjuncture includes the internationalization of the economy through a radical opening since 1990 and a transformation of the Constitution of the country in 1991 that issued the recognition of the collective right of the black communities of the region to the territories that they have traditionally occupied. Internationally, areas of tropical rainforest such as the Colombian Pacific have acquired a unique specificity by the end of the last decade. This specificity stands by the fact that these regions are home to the vast majority of the planet's biological diversity" (Escobar, 1999, 169).

Finally, the emergence of ethnicity as an alternative political discourse for black peasants in the Pacific opened a new chapter in the struggle of rural communities in Colombia. It is the emergence and appropriation of an ethnic discourse by black communities that allowed the defence of the territory and the reproduction of historically invisibilised non-western epistemologies and ontologies present in the region. This means that the process of ethnicisation (analysed in the following section) is the process of making visible non-western lived experience.

Ethnicisation of blackness in Colombia

According to Restrepo (2011, 2013), ethnicisation is a process that "lies in the formation of a political subject in a broad sense (an us/them), and of some subjectivities (some identifications), in the name of the existence (supposed or effective) of an 'ethic group'" (Restrepo, 2011).[58] In this sense, before the political constitution of Colombia in 1991 and, specifically, the regulation of Law 70 of 1993, the academy, the state and political parties

[58] Henceforth my own translation from: Restrepo, E. (2013). *Etnización de la negridad: La invención de las 'comunidades negras' como grupo étnico en Colombia.* Popayán: Universidad del Cauca.

simply considered the black communities of the country to be peasants and did not think about them as an ethnic group with specific traditional practices, ancestral links and cultural identities.

In order to understand the process that led to the constitution of black communities as an ethnic group, it is necessary to briefly account for the historical representations of these territories and its population. Additionally, it is essential to comprehend the social, economic and cultural role of black communities in the regional and national political sphere. Beginning with representations of the territory, following the analysis presented in Section 2.2 on modern mechanisms that problematise difference, scientist, travellers, explorers and government delegates have labelled the Pacific region of Colombia according to two main references: first, as an abundant, voluptuous and pristine region ready to be exploited by the rational hand; second, as conflictive, unhealthy, backward and opposed to the course of progress. In this sense, Restrepo (2013) uses the notion of "tropicalism" developed by Gustavo Lins Ribeiro,[59] to understand the relation the hegemonic discourse has had to the Pacific:

> "Referring to the acquaintance work of Edward Said, Ribeiro considers that tropicalism should be understood as a modality of orientalism. That is, as a discursive formation and a series of devices of othering geographies and populations. Orientalism produces the 'East,' not the other way around" (Restrepo, 2013; 179).

Following the idea of tropicalism, from the colonial occupation of the Pacific region by Spaniards to today, colonial authorities, Republican powers and (later) development experts and trustees (see Section 3) have labelled these territories a green ocean full of exorbitant human and non-human products that hinder the civilising mission. Moreover, in accordance with the idea of the coloniality of power that argue that race is the backbone of the modern world-system (Quijano, 2005), during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Pacific region became the subject of representations that tried to explain the backwardness of the territory and its inhabitants. To do so, the colonial relation between non-western territories, non-western races and non-western cultures analysed in Section 2.2 become relevant in as much as, under the colonial discourse, that triple relation conditioned the backwardness of the region.

Furthermore, under the developmentalist stage of modernity after 1949 (see Section 3.1), tropicalism continues to be the discursive framework that defines the relationship between policymakers, trustees and experts, and the territory and its inhabitants. As analysed in the Chapter 2, under this new configuration of the macro level of power, the ontological

[59] Ribeiro, Gustavo Lins. 2004. "Tropicalismo y europeismo. Modos de representar a Brasil y Argentina" En: Alejandro Grimson, Gustavo Lins Ribeiro y Pablo Semán (comps.), *La antropología brasileña contemporánea. Contribuciones para un diálogo latinoamericano*. pp. 165-195. Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros-ABA.

difference of modernity changed from cultural, territorial and racial features of the "other" to levels of industrialisation, urbanisation and income. More recently, with the development of the HDI and the MPI based on a standardised conception of how collectivities should live, by focused exclusively on individuals in denial of the social world, the hegemonic discourse avoids acknowledging its racialised perspective of the "other."

However, in the case of the Pacific region of Colombia, as in many other non-European territories, racialised perspectives remain and reproduce themselves. As Restrepo (2013) highlights, the images by which experts represent the territory are full of racialised attempts to explain the underdeveloped condition of its population. Quoted in Restrepo (2013), in 1961, the National Planning Department[60] (DNP) described the Department of Chocó:

> "The black, without major culture, lives clinging to his traditions and in a miserable way on the banks of the rivers, where he practices an incipient agriculture or engages in the exploitation of gold and platinum in the most primitive form. He lives in rustic huts and the only means of communication and transport available at all times is the river and his canoe" (Departamento Administrativo de Planeación, 1961, 104, quoted in Restrepo, 2013, 194).

In the same vein, the Plan Pacific of 1992 reproduced representations that position non-western territories as environmentally wealthy but un-institutionalised and poor:

> "The Pacific region in Colombia is characterized by the extreme poverty of its inhabitants, its great environmental wealth, its location between the Pacific Ocean and the interior of the country institutional weakness of the State to develop actions in this area" (Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 1992, n/p).[61]

Furthermore, after highlighting the weak institutional, educational and health conditions of the territory, the document argues that the strategy to improve the living conditions of the inhabitants on the region combines "a substantial investment effort in social and environmental infrastructure with strategic investments in transport, energy and telecommunications. These actions, complemented by an important effort in institutional development, can substantially raise the standard of living of the population throughout a process of sustained and sustainable development" (Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 1992, n/p). The language of this document and the strategies to improve the territory echo

[60] The DNP is a technical advisory body of the presidency of Colombia in charge of designing, recommending and promoting public and economic policy. As stated on its webpage, it has the mission of leading, coordinating and articulating the medium- and long-term planning for the sustainable and inclusive development of the country (Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 2019b).

[61] Henceforth, my own translation from: Departamento Nacional de Planeación. (1992). Plan Pacífico. Una nueva estrategia de desarrollo sostenible para la costa Pacífica colombiana. *Presidencia de La República, Departamento Nacional de Planeación*.

the six stages of economic growth stated by Rostow (see Section 3.1) that seek to transform non-western territories, cultures and races into "modern" and "developed" collectivities.

These modern representations of the territory as abundant and wealthy but conflictive and poor allowed the conditions of the emergence of a new discourse to represent the black communities of the Pacific. The notion of black communities as "ecological natives," the expression analysed by Ulloa (2004), represented (and continues to represent) a strategic tool used by academics and social movements in the Pacific to achieve the demands of the population in the region. Due to their non-western economic, social and cultural practices, plus the "pre-modern" label that hegemonic power has historically used to describe non-western collectivities and the communities themselves, NGOs, academics, trustees and experts started to portray the black population of the Pacific as protectors of the environment. This imbrication of ethnicity and environmental conservation materialises in Law 70 of 1993, which titled collective territories to black communities and restricted the uses of the land to sustainable economic activities (see Section 6.3):

> "One of the arguments that is repeatedly used is that the recognition of collective ownership over the lands inhabited by 'black communities' is a way of conserving biodiversity. The 'traditional practices' and the 'economic rationality,' radically different from the 'western' attributed to these communities, have not only been one of the factors by which this biodiversity has been conserved but is outlined as a strategy so that it does not disappear in the future" (Restrepo, 2013, 216).

Moreover, the same author (Restrepo, 2011, 2013) argues that one of the most important discourses in the ethnicisation of the black population of Colombia was their representation as ecological and sustainable collectivities:

> One of the most powerful images of the ethnicisation of the black communities of the Pacific is to represent them in a harmonious relationship with "nature." The texts written under this premise are numerous. Not only much of the legislation is based on it, but also often the analysis of academics and activists (Restrepo, 2013, 177).

In this sense, the process of ethnicisation of black communities in Colombia responds to a double historical movement: the emergence of the environment as a global problem and the eruption of the cultural and the multi-ethnic as a new factor in the constitution of modern states (Escobar, 1999). As Escobar establishes, this double eruption occurs in a changing context of capitalism and modernity wherein the multiple intersections of the local and the global are no longer polarised categories but the local processes the global through hybrid alternatives to and of modernity and post-development (Escobar, 1999).

Following the process of ethnicisation, after trustees, NGOs, academics and the communities themselves portrayed the black population of the Pacific region of Colombia as representatives of environmental rationality, the territory as an entity began to signify one of the central axis of the struggle (Restrepo, 2013). Taking the definition advanced by Restrepo (2013), "territory" is a form of political reflexivity and special appropriation, which "emerges to give sense and guide the actions over imagined of effective conflicts related to territorial experiences and practices of different conglomerates or social actors" (Restrepo, 2013, 224). In this regard, concludes the author, a given territory becomes part of an economy of visualisation of the ethnicity of black communities in the Pacific because the notion goes beyond a special claim and refers to an affirmation of identity, autonomy and control over natural resources (Restrepo, 2013).

Last, in the process of the ethnicisation of black communities, after defining claims over non-western environmental rationalities and their relation to the territory, it was important to establish a shared memory in order to build an identity. Although the black population in Colombia shares the same past, according to Losonczy (1999), at first sight it seems that the memory of the black communities in Colombia is built over two main gaps: its African ancestry and slavery. These historical gaps situate the origins of black, indigenous and white population at the same primordial temporality of creation, ergo allow the emergence of an identity attached to a particular territory. Referring to a simultaneous origin of black, indigenous and white peoples creates the conditions of an "active syncretism" (Losonczy, 1999). In this regard, black religiosity mixes indigenous, Catholic and African cultural practices that exemplify the syncretism of the formerly enslaved population in the Pacific:

> However collective ceremonies around the dead and the saints keep traces of the African heritage never recognized as such. At the same time, they are integrated into a ritual fabric that comes from Hispanic popular Catholicism and is marked with the seal of the shamanic system of the Embera indigenous neighbours (Losonczy, 1999, 16).[62]

Activists, academics and NGOs that participated in the ethnicisation process highlighted the shared past of the black communities in the Pacific basin. The dispersed and discontinuous memory of the black population, which located the origin myth of indigenous, black and white peoples simultaneously, shifted towards a linear and chronologic version of their history, incorporating Africa and slavery into their claimed discourses.

Alongside the constitution of a linear history in contrast to a dispersed and plural history, the ethnicisation of black communities came with what Restrepo (2011, 2013) calls the

[62] Henceforth, my own translation from: Losonczy, A. M. (1999). Memorias e identidad: Los negro-colombianos del Chocó. In *De montes, ríos y ciudades: Territorios e identidades de la gente negra en Colombia* (Restrepo, E. & Camacho, J., pp. 13–24). Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia - Ecofondo.

"objectivation of culture." This not only stresses on a shared past, but also on traditional knowledges, social organisations, medicine, productive systems, religiosity, etc. This does not mean that the cultural, social and economic practices were not, and are not, present in the black communities of the Pacific, but that, in order to make progress in the acquisition of their rights as a collectivity, black communities and their allies highlighted a shared rationality of the black rural collectivities in the region:

> In practice, the objectification of the culture of 'black communities' has meant an emphasis on the ancestral and communal. In the traditional production practices that are an expression of a successful adaptation to different ecosystems. In the extensive branches or family trunks that define not only access to resources, but also that constitute the network through which goods and people move. In its own economic rationality, that opposes the 'western.' In the existence of forms of self-government based on generational respect for the 'elders.' And in a specific system of representations that is clearly expressed in funeral or healing practices, as well as in a rich oral tradition (Restrepo, 2013, 245).

To sum up, the process of ethnicisation of black communities in Colombia based on the lived experiences of the rural black population settled in the Pacific region of the country had four main axes in its configuration. First, a discourse of historical tropicalism was applied to represent the territory and its inhabitants, focusing on notions analysed in Chapter 2, such as abundant and environmentally wealthy, conflictive and uncivilised. Second, the double discursive eruption of biodiversity and multiculturalism in the late twentieth century portrayed black communities as ecological natives who, through their non-western rationality, allow for the reproduction and sustainability of the environment. Third, in connection with the previous axis, the territory emerged as a political scenario that enables the reproduction of a particular identity and autonomy. Last, a shared history was constituted that, although accurate, did not have an active role in the memory of the origin of the black population in the Pacific region before the 1980s.

To close, although stated previously, it is vital to highlight that imagining a community and emphasising certain features of non-western epistemologies and social ontologies does not mean that the black communities did not share, or continue to share, these features. As part of the strategy to achieve political, cultural and territorial rights, black collectivities, activists, academics and NGOs emphasised these socio-ontological particularities in order to make visible the distinction between them and hegemonic discourses over the uses and appropriations of the territory. It is a vindicatory self-othering in order to achieve particular rights; it is making visible ontological difference.

In other words, the ethnicisation process is part of what Spivak (Danius & Jonsson, 1993; Eide, 2010) called "strategic essentialism" – a "path that has been and continues to be

explored as a minority strategy for influencing mainstream society" (Eide, 2010, 76). In this sense, while having important internal differences, the black social movement in the Pacific asserted an essentialised and standardised public image of themselves during the 1980s in order to achieve certain objectives.

As analysed in the following section, Law 70 of 1993 stressed traditional practices and the ecological relationship that rural black communities had (have) with the environment, acknowledging a new ethnic group that based its discourse on the representations and struggle parameters historically defined by indigenous communities. The ethnicisation of black communities, in order to achieve autonomic and territorial rights, framed its strategy in terms of defining itself as non-western based on the indigenous experience and struggle.

The Constitution of 1991 and 70 Law of 1993

After 105 years of rule under the Constitution of 1886, the National Constituent Assembly issued and approved a new constitution in 1991. The National Constituent Assembly of 1991 included the participation of certain social groups that, until then, had been excluded from official and institutional politics. As Domínguez Mejía (2017) argues, in the elaboration of the new constitution, it is important to highlight the participation of members of the recently demobilised guerrilla groups and the participation of indigenous movements that had reached some political space since the 1970s (Domínguez Mejía, 2017). The participation of these new social groups in the discussions of the new constitution led to the definition of Colombia as a multicultural and pluri-ethnic country. Although the black population of the country did not have representatives in the National Constituent Assembly, the new constitution approved a provisional article that ordered the creation of a law to regulate special rights of black communities in Colombia, particularly in terms of the collective titling of land (Domínguez Mejía, 2017).

Even though there is an asymmetry in the achievements of indigenous communities in the Constitution of 1991, for they were "explicitly subject to territorial, economic, educational and political administrative dispositions, […] 'black communities' only found the possibilities of realising their specific rights in a provisional article" (Restrepo, 2013, 91). Nevertheless, the political process related to the AT 55 is the most important milestone in the political and conceptual reconfiguration of blackness in Colombia.

The AT 55 issues the creation of Law 70 of 1993, which recognises the right to collective ownership of land by black communities that have been using them according to their traditional practices.

In its first article, the Law 70 of 1993 provides that:

> "The object of the present Law is to recognize the right of the Black Communities that have been living on barren lands in rural areas along the rivers of the Pacific Basin, in accordance with their traditional production practices, to their collective property as specified and instructed in the articles that follow. Similarly, the purpose of the Law is to establish mechanisms for protecting the cultural identity and rights of the Black Communities of Colombia as an ethnic group and to foster their economic and social development, in order to guarantee that these communities have real equal opportunities before the rest of the Colombian society
>
> In accordance with what has been stipulated in paragraph 1 Article 55 of the Political Constitution, this Law will also apply in the barren, rural, and riparian zones that have been occupied by Black Communities that have traditional practices of production in other areas of the country and abide by the requirements established in this Law" (Ley 70, 1993, Art. 1).

In a general sense, considering that the Constitution of 1991 states that the country is pluri-ethnic and multicultural, Law 70 of 1993 fundaments itself on the "respect for the integrity and dignity of the black communities' cultural life. […] Participation of the black communities and their organizations, without detriment to their autonomy, in decisions that affect them and in those that affect the entire nation in conformity with the law. […] The protection of the environment, emphasizing the relationships established by the black communities and nature" (Ley 70, 1993, Art. 3).

As stated above, one of the most important elements of Law 70 of 1993 is the collective titling of areas where black communities had settled. Domínguez Mejía (2017) clarifies that collective titling is not a mechanism to expand black communities' territories, but a governmental strategy to formalise the property of the land these communities were occupying since their arrival in the region. The titling of collective territories excluded pre-existing private property, areas of natural reserves and natural parks, areas of urban expansion and indigenous territories (Domínguez Mejía, 2017).

Furthermore, the law establishes that, in order to acquire a collective title, every community has to structure a community council as an internal administration. The tasks of the community councils are the following: "to watch over the conservation and protection of the rights of collective property, the preservation of cultural identity, the use and conservation of natural resources; to identify a legal representative from the respective community as their legal entity, and to act as friendly conciliators in workable internal conflicts" (Ley 70, 1993, Art. 5).

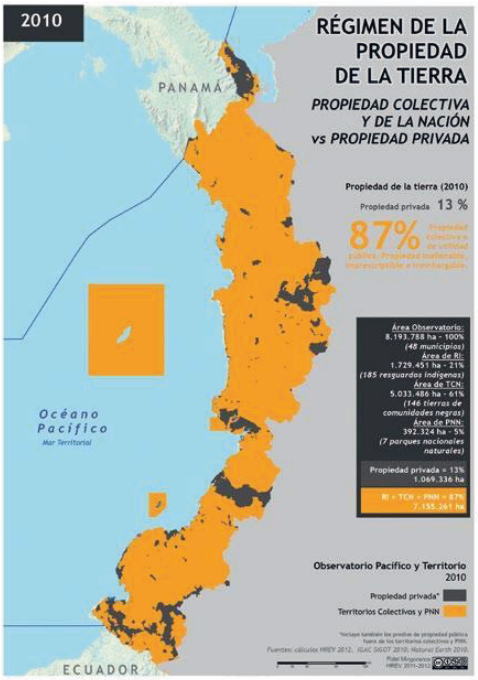
Chapter IV of Law 70 establishes the uses of the land within the parameters of traditional practices. The law prioritises subsistence economy of the territory over non-traditional

activities. It provides that "hunting, fishing or the harvesting of products for subsistence will have preference over any other quasi-industrial, industrial, or sports interest" (Ley 70, 1993, Art. 19). Furthermore, the law limits the activities of black communities with the purpose of environmental conservation and the reproduction of traditional practices:

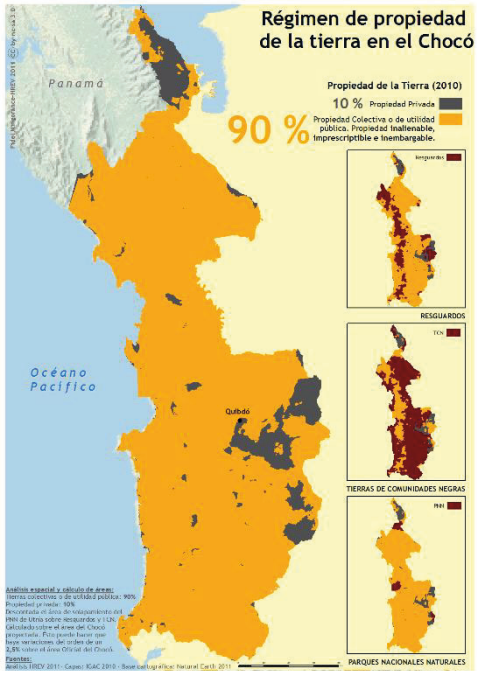
> Black Communities which are part of the groups receiving collective title will continue to maintain, preserve, and favour the renewal of the vegetation that protects the waters, and to guarantee, through adequate use, the preservation of particularly fragile ecosystems such as mangroves and wetlands, and to protect and preserve species of wild fauna and flora that are threatened or that are in danger of extinction (Ley 70, 1993, Art. 21).

To close this section, Map 3 and Map 4 illustrate land ownership in the Pacific region and Chocó. In Map 3, 87% (in orange colour) of the land belongs to either National Natural Parks or collective territories. In the case of Chocó, the percentage of collective territories and National Natural Parks is 90%. With these two figures, it is possible to grasp the magnitude and dimension of the law that black communities managed to attain.

Map 3. Land ownership in the Pacific region



Map 4. Land ownership in Chocó



Source. Estrada Álvarez, J., Moreno Rubio, S., Ordóñez Gómez, F., Moore Torres, C., Naranjo, J. E., & Jiménez, C. A. (2013). Procesos socio-territoriales Pacífico: Itinerarios y tendencias. Bogotá: ILSA, Instituto para una Sociedad y un Derecho Alternativos.

4.3. Looking beyond achievements: a critical approach to Law 70 of 1993

Acknowledging the importance of Law 70 for black communities in Colombia, there are two main intertwined criticisms that enrich the discussion of the law and its recognition of the autonomy and self-determination of non-western collectivities. First, the law leaves most of the marginalised afro-Colombian collectivities of the country as second-class citizens. The law excludes black communities from the Caribbean coast or the Archipelago of San Andrés because their cultural practices do not fall under the notion of "traditional" or "original." At the same time, that the law affirms and recognises the existence of a particular social ontology – that of the black rural Pacific basin – while invisibilising other black populations in Colombia. In relation to this critique, the second aspect refers to the simultaneity of acknowledging black communities in the rural Pacific and retracting of the state as part of the implementation of neoliberal policies. In other words, the second critique refers to what Hale (2002) calls "multicultural neoliberalism."

As for the first critique, Law 70 literally states that it only includes black people "that have been living on barren lands in rural areas along the rivers of the Pacific Basin, in accordance with their traditional production practices, to their collective property as specified and instructed in the articles that follow" (*Law 70 of 1993. In Recognition of the Right of Black Colombians to Collectively Own and Occupy their Ancestral Lands*, 1993). With the ethnicisation of blackness in Colombia, this definition of what it means to be black limits a myriad of other possible identifications. Namely, establishing a standardised definition of blackness in the country closes the discussion as to the multiple and diverse possible black identities. As Cunin (2003) argues, "by objectifying an essential ethnicity defined in terms of territory, community and tradition inspired by the indigenous model, the question about the identification of black is resolved even before it is formulated" (Cunin, 2003, 33).[63]

This critique relies on the fact that the law defines blackness as a single, univocal dialectical relationship between social ontology and practice, excluding a vast diversity of black social ontologies and their performances (see Section 6.3). What is more, black peoples from different parts of Colombia, in order to achieve the rights stated in this law, such as collective territories, have to prove the existence of certain practices considered "traditional" by the state:

> In other words, the priority is given to the Pacific, not only in legislative texts but also in the definition of ethnicity, since the "other black populations" must have the same characteristics as those in the Pacific, almost unattainable condition given the

[63] Henceforth, my own translation from: Cunin, E. (2003). Identidades a flor de piel: Lo "negro" entre apariencias y pertenencias: Categorías raciales y mestizaje en Cartagena (Colombia). IFEA-ICANH-Uniandes-Observatorio del Caribe Colombiano.

> geographical, demographic, economic and cultural conditions so particular of the Pacific region (Cunin, 2003, 34).

As for the second critique, it is necessary to understand that "multicultural neoliberalism" is a project that seeks to "harness and redirect the abundant political energy of cultural rights activism, rather than directly to oppose it. A principal means to achieve this re-direction is the strategic deployment of resources, which rewards organisations that promote acceptable cultural rights demands, and punishes the others" (Hale, 2002, 498). Furthermore, to distinguish those acceptable or punishable cultural demands, the state has "to turn ethnographic; to produce a fine-grained account of political interactions, with particular attention to the consciousness and practice of those most directly involved in processes of 'subject-making'" (Hale, 2002, 498).

In the same vein, analysing the case of Bolivia, Rivera Cusicanqui (2010) argues that, under neoliberalism, the idea of multiculturalism became ornamental and "symbolic formulas such as 'ethnotourism' and 'ecotourism,' which put into play the theatricalization of the 'original' condition, anchored in the past and incapable of driving its own destiny" (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2010, 58).[64] That argument suggests that, to certain extent, with the ethnicisation of blackness in Colombia and its rooting in an essential condition of blackness, the collectivities lost some of their capacity to claim their rights, reinvent their identities and foster societal transformations:

> Either for fear of the mob or for following the agenda of its funders, the elites are sensitized to the demands of recognition and political participation of the indigenous social movements, and adopt a rhetorical and essentialist discourse, centred on the notion of "native peoples." The recognition – limited, conditioned and reluctantly – of indigenous cultural and territorial rights thus allowed the recycling of elites and the continuity of their monopoly in the exercise of power (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2010, 58-59).

Over the long term, neoliberal multiculturalism is the strategy of ignoring the fact that non-western collectivities are the majority and denying their potential hegemonic vocation and capacity to have transformative effects on the state:

> The official multiculturalism described above has been the cover-up mechanism par excellence of the new forms of colonization. The elites adopt a strategy of transvestism and articulate new schemes of co-optation and neutralization. This reproduces a 'conditioned inclusion,' a shortened and second-class citizenship, which

[64] Henceforth, my own translation from: Rivera Cusicanqui, S. (2010). Ch'ixinakax utxiwa. Una reflexión sobre prácticas y discursos descolonizadores. Tinta limón.

> shapes imaginary and subalternised identities to the role of anonymous ornaments or masses that theatricalize their own identity (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2010, 60).

In the same vein, Rivera Cusicanqui (2010) states that labelling collectivities as "traditional" or "original" deny their coetaneity and exclude them from the struggle over the present and the future for they "are granted a residual status, and in fact, they become minorities, typecast in indigenist stereotypes of the good savage guardian of nature" (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2010, 59). What is more, the same author argues that essentialising certain collectivities also denies territorial, economic, cultural and social vindication of other possible collectivities. Although Rivera Cusicanqui (2010) refers to Bolivia, in the case of Colombia, beyond other black collectivities, the law left out collectivities such as peasants, some indigenous communities, traditional mining areas, cities and intercultural trading networks and smuggling.

In brief, by governing the purpose of cultural demands, multicultural neoliberalism becomes the most effective way of controlling social movements that challenge both relations of representations and the distribution of resources – those social movements that tackle the micro and macro levels of power by challenging the structural inequalities intrinsic to modernity, developmentalism and capitalism. Although neoliberal multiculturalism promotes certain cultural rights and certain forms of access to goods and services, it always does so under the premises of capitalism and developmentalism, ergo it does not consider local social ontologies or forms of existence. In that sense, neoliberal multiculturalism, although representing an innovation compared to former approaches, is hardly transformative:

> Maya cultural rights activism, for example, may invert dominant relations of representation, while remaining at the margins, resource starved, without the power to influence decisions taken by the state and powerful institutions. Similarly, Mayan communities host myriad development initiatives, which promise (and at times even deliver) improvements in community members' material well-being, yet at the same time reinforce a symbolic order that saps the energy for collective, autonomous Maya empowerment (Hale, 2002, 498).

Furthermore, neoliberal multiculturalism blames the collectivities for the ominous consequences of the economic model, not the neoliberal economic policies themselves. In the name of autonomy, governments retract their presence and reduce their actions to specific developmental projects. As numerous authors argue (Domínguez Mejía, 2017; Gros, 2012; Hale, 2002; Pardo Rojas, 2002), in the name of the autonomy of indigenous and black communities, the state withdraws its direct, active public policy. The collectivities have to invest all their organisational energies, political capital and capacity in finding resources and projects to ensure their own survive as collectivities and perform the practices necessary for

the recreation of their social ontologies. According to Gros (2012), with multicultural neoliberalism, the state operates in a new language:

> The State also intervenes in what still constitutes the primary organizational base of the indigenous world. That is, in the local community, by assigning specific resources (linked to its character as an indigenous community) and recognizing various forms of *autonomy*,[65] and consequently makes it the basis of its new action. […] Thus, organized around the figure of the supposedly autonomous indigenous territories and under the control of their traditional (legitimate) authorities in the role of mediators and agents of change, in these communities falls the task of implementing and executing programs of local development (ethno-development in official jargon). In this scenario, the State intervenes with all its weight, but with a new language trying to permeate the communities with its rationality and its instrumental modernity (Gros, 2012, 106).[66]

This new language is what Domínguez Mejía (2017) calls "projectism." With this term, which could also be termed "projectitis" to show its pathological nature, the author refers to the presence of the state in terms of financing small projects whose responsibility for design, management and execution falls to the community (Domínguez Mejía, 2017):

> Through "projectism," the State delegates to the communities the responsibility of deciding on the minors of social policies, under the inclusion of co-participation in specific projects that, in any case, must be approved and financed by the central State (Domínguez Mejía, 2017, 264).[67]

Moreover, Pardo Rojas (2002) argues that the dependency of the community councils on state projects have diminished and fragmented the black social movement for two main reasons. First, every regional or local faction of the movement, in the urgency of finding resource and projects, reduces its scope and loses the sight of the national agenda. That is, as Rivera Cusicanqui (2010) stated, communities lose their transformative capacity and their capacity to confront hegemonic discourse.

Second, dependency on projects has forced community councils and their individual members to act as employees or consultants, of national, regional or local organisation that at times work against both the interests of the collectivity and the re-creation of their social ontology:

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[65] Italics in the original.

[66] Henceforth, my own translation from: Gros, C. (2012). *Políticas de la etnicidad: Identidad, Estado y modernidad*. Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia.

[67] Henceforth, my own translation from: Domínguez Mejía, M. I. (2017). *Territorios colectivos: Proceso de formación del Estado en el Pacífico colombiano (1993-2009)*. Universidad de Antioquia.

> This circumstance [dependency on projectism] has diminished the initiative of black organizations and their ability to innovate ideological and organizational parameters. In addition, the traditional dependence of the Pacific region to the State resources for political action has influenced the organizational style of the black movement, which frequently prioritize obtaining official resources over the extension of the scope of the political agenda. […] The participation of black organizations and people in the planning and management concerning the black population, derived from Law 70 and its territories, has accentuated factionalism and decreased organizational dynamism as organizations entered to compete for official prominence and recognition, and the coordination scenarios of the black movement at the sub-regional, departmental and national levels have weakened (Pardo Rojas, 2002).[68]

To illustrate this point, the current president of Community Council Los Riscales in Nuquí argues that most of the efforts of the organisation go to finding resources provided by means of international cooperation, the state or NGOs. They find their autonomy and transformative capacity limited by the need to find resources:

> A great weakness that left the norm that regulated the Community Council was that it did not leave resources, of any nature. We do not receive resources from the State. That is in decree 1746 of 95, which regulates Law 70 of 93. It left us with enormous power in terms of land, but without a peso.[69] So what we have do here is the following: submit projects to the public sector, to the private sector, to the ONGs, to whoever appears, to the dog and the cat that offers us sources of financing for a project, or we make an inter-administrative agreement or contract (Interview President of the Los Riscales Community Council, April 2019).

In this sense, despite the multiple efforts that community councils might make, instead of working towards the constitution of the well-being and autonomy of the collectivities, most community council work focuses on applying for for funding from international cooperation, NGOs and the state. The reduction of the autonomy of community councils to their capacity to formulate projects for funding reflects pathological "projectitis," part of the notion of neoliberal multiculturalism. The most important activity of the board and the president of the community council is finding resources to support themselves, not as a collectivity but as a non-profit entity. This limitation diminishes the transformative dimensions of black collectivities in the area, as well as their capacity to challenge hegemonic discourse:

> So what does one have to do as a legal representative or chairman of the board of directors? Look for projects to turn off those 12 or 15 million (between €3,200 and

[68] Henceforth, my own translation from: Pardo Rojas, M. (2002). Entre la autonomía y la institucionalización: Dilemas del movimiento negro colombiano. *Journal of Latin American Anthropology*, *7*(2), 60–84.
[69] The Colombian peso is the currency of the country.

> €4,200) that are the administrative costs for us. Our office is there [points out]. We have to pay an accountant, pay a cleaner, rent, stationery, and services, pay the motorist, etc. Those on the board have no salary. What do we have to look for? The game is the following. Look for proposals, sign them and, in the proposals for implementing there is always an AIU issue (overhead, contingencies and profit for its acronym in Spanish). Then the utility that you are going to have for implementing a project or a program are the resources to supply that. In the project, you put all that administrative issue to be able to relieve the burdens, when you do not put it into a project that becomes a problem (Interview President Community Council Los Riscales – Nuquí April 2019).

At this point, it is necessary to consider the role of the state in the implementation of neoliberal multiculturalism. This dynamic is not as simplistic as a Machiavellian structure that rationally gives limited power to non-western collectivities in order to control them and expand its power. As Domínguez Mejía (2017) argues, to understand the role of the state in the elaboration of the Constitution of 1991 and in the implementation of Law 70 of 1993, it is necessary to take it as a complex system with different actors, agendas and purposes. That means taking the state as a system within which "operate multiple individual and collective actors with different logics, even contradictory, and always with unequal capacities and possibilities to influence in the design and implement politics, plans and programs" (Domínguez Mejía, 2017, 72). These unequal capacities and possibilities respond to the specific positions that given actors (collective or individually) have inside the system. Among others, the hierarchical relation of policymaking responds to international pressure, economic interests, lobbying and clientelism and explains the reproduction of the *status quo* as part of the agenda of the state.

Briefly, under this understanding of the state, the accomplishments of black communities with Law 70 and its side effects respond to a dispute within the different hierarchically organised actors within the state and between the state itself and its interlocutors – in this case, the black social movements:

> It is necessary to carefully analyse the contents of the different proposals for autonomy, as they come from the State or from defined ethnic organizations and communities. While for the State the autonomy granted to indigenous peoples must be understood in the context of the demands of governance and legitimacy, from the indigenous peoples autonomy appears strongly linked to a counter-hegemonic project (Domínguez Mejía, 2017, 265).

To close, beyond the impact of Law 70 of 1993, it is important to stress two main conclusions. First, the black political subject is broadening into a more diverse and heterogeneous character. Due to the marginalisation of and discrimination against blackness in Colombia,

the transnationalisation of social movements and the international agenda against racism, new political demands from black communities settled in the Pacific basin have fostered new approaches that strive to redefine the political and theoretical images that think blackness in the country. Therefore, beyond the diversification of the black political subject, during the 1990s and early 2000s, other marginalised collectivities such as peasants, Romani, Raizals and Palenqueros have deployed similar strategies to advance the vindication of their rights.

Second, while acknowledging the achievements of the law, it is important to stress the risks of essentialising a collectivity and limiting its transformative capacity (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2010), for it "may be playing into the hands of those whose essentialism is more powerful than their own – whether they are researchers, editors, politicians or empire-builders" (Eide, 2010, 76).

Summing up

The chapter analysed the historical and political process by which black communities in the Pacific basin of Colombia managed to issue a law to secure collective ownership of land and specific ethnic rights. Moreover, the chapter summarizes the settlement process of black peoples in the region: first as enslaved workers, later as black peasants and finally as ethnic collectivities with particular rights over their territories. As part of a double historical movement that stressed the importance of the environment and the emergence of a multicultural state discourse, black communities began a process of ethnicisation that converted them into ethnic subjects. Materialised in Law 70 of 1993, this process of ethnicisation represents the culmination of a particular form of struggle to secure, at least on the paper, collective ownership of the territory and the reproduction of a particular form of inhabiting and relating to the space.

However, as part of the constitution of the multicultural state under neoliberalism, Law 70 of 1993 presents a series of obstacles to the political struggle of these communities, as it tends to hinder the political efforts of black collectivities in their struggle for autonomy and self-determination.

In that sense, besides narrating the settlement process of black communities, this chapter described the political process carried out by these collectivities during the twentieth century to understand the political struggle for particular rights and their constitution as an ethnic group. After *The Colombian Pacific Region: history of a settlement*, *Institutional struggle of black communities: the Constitution of 1991 and 70 Law of 1993* focused on the historical struggle waged by black collectivities in order to achieve institutional recognition since the early twentieth century.

Last, the section *Looking beyond achievements: a critical approach to Law 70 of 1993* provided a critical perspective on Law 70 of 1993. After acknowledging the importance of this law, this section questioned its belonging to neoliberal multiculturalism discourses and its tendency to hinder of ethnic social movements as a processes with national scope and a hegemonic capacity.

5. Understanding socio-territorial conflicts: political ontology, reality as enacted practices and complex thinking.

Drawing upon the idea that socio-territorial conflicts are not limited to either the environment or the land itself but actually imply ontological disputes, the present section draws upon a variety of theoretical tools to understand the complexity of the dispute over the Gulf of Tribugá. With that in mind, the present section brings into the discussion a variety of elements that shed some light on the complexity of ontological disputes and the magnitude of what is at stake in the particular case of the dispute currently taking place in the Gulf of Tribugá.

Grounding these theoretical concepts in the ethnographical record, the following lines mainly deal with the notion of political ontology as the encompassing element of the analysis. To do so, this section tries to understand the conceptualisation of reality as enacted practice, the main characteristics of relational ontology compared to other ontological formations and the logic behind complex thinking, referring to assemblage thinking and ANT.

Within the scope of political ontology as the understanding of socio-territorial conflicts as ontological, in order to provide a complex understanding of what is at stake in the dispute currently taking place in the Gulf of Tribugá, this section puts the above mentioned theoretical contributions in dialogue with one another. With this in mind, this chapter is divided in three main parts.

First, *Political ontology: theoretical tools to understand socio-territorial conflicts* provides a general understating of the notion of political ontology and argues that the core of socio-territorial disputes, such as the one taking place in the Gulf of Tribugá, is neither land nor its resources but the conditions of existence and existence itself. In short, such conflicts are ontological in that they dispute reality itself. Moreover, in dialogue with the notion of ontological struggles, this section draws on the notion of social ontology as the complex fundament that frames both the conditions and type of existence for every entity.

Second, *Towards and understanding of reality as enacted practice* analyses the idea of reality as enacted, as an emergent category, rather than something fixed or predetermined. Considering that the emergence of reality depends on entities and their actions, any give reality is multiple, malleable and in constant interaction and negotiation with other realities. This understanding of reality defies the naturalistic notion of nature, very much instrumentalised by neoliberal multiculturalism and Eurocentrism, which argues there is one single reality with multiple interpretations.

Third, *Relational ontology, assemblage thinking and actor-network theory* seeks to create a dialogue between these three perspectives. By doing so, this section proposes a new conceptualisation that, drawing upon elements of both assemblage thinking and ANT,

broadens them and proposes an understanding of reality that results from the diverse and complex interactions between human and non-human entities. Such interactions, as constitutive of reality, produce, re-produce and transform specific materialisations of reality on multi-scaled levels.

5.1. Political ontology: theoretical tools to understand socio-territorial conflicts

Before analysing each of these elements, it is important to understand the implications and scope of political ontology as the analytical concept necessary for grasping the ontological nature of socio-territorial conflicts. Considering that recent years have witnessed an academic turn from the epistemological towards the ontological (Escobar, 2008; Viveiros de Castro, 2015), questioning anthropocentrism as the lens to understand humanity (Braidotti, 2013), the analysis of socio-territorial conflict requires a theoretical revision. The reduction of socio-territorial conflicts to matters of access to land and resources not yet fully exploited by capitalism does not contemplate, or has not yet contemplated, the ontological nature of these disputes. Besides the protection of certain environments and ecosystems, this debate should focus on the disputes over concrete ontologies and social ontologies that take place in particular time-space circumstances.

Considering that ontologies emerge and re-create themselves under particular time-space circumstances, the contributions of Phillipe Descola (2013) are a breaking point: his work helps questioning the western idea of a single, universal ontology. By localising ontologies in particular time-space frames, Descola's work carries two main implications concerning political ontology. First, it provincialises and denaturalises the modern ontological configuration and presents it just as one among many others. Second, it recognises the existence of multiple mechanisms that establish and distribute what exists, as well as their mutual relations:

> "To this end, we need first to show that the opposition between nature and culture is not as universal as it is claimed to be. Not only does it make no sense to anyone except the Moderns, but moreover it appeared only at a late date in the course of the development of Western thought itself, in which its consequences made a singularly forceful impact on the manner in which anthropology has envisaged both its object and its methods" (Descola, 2013, XVIII).

Briefly, the four clusters consist on the following:

1. Naturalism: it divides every existing entity into two main groups: the natural and the cultural; the non-human and the human. Based on the dualist nature of modernity, this cluster belongs to Cartesianism and its separation of humanity and nature.

2. Totemism: the differences between natural species become a mechanism for social distinction. Certain groups metaphorically carry specificities of the non-human with which humans identify themselves. Present in many collectivities in the Americas, totemism ascribes to plants a spiritual principle of their own and considers it possible to maintain personal relationships with those entities.
3. Analogism: it divides every existing being into a multiplicity of essences, forms and substances. These forms, essences and substances are present, repeat and replicate themselves on both micro and macro scales. This cluster is present in different parts of the world, such as China and some African indigenous communities. As an example, in the latter iteration, social disorder is capable of provoking climate catastrophes.
4. Animism: it does not use plants and animals to conceptualise the social order as happens under totemism; it employs "elementary categories of social practice to think through the links of humans with natural beings" (Descola, 2013, 213). Present in many parts of the world, such as the Amazon, animism imbues the relations between humans and non-humans with a social character. Under animisms, the connection between human and nature is social.

Considering the foundational differences between ontologies, it is necessary to understand the notions of social ontology, socioculture and assemblage, as well as the possible dialogue they may have with some of the elements from Descola's quadrant and the insight they provide in discussing political ontology. Going beyond the definition of ontology as the study of existing entities and the connections among them,[70] the notion of social ontology seeks to identify the embodied structures that define what a collectivity is, how does it structures itself, and what entities are allowed or able to become part of it (Baumann & Bultman, 2020).

Exceeding the identification of the conditions of possibilities of existence, social ontology focuses on intrinsic systems of social classification, sets of meanings and symbolic values subconsciously shared by members of a given collectivity. Moreover, according to Baumann & Rehbein (2020), social ontologies as systems of social classification works as mechanisms of assessment for entities within a given collectivity and other collectivities, for it defines the embedded limits of behaviour and the roles of individuals and social groups inside and outside the collectivity. As the authors argue, the embodiment of social ontologies in the everyday background knowledges, institutions, practices and *habitus* "expresses deep, encompassing structures of society that are enshrined in language and incorporated over a given life-course. Within each structure, certain things are taken for granted – some thoughts are possible only for certain social groups, and many things are even unthinkable" (Baumann

[70] A definition of "ontology" from a dictionary would argue that ontology is the study of what exists, the conditions of existence of such entities and the kinds of relationships between existing entities: "the borders here are a little fuzzy. But we have at least two parts to the overall philosophical project of ontology, on our preliminary understanding of it: first, say what there is, what exists, what the stuff is reality is made out of, secondly, say what the most general features and relations of these things are" (Hofweber, 2018).

& Rehbein, 2020, 11). In short, this understanding of social ontology refers to systems of social classification, sets of meanings and symbolic values of a collectivity that materialise through practices, institutions and *habitus.*

Of great relevance, this definition of social ontology allows for the broadening of the notions of both collectivity and ontology. First, it allows thinking of more-than-human and other-than-human entities as members of collectivities.[71] Acknowledging the existence of more-than-human and other-than-human entities in a collectivity means that the social classification of certain collectivities may include entities such as animals, landforms, plants, ancestors and spirits (among a vast list), all of which have specific status, roles, influences and relationships. Broadening the definition of "collectivity" to include other-than-human and more-than-human entities does not only increase the understanding of particular collectivities but also innovates in terms of understanding the active roles that such entities play inside collectivities, their decision-making, their strategies of inhabiting space, their defence of territory and their claims over particular rights.

Partially mentioned above, this conceptualisation of social ontology creates two particular dialogues of interest. First, to the extent that certain collectivities include other-than- and more-than-human entities in their groups and give them specific roles and places, the concept of social ontology relates to the ontologies identified by Descola (2013) as animism and analogism. Likewise, by including other-than-human and more-than-human entities in the collectivity and considering the way in which collectivities define themselves, this understanding of social ontology opens up discussion about socio-territorial conflict, territorial rights and political ontology, for it sets important challenges in the constitution of a plural world beyond neoliberal multiculturalism.

Second, it recognises the fact that ontologies and social ontologies materialise through practices in specific temporary spatial circumstances. One of the most innovative elements provided by Baumann & Rehbein (2020) in their definition of social ontology is acknowledging that the materialisation of social ontologies happens through practices, institutions and *habitus*. Besides being in tune with the notion of *Dasein* described in Section 2.1 in its acknowledgement of ontology as contextual, it recognises that the socio-ontological features of collectivities are a malleable, open-ended singularities defined and re-created by environmental, historical and political conditions and by the practices that enact them.

[71] For the sake of conceptual clarity, a few meanings: i) "more-than-human" refers to those entities that, although without human form, contain traits of human ontology. Among other elements, they might be landforms, animals or spirits; ii) "other-than-human" refers to those entities that, although do not have human ontological traits, have agency and actively interact with humans. Although not human, they are active agents inside the collectivity. They could also be landforms, animals or spirits; iii) "non-human" refers to those entities without either human form or human ontological traits. Notwithstanding this non-human ontological status, these entities and elements may have an active or passive role according to the social ontology of the collectivity. Not only may entities that share a complete or partial human ontological condition have agency and specific roles inside the collectivity – on the contrary, according to the ontology of naturalism (characteristic of modernity), these non-human entities have a passive ontological status. They do not establish interactions with humans, but they are materialities for human use.

Moreover, based on a practice-oriented understanding of social ontologies, it is possible to argue that human, other-than-human and more-than-human members of collectivities constantly enact or perform the social ontology that define and condition them. Additionally, understanding practices as the materialisations of social ontologies means that social ontologies can transform as practices change. The relationship between social ontologies and practices is dialectical, as the reproduction of each simultaneously conditions and depends on the other.

The dialectical relationship between social ontologies and practices, institutions and *habitus* implies that the transformation of the latter may change the social classifications, sets of meanings and symbolic values of a given collectivity. The alteration of practices may signify the inclusion or exclusion of certain entities in or from the community, as well as the ways in which they relate to each other. Along this vein, given that the transformation of practices may modify the social ontologies of collectivities, changing practices may also imply the transformation of the conditions of existence and the characteristics of such existence. Ultimately, the transformation of the conditions of existence through the transformation of practices opens up a discussion regarding the ontological constitution of reality; it opens up the discussion of reality as enacted practice.

The discussion of the materialisation and persistence of social ontologies through practices, institutions and *habitus* brings up the notion of "socioculture." Sociocultures are reproductions of historical social structures embodied in individuals and collectivities that materialise them through practices, institutions and *habitus.* In other words, sociocultures are historical sets of actions, attitudes, behaviours, imaginaries and organisations that persist through time and respond to the historical paths, connections or transformations of each collectivity. A collectivity may have a series of co-existing sociocultures or, according to their past and their present, may have partial connections with other sociocultures. As Baumann & Bultman (2020) put it, the notion of socioculture "captures the diachronic dimension of social structures [… and] how they persist in the present in habitualized and institutionalized forms" (Baumann & Bultman, 2020).

The notion of socioculture allows for the identification of multiple co-existing sets of historically reproduced social structures performed through a series of practices. Moreover, as will be analysed in the section dedicated to the Gulf of Tribugá, the complexity of practices, institutions and *habitus* enacted in a territory may not only respond to co-existing sociocultures but also co-existing social ontologies. Sociocultures that belong to different "traditions" can co-exist in a single collectivity and compete, negotiate or nurture each other, revealing co-existing features of different social ontologies. In short, "socioculture" refers to those historically acquired, co-existing embodied patterns of practices, institutions and *habitus* that reflect deep roots in social structures and foster the reproduction of a given social ontology. As Baumann & Rehbein argue, "remnants of sociocultures exist and continue to

shape contemporary habitus, institutions, and official imaginations of the social" (Baumann & Rehbein, 2020, 13).

To close this section, challenging the modern notion of a single naturalist ontology, the work of Descola (2013) contributes to the analysis of social ontologies in that he identifies the social character of interactions between humans, more-than-humans and other-than-humans. Collectivities that include specific roles for other-than-human and more-than-human entities break with the idea of a single dualist ontology. Moreover, the provincialisation of western naturalism and the opening of the idea of "social ontology" beyond an exclusively human realm to include other-than-human and more-than-human entities in the notion of "collectivity" provide necessary theoretical elements for the analysis of socio-territorial conflicts as ontological disputes. Rather than limiting the discussion to the neoliberal form of multiculturalism, including entities beyond human entities in the notion of social ontology allows for a broader discussion that focuses on the ontology of the collectivity, its conditions of existence and the conditions of the interactions both within the collectivity and with external actors. Considering that political ontology centres the discussion on possible differences between conditions of existence in particular time-space contexts, what is at stake in the dispute in the Gulf of Tribugá is black social ontology and the actual existence of the entities that participate in the black social configuration.

Acknowledging the ontological nature of this dispute, in addition to thinking social ontologies as practice-oriented, allows its real dimension and magnitude to be grasped. Black collectivities are not only struggling for the preservation of the environment; particularly, it is a dispute over what exists, the conditions of existence, the relationships between existing entities and the roles of existing entities in- and outside the collectivity.

5.2. Towards an understanding of reality as enacted practice

> *"This idea must be well understood: the truth is not verified, but the verification process itself is what makes the truth happen, therefore, the truth is the verification process, the truth is the process"* (Viaña & Claros, 2009, 108).

Now that it has been established that collectivities reproduce and recreate social ontologies through specific sociocultures, the notion of "reality as enacted practice" may help in understanding the implications of political ontology and the ontological nature of the dispute over the Gulf of Tribugá. As discussed earlier, when it comes to ontology, what is at stake is the definition of which entities exist, under what conditions and in relation to what. Moreover, as described above, in addition to defining the systems of social classification, sets of meanings and symbolic values, social ontologies also define which entities are part of or exists within the collectivity, as well as the roles and relationships that existing entities have with other entities inside and outside the collectivity. If ontological questions focus on

what exists and the conditions of existence, social ontology questions what exists as part of a given collectivity, the conditions of existence within that collectivity and the meanings, values and relations attributed to those existing entities. Now, if the question of social ontology concerns the conditions of existence of a given entity and if social ontologies materialise through sets of practices, institutions and *habitus*, it is through the sociocultures embedded and embodied in members of a collectivity that entities acquire their ontological nature and the conditions of their existence. In short, those practices, institutions and *habitus* constitute or construct reality, for they define and re-create the conditions of existence of human, more-than-human and other-than-human beings.

Although two of the most important approaches towards "reality as enacted practice" come from anthropology, it develops in different scenarios. The first approach, by Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (1998, 2004, 2015, 2019), takes the experience of the author in the Brazilian Amazon to argue that, rather than "multi-perspectival," reality is "multi-natural" – that there are multiple realities. As for the second approach, based on the study of medical praxis in Western Europe, Annemarie Mol (1999, 2002) argues that specific diseases emerge differently according to the medical praxis that performs and observes it – that is, the nature of a given disease changes according to the practice that enacts it.

The analysis provided by Viveiros de Castro challenges two main elements of modern conceptions of reality and absolute truth. By questioning the modern idea of reality as a fixed and constant fact, the author proposes that collectivities with ontologically different entities are constantly constructing reality through enactments and performances. As described in the first chapter of this research and highlighted above with the definition of "naturalism" provided by Descola (2013), one of the most important features of modernity is its dualistic division between humans and nature. In this perspective, while humans are malleable in terms of history and different contexts, reality is pre-established and continuous. According to this divide, one single and fixed reality becomes the object of a variety of forms of appropriation, interpretation and study by external human entities. Those different understandings of a single immutable nature (named "cultural interpretations of reality") might be closer to or further from a veracious comprehension of the actual nature of reality. According to the modern perspective, the epistemology best equipped to truly grasp reality is modern science (see Section 1.2). From the notion of one single nature with multiple interpretations come the liberal and neoliberal perspectives of multiculturalism in which all interpretations are relatively valid as long as they do not compete or contradict the scientific version of reality, for it is the one that provides absolute truth (see Section 1.2).

Inspired by Amerindian perspectivist cosmologies and in dialogue with Descola (2013), Viveiros de Castro (1998, 2004) argues that anthropology has to overcome limiting itself to criticising modern dualisms and, instead, propose non-Eurocentric explanations of reality. The question of Amerindian perspectivism does not only revolve around how animals,

humans and spirits perceive themselves but how certain conditions and interactions between animals, humans and spirits may transform their ontological conditions:

> Typically, in normal conditions, humans see humans as humans, animals as animals and spirits (if they see them) as spirits; however animals (predators) and spirits see humans as animals (as prey) to the same extent that animals (as prey) see humans as spirits or as animals (predators). By the same token, animals and spirits see themselves as humans: they perceive themselves as (or become) anthropomorphic beings when they are in their own houses or villages and they experience their own habits and characteristics in the form of culture - they see their food as human food (jaguars see blood as manioc beer, vultures see the maggots in rotting meat as grilled fish, etc.), they see their bodily attributes (fur, feathers, claws, beaks etc.) as body decorations or cultural instruments, they see their social system as organized in the same way as human institutions are (with chiefs, shamans, ceremonies, exogamous moieties, etc.). This "to see as" refers literally to percepts and not analogically to concepts, although (Viveiros De Castro, 1998, 471).

Following the quote above, this analysis of Amerindian perspectivism breaks with that of western relativism, for the differences between how animals see humans does not vary due to cultural representations of reality but because reality itself changes. As the author puts it, "all beings see ('represent') the world in the same way – what changes is the world that they see" (Viveiros De Castro, 1998, 477). Just as humans do, animals impose the same categories and values on reality; what changes is not the representing eye but reality as such. Similar to the human world, animals' worlds revolve around hunting, fishing, cooking, drinking, initiation rituals, wars, spirits and any other activity that humans do; what changes is the sphere of existence – reality – not the perspectives of the subjects:

> But the things *that* they see are different. Again, what to us is blood is maize beer to the jaguar; what to us is soaking manioc is, to the souls of the dead, a rotting corpse; what is a muddy waterhole to us is for the tapirs a great ceremonial house (Viveiros de Castro, 2004, 472).[72]

Related to the discussion of multi-naturalism, the Amerindian ontological understanding of reality provides more elements that enrich the ontological turn towards the idea of reality as enacted practice. In Viveiros de Castro's (2004) analysis, unlike the western tradition that endorses objects as self-contained substances acquired by virtue of their intrinsic properties (e.g., tress and rivers have certain intrinsic attributes that make them trees and rivers by themselves), Amerindian perspectivism takes objects as relational pointers. Similar to kinship logic, wherein one is something only in relation to another (a mother is a mother only

[72] Italics in the original.

because someone is her child, not due to innate conditions), Amerindian logic argues that objects are things not because of an intrinsic nature but because they exist in relation to something or someone else. What is more, stepping away from cultural relativism, the argument stands that the relationship between entities A and B is not *representational* but *genitive*: a person is not the son "for" another person but "of" another person. It is not from the point of view of a person that someone is her/his son, but it is an objective fact:

> But saying that crickets are the fish of the dead or that mud is the hammock of tapirs is like saying that my sister Isabel's son, Miguel, is my nephew […] there is no relativism involved. […] This is a genitive, internal relation (my sister is the mother of someone, our cricket the fish of someone) and not a representational, external connection of the type "X is fish for someone," which implies that X is "represented" as fish, whatever X is "in itself." It would be absurd to say that, since Miguel is the son of Isabel but not mine, then Miguel is not a son "for me" – for indeed he is. He is my sister's son, precisely (Viveiros de Castro, 2004, 473).

In short, according to this perspective, the conditions of existence of any entity emerge in relation to another entity (or set of entities) that dialectically provides its ontological characteristics. I am a son because someone is my mother, because I am the son of someone: "something is a fish only by virtue of someone else whose fish it is" (Viveiros de Castro, 2004, 473). That is, a fish is a fish because someone conceives it, use it and, particularly, performs practices upon or towards it as a fish. What makes a fish a fish is not an intrinsic self-contained fish-ness but the practices and relationships with those who see a fish and act upon the fish as such. For the author, this logic proposes a 100% relational reality in which there is no distinction between brute facts and cultural facts. Under this 100% relational reality or ontology, there are not autonomous, self-contained elements but, rather, ontological transformations that emerge from the dialectical relationships entities have with those who interact with them.

This notion of reality as the emergence of a dialectical relationship between two entities brings up the second contribution to the idea of "reality as enacted practice." In this case, an ethnological approach to medical praxis in Western Europe provides the elements for arguing that reality varies according to the practices that enact it. Mol (1999, 2002) argues that, to understand the emergence of reality, one should combine the words "ontology" and "politics" – not as "political ontology" but as "ontological politics" – to question the immanence of reality. According to the author, if "ontology" refers to the conditions of possibility of existence, adding the notion of politics suggests that conditions of possibility are not given but emergent. As Mol puts it, "reality does not precede the mundane practices in which we interact with it, but is rather shaped within these practices. So the term politics works to underline this active mode, this process of shaping, and the fact that its character is both open and contested" (Mol, 1999, 75).

In line with Viveiros de Castro's (1998, 2004), Mol (1999, 2002) suggests that, instead of talking about one single reality, as long as conditions of existence are subject to change given their historical and cultural location, the conversation should be about multiple, simultaneous realities. Although ontological politics borrow some notions from other forms of pluralism, such as perspectivism and constructivism, it does not follow them in that it focuses on performances and practices. On the one hand, perspectivism argues that every social group or individual sees the world from a different point of view and thus represents it differently. Under this analysis, there is one single reality with different representations. On the other hand, constructivism analyses how a specific version of truth was crafted, what and who supported it, what was opposite to it and how alternatives were discredited and discarded. As Mol notes, constructivism suggests that "alternative 'constructions of reality' might have been possible. They have been possible in the past, but vanished before they ever fully blossomed" (Mol, 1999, 76). The notion of "plurality" is present, but, in the case of constructivism, plurality is projected towards the past as multiple possibilities that did not become real.

Unlike these two versions of plurality, talking about multiple realities – not multiple points of view or multiple possible pasts – suggests that reality, rather than existing as something observed, is done or performed through practice. Moreover, instead of existing as intrinsic and fixed, the ontology of every object or entity has a different version that emerges after specific practices enact it. Each ontological version of an object is a different form of reality. Mol (1999) illustrates the ontological multiplicity performed by practices with an example from her work on anaemia. As she argues, although anaemia is no longer the centre of scientific controversies, the answer to "what is anaemia?" has not yet found a single or stabilised unity. Likewise, continues the author, when a person observes the practices around anaemia, it seems that it is performed in at least three different ways or genres:

1. The clinical performance of anaemia takes place in a consulting room where a doctor checks for a series of symptoms in a patient, such as dizziness, tiredness, colour of the eyelids and colour of the skin: "the patient's talk, the doctor's further questions and the observations made on the outside of the body all relate to anaemia. How do they stage it? The answer is: as a set of visible symptoms. As complaints that may be articulated by a patient. This is the clinical performance of anaemia" (Mol, 1999, 77).
2. The laboratory performance of anaemia consists of measuring haemoglobin levels in a patient's blood. This performance uses statistics as its methods and it consists of "assembling data for a population, the norm being set at, say, two standard deviations from the mean figure of the population. The people whose blood tests reveal a haemoglobin level below this norm are then diagnosed as having anaemia" (Mol, 1999, 78).
3. The third performance, called pathophysiological, depends on "finding, for every single individual again, the dividing line between the haemoglobin level that is

> enough to transport oxygen through the body properly, and the abnormal level which, by contrast, is too low" (Mol, 1999, 78).

Although textbooks may integrate and link these three different performances as if they were all different parts of a single deviance, anaemia does not work that way in practice. Medical textbooks would argue that a blood level of haemoglobin below the standardised range calculated statistically (statistic-laboratory) would present problems in terms of carrying oxygen from the lungs to the organs (pathophysiological) and would manifest in the form of symptoms that would cause the patient to seek medical help (clinical). However, some people may not present some clinical symptoms despite having a low level of haemoglobin; some patients' organs may lack oxygen because their haemoglobin levels dropped while remaining within the normal range. In practice, there are at least three ways of diagnosing anaemia that manifest something different. The reality of anaemia varies according to the practice that enacts it:

> These are not perspectives seen by different people – a single person may slide in her work from one performance to another. Neither are they alternative, bygone constructions of which only one has emerged from the past – they emerged at different points in history, but none of them has vanished. So they are different versions, different performances, different realities, that co-exist in the present (Mol, 1999, 79).

Acknowledging the co-existence of multiple realities entails three main epistemological and ontological challenges. To begin with, reality is understood as open, fluid and constantly transforming. In this sense, "tolerating open-endedness, facing tragic dilemmas, and living-in-tension sound more like it" (Mol, 1999, 83). Second, talking about multiplicity rather than pluralism implies that, under particular circumstances, different practice-realities may clash, collaborate with or even depend on one another. Multiplicity means that different performances around an object are not separate entities standing apart in homogeneous fields, but they interact, relate and enter into dialogue:

> One may follow the other, stand in for the other, and, the most surprising image, one may include the other. This means that what is "other" is also within. Alternative realities don't simply co-exist side by side, but are also found inside one another" (Mol, 1999, 85).

In the scenario of ontological politics where experts have lost evidence for their stories because they are representations rather than reality itself, the third challenge consists of choosing between different performances. From the perspective of multiple realities, it is not the stories or representations of reality that are contestable but "also the very material shaping of reality in diagnosis, interventions and research practices" (Mol, 1999, 86). From this challenge emerges a series of questions that revolves around the role of patients in those

performances: what are the endpoints that mark improvement in the physical condition, what are the effects that experts seek and, finally, its main question would be: "who, then, might *do* ontological politics, how to handle *choice incorporated*?" (Mol, 1999, 86).[73]

Overall, the proposal of ontological politics suggests a link between the real, the conditions of possibilities of existence and the political. This link implies the existence, assemblage and interaction of different performances that give rise to the real – not in the form of a condensed unity but as a multiplicity that is more-than-one but less-than-many singular unities.

To sum up, Viveiros de Castro's contribution revolves around the idea that the ontological condition of existing entities may vary according to the performer and its relation with the object. Meanwhile, with certain proximities, Mol argues that the ontological condition of the real varies according to the instruments or practices that perform the real. These two contributions share the idea that reality is enacted through practices and performances. Enacting reality, also called "worlding"[74] in that it constructs the world, consists of the process by which individuals and collectivities constantly create and re-create reality through their actions. Moreover, thinking reality as worlding provides some of the theoretical tools that serve as a framework for understanding the complexity of the dispute over the Gulf of Tribugá. In particular, assuming that reality is a historically and culturally enacted series of performances – and thus multiple – allows for the comprehension of the ontological dispute as non-fixed, non-coherent assemblages performed by different collectivities that nurture, transform or reproduce different versions of reality.

Finally, the practice-oriented understanding of reality recalls the idea of social ontology materialised through practice. As analysed in the section above, social ontologies emerge, take place and change through specific practices, institutions and *habitus* enacted by historically and culturally located collectivities. Similar to social ontologies, reality is a worlding process that takes place according to the practices that enact it. Furthermore, that social ontologies and reality are practice-oriented implies the existence and co-existence of multiple ontologies and social ontologies – a co-existence not free of disputes or contradictions but a co-existence that respects the complexity of any socio-territorial conflict.

5.3. Relational ontology, assemblage thinking and actor-network theory (ANT)

Some of the contributions presented above, such as the practice-oriented multiplicity of realities and social ontologies and the opening of social ontologies to more-than-human and other-than-human entities, provide elements critical for understanding the concept of relational ontology in the Gulf of Tribugá. To understand the social ontology of the region

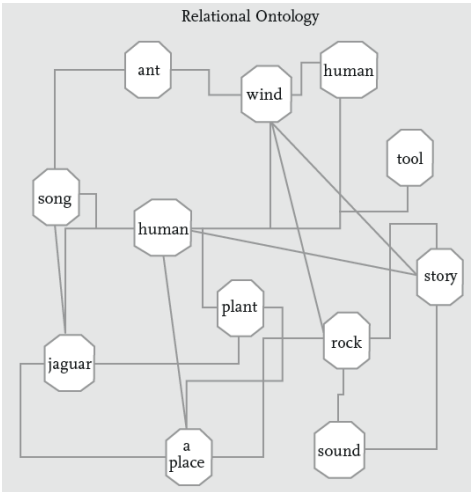
[73] Italics in the original.

[74] Following De la Cadena's (2015) notion, worlding refers to "practices that create (forms of) being with (and without) entities, as well as the entities themselves. Worlding is the practice of creating relations of life in a place and the place itself" (De la Cadena, 2015, 291).

under study, it is necessary to understand what "relational ontology" means and the implications it carries in comprehending the socio-territorial conflict currently taking place in the territory. Inspired by, but surpassing, Descola's (2013) ontological quadrant described above, relational ontology argues that every existing entity exists only in relation with all other existing entities.

In line with Viveiros de Castro's (1998) notion of a 100% relational reality, relational ontology seeks to understand the connectedness of every existing thing. Under the lens of relational ontology, things do not exists in terms of self-contained substances, but every singularity exists only in relation to something or someone else. In other words, nothing exists before the relationships that constitute it: we exists because everything exists. As Blaser (2013a) puts it, contrary to modern ontology that divides human and nature, relational ontology (see Figure 7) does not only integrate human and non-human entities in the same plane, but it suggests that "entities that exist emerge from a web or network of relations" (Blaser, 2013a, 20):

Figure 7. Relational ontology



Taken from: Blaser, M. (2013a). Notes towards a political ontology of 'environmental' conflicts. *Contested Ecologies: Dialogues in the South on Nature and Knowledge*, 13–27.

With this in mind, relational ontology gives rise to two main forms of social ontologies: those that concede humanity to other-than-human entities and those that do not. As for the first group of social ontologies that consider reality as fundamentally relational, they include landforms, plants or animals as interlocutors, for those entities also have human features and agency. Among others, two examples from South America may help illustrate this form of relational ontology. First, the case of the Amazonian cosmology described by Viveiros de Castro (1998, 2004, 2019) that considers that both animals and humans were previously

humans, but animals changed their physical appearance to zoomorphic while humans kept the original anthropomorphic appearance:

> For Amazonian peoples, *the original common condition of both humans and animals is not animality but, rather, humanity*. The great separation reveals not so much culture distinguishing itself from nature as nature distancing itself from culture: the myths tell how animals lost the qualities inherited or retained by humans. Humans are those who continue as they have always been. *Animals are ex-humans (rather than humans, ex-animals)*. In some cases, humankind is the substance of the primordial plenum or the original form of virtually everything, not just animals (Viveiros de Castro, 2019, 465).[75]

This social ontology includes every animal and human in the collectivity and conceives of animals as having similar desires, practices and cultural inner-expressions to humans but "disguised" in a bestial body. The interaction between human and other-than-human entities is among ontological equals – among people:

> While our folk anthropology holds that humans have an original animal nature that must be coped with by culture – having been wholly animals, we remain animals "at bottom" – Amerindian thought holds that, having been human, animals must still be human, albeit in an unapparent way. Thus, many animal species, as well as sundry other types of nonhuman beings, are supposed to have a spiritual component that qualifies them as "people" (Viveiros de Castro, 2019, 465).

The second example originates in the Peruvian Andes where certain landforms have human attributes and participate in social life. Similar to the Amazonian relational reality, Marisol De la Cadena (2010, 2015) studies the case of the *tirakuna* – what she calls "earth-beings." According to the author, these entities are landforms that have a presence that blurs the distinction between humans and nature in that they share some features of being (De la Cadena, 2015a). The human features shared by earth-beings imply the active participation and specific role of the *tirakuna* in the social world of collectivities in the region.

Furthermore, following the analysis of reality as enacted performance, De la Cadena argues that, through everyday practices, the collectivities of the Peruvian Andes create and re-create the specific relationship between *tirakuna* and the *runakuna* ("people") and the conditions of existence for both entities. It is through particular performances and practices that the *runakuna* create the conditions of possibility that allow for the emergence of the *tirakuna* as real and existing earth-beings, and vice versa. Therefore, the relationship between these two entities – *tirakuna* and *runakuna* – is not representational but factual, because both have

[75] Italics in the original.

actual roles and influence within and outside of the collectivity. Moreover, despite the historical changes that the collectivity has lived since the Inca Empire, some of the specific sociocultures that link people and earth-beings remain until today and have an important role in different matters both within the collectivity and with external actors. As noted in the description of the concept of "socioculture," there are certain frameworks of practice, institutions and *habitus* that remain throughout time and adapt to new political and historical circumstances:

> Of course I am far from suggesting that tirakuna or the nonrepresentational relation through which they emerge have not changed since Inka times. What I am suggesting is that along with historical changes, the practices that enact tirakuna *and* runakuna as inherently related to each other continue to make local worlds in the Andes. And thus, connected to modernity but uncontained by representational epistemic requirements, these practices exceed history or politics (De la Cadena, 2015, 100).[76]

On the other hand, the second type of relational ontology, although it does not concede ontological human features to landforms, plants or animals, has two main distinctive characteristics that dialogue with the animistic understanding of reality: i) it sticks to the notion of radical interconnectedness; ii) although it does not humanise other-than-human beings, it acknowledges the influence and role of such entities in the collectivity. This is the case of the relational ontology present in the Gulf of Tribugá, where the interconnectedness between human and other-than-human entities does not depend on the humanity of the latter but on the specific practices that create and re-create connections between singularities, as well as on the roles those singularities may have within the collectivity. This form of relational ontology, as it does not identify the humanity in other-than-humans but identifies the active and autonomous nature of some other-than-human beings, becomes a useful mechanisms for understanding the complex forms of interaction between multiple co-existing social ontologies and sociocultures in the Gulf of Tribugá.

These types of relational ontologies resort to two different yet complementary theoretical approaches that seek to grasp the complex, multidimensional and constantly changing nature of the social. Those theoretical approaches are assemblage thinking and ANT. As for the former, it helps to picture the complexity of co-existing social ontologies and sociocultures in one single territory (see Section 6). According to Deleuze & Parnet (2007), an "assemblage" is a "multiplicity which is made up of many heterogeneous terms and which establishes liaisons, relations between them, across ages, sexes and reigns – different natures" (Deleuze & Parnet, 2007, 69). Furthermore, the confluence of these dissimilar elements do not constitute a static unity, for it is "never filiations which are important, but alliances, alloys; these are not successions, lines of descent, but contagions, epidemics, the wind"

[76] Italics in the original.

(Deleuze & Parnet, 2007, 69). Additionally, as an effect of the fluidity and malleability of assemblages, the confluence of heterogeneous terms do not permanence in time, but they are under constant dispute, renegotiating and recalibrating themselves, for they are historically and culturally located:

> […] lines of articulation or segmentarity, strata and territorialities; but also lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and destratification. Comparative rates of flow on these lines produce phenomena of relative slowness and viscosity, or, on the contrary, of acceleration and rupture. All this, lines and measurable speeds, constitutes an assemblage (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, 3).

Moreover, in his analysis of Deleuzian assemblages, Manuel de Landa (2006) argues that it is necessary to overcome a dichotomist vision of assemblages in which the micro or the macro levels of actions is entitled to the greatest influence. Giving priority to one or the other would constitute a reductionist approach that blurs the actual complexity of both the assemblages themselves and the social at large. To do so, the author proposes a heterarchical understanding of assemblages in which all components of each and every scale constantly connect, negotiate, struggle, interact and complement each other.[77] The whole is not the result of social, economic and political structures (macro reductionism) nor "simply the aggregate or sum of either many rational agents or phenomenological experiences shaped by daily routine" (de Landa, 2006, 250) (micro reductionism).

To understand this multi-scale understanding of social reality, de Landa (2006) proposes four main features of the scheme:

1. Every individual entity "(individual person, individual organization, individual cities and so on) is made out of entities at the immediate lower scale, that is, that the relations among scales is one of *parts to whole*" (de Landa, 2006, 251).
2. Any level of the scale deals with populations of interacting entities, such as populations of persons, organisations or cities. Moreover, it is within "theses populations, and the processes generated by their interactions, that larger entities emerge as kind of *statistical result*, or as collective unintended consequences of intentional actions" (de Landa, 2006, 252).
3. Once a large-scale entity emerges, it starts establishing limitations and resources to its components. Although "the arrow of causality in this scheme is bottom-up, it also has a top-down aspect: the whole both *constrains and enable* its parts" (de Landa, 2006, 252).

[77] See the analysis of the heterarchical reproduction of power and its complex exercise on the micro and macro levels in Chapter 2.

4. At the top, there is not "society as a whole," for it is a vague category – instead, there is "simply another concrete, *singular* entity (an individual nation-state, for instance, part of a population of such territorial states)" (de Landa, 2006, 252).[78]

These features help understanding assemblages not as totalities, in which parts mutually constitute and fuse with each other into a closed whole, but as open-ended multiplicities under constant restructuration. In an assemblage, each component has a certain autonomy from the whole; it can detach from it and plug into another whole. Individuals, populations and collectivities are not fixed categories or entities, but their existence and re-creation depends on the relationships entailed among each component:

> The concept of assemblage -an open-ended entanglement of ways of being- is more useful. In an assemblage, varied trajectories gain a hold on each other, but indeterminacy matters (Tsing, 2015, 83).

Regarding the second theoretical body, inspired by assemblage theory, ANT also represents a useful approach in understanding reality as relational and practice-oriented rather than as fixed and predetermined. With Bruno Latour as its most visible exponent, this approach provides important theoretical tools for analysing both the complex relational ontology of black collectivities in the Gulf of Tribugá and the ontological dispute over that territory (see Section 6).

Succinctly put, ANT consists of three main elements. First, it argues that society is a series of constantly changing sets of interactions among the actors that compose it. These sets of interactions are what they call a "network." In that sense, society (or "reality" for the purpose of the present research) is a complex network that emerges out of the interactions of and between its components. In other words, reality, societies, or collectivities emerge as networks out of interactions. As Law (1992) puts it:

> This lies at the heart of actor-network theory, and is a way of suggesting that society, organisations, agents and machines are all effects generated in patterned networks of diverse (not simply human) materials (Law, 1992, 380).

Second, considering that society is a network and following the quote above, ANT suggests that the interacting elements of such networks are not only humans but also every materiality that belongs to the society in question. Everything – human and non-human – has agency to the extent that interacts with other materialities (Law, 1992). Likewise the black social ontology in the Gulf of Tribugá (see Section 6.3), ANT does not provide non-human entities with human features but provides them with agency and a role in the enactment of reality. In both cases, every entity is an agentive and autonomous "actant" that interacts within the

[78] Italics in the original.

network that constitutes reality. In this sense, there is no fundamental difference between humans and other entities, for both equally participate in the constitution of reality through their interactions (Law, 1992):

> This is a radical claim because it says that these networks are composed not only of people, but also of machines, animals, texts, money, architectures – any material that you care to mention (Law, 1992, 380).

Last, inasmuch as ANT focuses on the factual interaction of humans and non-humans within the network, it has a practice-oriented perspective of reality. In dialogue with the notion of social ontology and the aforementioned idea of reality as enacted practice, ANT takes supposedly inert entities as active actors in the constitution of reality. As Law (1992) argues, to ANT, the social structure is not a noun but a verb, for it constitute and reproduces itself through the actions that exercise its materialities:

> Thus, actor-network theory assumes that social structure is not a noun but a verb. Structure is not free-standing, like scaffolding on a building-site, but a site of struggle, a relational effect that recursively generates and reproduces itself (Law, 1992, 384).

Although with partial differences, similarities between ANT and assemblage thinking are evident. To begin with, they are both "concern[ed] with the more than-representational and more-than-human aspects of the socio-material world forms part of a response to the perceived excessive focus on representations and meaning that emerged in human geography in the late 1980s with the turn towards poststructuralism" (Müller & Schurr, 2016, 217). Additionally, both approaches have a relational perspective of the world, in which actions constitute the links between the elements of the whole, but it cannot be reduced to such connections. In other worlds, both approaches "emphasise emergence, where the whole is more than the sum of its parts" (Müller & Schurr, 2016, 217).

However, some of their differences reside in the fluidity or rigidity they afford to human relations. On the one hand, argues Müller & Schurr (2016), ANT is not able to grasp the openness and autopoietic understanding of reality provided by assemblage theory. On the other, assemblage theory is not able to empirically substantiate its reflections or give some sort of stabilisation to interactions. With this in mind, the authors propose three cross-fertilisations that strive to enrich the dialogue between both approaches:

1. "ANT can provide the notion of the assemblage with an explicitly spatial account of how relations in an assemblage are drawn together and stabilised" (Müller & Schurr, 2016, 218).

2. "[…] the common ground between the two approaches has increased with ANT's turn towards embracing multiplicities and fluidities in the 1990s" (Müller & Schurr, 2016, 218).
3. "ANT would benefit from the attention to the role of affect and desire in bringing socio-material relations into being, which is so central in assemblage thinking" (Müller & Schurr, 2016, 218).

Considering the cross-fertilisation of both approaches proposed by Müller & Schurr (2016), the notion of "assemblages" used in the following pages includes the structuring nature of ANT. In order to understand both the black social ontology in the Gulf of Tribugá and the socio ontological dispute in that region, it is necessary to broaden the concept of "assemblage" and fill it with empirical and localised content. Moreover, imbuing assemblage thinking with the specific spatiality of the Gulf of Tribugá allows the multi-scale nature of reality and the openness of the connections among agents of the collectivity in a particular territory to manifest. In that sense, it is worth clarifying that, when using the term "assemblage," this research does not limit itself to its ephemeral Deleuzian definition but tries to incorporate in it some of the structuring, spatial and empirical focus of ANT.

With this in mind, thinking assemblages as localised and complex interconnections of non-fixed categories of entities on both the macro and the micro scales dialogues and complements different ideas analysed above regarding the relational social ontology in the Gulf of Tribugá. Along the same vein, in relation to the notion of reality as enacted practice, if the creation and recreation of assemblages respond to the temporal connections and roles of each of its components, it is through practices that those roles and connections renew and thus reproduce, transform or renovate the assemblage. What is more, in line with the heterarchical approaches of both assemblage theory and ANT, although transformations of the assemblages may take place in both the micro and macro scales, they have repercussions on both the scales and for the whole.

Furthermore, thinking reality as multiple assemblages or networks dialogues with the idea of multiple, simultaneous realities, for it recognises the time-space constrictions of the alliances, relations and practices that constitute every assemblage/reality. Moreover, the temporal, fluid connections that both theories identify resonate with the idea of relational ontology, for the latter argues that every existing thing is connected with every other existing thing and that existence depends on, or emerges from, those connections. Assemblage theory, ANT and relational ontology share the notion of interconnectedness between every existing element.

Moreover, questioning the naturalist perspective of each of the elements that make up the whole as autonomous, self-contained and ontologically fixed, the dialogue between relational ontology, assemblage thinking and ANT suggests that the ontology and the condition of existence of every component of the assemblage depends on its connections – not on itself.

In that sense, the innovative contribution of this triad consists of understanding the existence of all singularities that compose the assemblage as the particular, momentary and fluid connections that take place in particular space-time circumstances.

In that sense, while assemblage theory argues that a component may retain its ontological unity moving from one assemblage to another (for it is autonomous and independent), the dialogue between the three theoretical approaches – relational ontology, assemblage thinking and ANT – argues that there is no such thing as an entity independent of its relations. This does not mean that an entity cannot move between assemblages or participate in different scales of the assemblage but that moving from one assemblage or scale to another implies a transformation of ontology. Considering that practices enact reality and that the links between components of assemblages take place through practices on different intertwined scales, the ontological nature of every entity changes when moving between assemblages or scales.

Bearing this in mind, these approaches help understand the black social ontology present in the Gulf of Tribugá and the ontological dispute taking place in the territory. In this sense, it is important to consider that the existence and permanence of assemblages do not only depend on the temporary connections that compose it. The characteristics of existence of each of the entities that compose the assemblage depend on the nature of the connections between them. Along that vein, reality should be addressed as a historically and culturally multi-scaled, interconnected assemblage that emerges through practices enacted and re-created by entities with agency, wills and desires. These agentive entities vary according to particular social ontologies, for they may include (along with a probably infinite list) humans, landforms, plants, animals, spirits, gods, the state or money.

Simply put, the conceptualisation of the discussion carried by reality as enacted practice, relational ontology, assemblage theory and ANT argues that each reality comes into being through the practices enacted by human and non-human agents that create, re-create and transform the nature of the connections that form multi-scaled assemblages. Moreover, the discussion suggests that the moment of enactment also transforms or re-creates the ontology of the enacting agents and the nature of the connections that link them to the rest of the assemblage. If reality is multiple and enters into dialogue with, negotiates with and disputes other realities, such is also the case of assemblages that co-exist with (or more or less conflict with) other assemblages or complex formations of reality.

Including the notion of assemblages in the understanding of reality completes the dialectical relationship operating in a particular time-space framework between social ontologies, sociocultures and practices. Considering that practices enact and re-create both social ontology and sociocultures while being simultaneously shaped by them, it is through, or within, assemblages that such practices take place. Specific practices enact the insertion of assemblages into singular or multiple social structures that, in turn, reflect a particular social

ontology. Put shortly, assemblages are the temporary and changing compositions in which practices enact sociocultures, social ontologies and, ultimately, reality.

With this in mind, while assemblages might co-exist peacefully and fruitfully depending on cultural and historical context, ontological disputes over specific territories often entail disputes and violence over the hegemonic set of practices enacted in a particular space – such is the case in the Gulf of Tribugá. In order to understand the ontological nature of the dispute, it is necessary to have a general view of the multiple assemblages present in the territory, the practices that enact them, the mobility of those practices from one assemblage to another and the possible partial connections between assemblages. In this sense, the interest of the following chapter centres on the co-exiting, disputing and negotiating social ontologies, sociocultures and assemblages present in the Gulf of Tribugá.

Summing up

In order to understand the complexity of the ontological struggle taking place in the Gulf of Tribugá in which multiple assemblages dispute hegemony in the territory, this chapter appealed to different theoretical approaches. The dialogue between political ontology, reality as enacted practice and relational ontology allows for a better comprehension of the complexity of the dispute in the territory. The section first drew upon the idea of social ontology and socioculture (particularly on the first) in terms of their importance in broadening notions of both collectivity and ontology. To the extent that this conceptualisation of intrinsic systems of social classification, sets of meanings and symbolic values subconsciously shared by the members of a collectivity includes non-human or more-than-human entities in the social group, it allows the identification of the roles played by animals, landforms, plants or spirits in- and outside a collectivity.

Hand in hand with including non-human and more-than-human entities in the collectivity, the chapter resorted to the notion of political ontology developed by Blaser (2009, 2013a, 2013b). With this concept, the author argues for the inclusion of the ontological sphere in territorial conflicts. Just as the case of the socio-territorial dispute in the Gulf of Tribugá, the main argument is that what is at stake in any socio-territorial struggle is *existence itself* and the *conditions* of such existence. In short, the dispute, rather than limited to land or access to resources, is rather ontological and concerns existence itself.

Echoing the concept of political ontology, the idea of reality as enacted practice argues that reality emerges out of the actions that entities of any given collectivity perform in particular space-time frameworks. In that sense, to the extent that reality is the result of particular actions performed by multiple types of entities that belong to a collectivity, the notion of reality as enacted practice allows a territory to be conceived with multiple co-existing, negotiating and disputing realities. Again, as suggested by political ontology, socio-territorial

conflicts are over existence itself and the practices, institutions and *habitus* (parts of particular social ontologies) that give rise to particular realities.

Last, in dialogue with both notions described above – political ontology and reality as enacted practice – the last theoretical resource of the chapter focused on the idea of relational ontology. This type of ontology, surpassing the ontological quadrant proposed by Descola (2013), argues that everything that exists does so only in relation with all other existing things. Along this vein, and in dialogue with the idea of reality as enacted practice, the notion of a 100% relational reality proposes that it is through the interactions between human, non-human or more-than-human entities that reality takes place or emerges. Things do not exist as isolated, self-contained substances, but it is through the practices performed by and upon such entities that they acquire their ontological nature. In order to enrich the discussion and do justice to the complexity of ontological disputes, the analysis of relational ontology drew on two theoretical approaches: assemblage theory and ANT. With their differences and similarities, both perspective advocate understanding reality as a multi-scaled, complex interconnectedness of entities that emerges with and through the actions performed by human and non-human agents that constantly re-create and transform the nature of their connections to form multi-scaled assemblages.

6. Socio-territorial struggles in the Gulf of Tribugá: complex assemblages and the ontological conflict over territory

Bearing in mind the ontological nature of socio-territorial conflicts, the region under dispute become the scenario of "partially connected" (Strathern, 2005) assemblages that, at times, co-exist, struggle and negotiate the transformation or re-creation of the social ontologies and sociocultures present in the territory. This unequal dispute results in a mobile, dynamic and overlapping game of assemblages with dialectical interactions between the practices enacted in the territory. As stated above, considering that assemblages and social ontologies are practice-oriented, there is a dialectical relationship between assemblages that dispute the territory and practices carried out by actors interested in the territory (such as local collectivities, investors, the state, NGOs, conservationists, etc.). In other words, the relation runs both ways: the assemblages that belong to one social ontology, but might be partially connected to many, give fundament to the practices that materialise them. Simultaneously, assemblages emerge, re-create and transform themselves from those practices that give them content and materiality.

Drawing upon the idea of multiple co-existing assemblages, the present section seeks to provide a complex understanding of at least three of these occasionally overlapping, occasionally disputing assemblages present in the Gulf of Tribugá. Each of these assemblages represent a mixture, transformation and reinvention of social ontologies; they are not coherent units with fixed limits – they are open-ended (Tsing, 2015), fluid amalgams of mobile singularities concretised through practices. The dispute over the territory is an unequal dispute between at least three assemblages that reflect particular social ontologies and materialise through specific sets of practices, institutions and *habitus.*

Taking into consideration the risk of labelling transforming and complex assemblages, each of these labels responds to elements of affiliation to and affinity with certain discourses that represent particular ontologies, epistemologies and sets of practices. In this sense, the main argument of this chapter is that, in the Gulf of Tribugá, there are two social ontologies and three assemblages. One social ontology is that of modernity, deeply analysed in Part I of this research, which contains two assemblages: those of developmentalism/capitalism and sustainability/multiculturalism. The other social ontology is the black social ontology, analysed further in the present chapter, which materialises and re-creates itself through the communitarianism/non-capitalism assemblage. Shortly put, the three intertwined assemblages present in the Gulf of Tribugá are the following:

1. Developmentalism/capitalism: belongs to the social ontology of modernity, corresponds to a naturalistic ontology, conceives of history as teleological and considers western epistemology to be the only mechanism that can reach absolute

truth. It materialises through mega-infrastructure projects, industrial fishing, agroindustry, mining and drug trafficking.

2. Sustainability/multiculturalism: also belongs to the social ontology of modernity in that it ontologically separates humans and nature, has a notion of reality as singular and fixed and trusts that western epistemology is the only mechanism that can reach absolute truth. However, to a certain extent and under specific circumstances, the sustainability/multiculturalism assemblage promotes black social ontology. This assemblage does not belong black social ontology, but it exists as a side-effect of supporting and financing specific non-capitalist practices and, to a certain extent, it helps strengthen black social ontology. Some of its practices are sustainable fishing, communitarian tourism and the support of cultural manifestations as folkloric expressions.
3. Communitarianism/non-capitalism: belongs to black social ontology; its ontology is relational and materialises through reciprocal, livelihood economic practices mainly enacted by black collectivities.

With this in mind, Illustration 1 seeks to represent the complexity of the assemblages present in the Gulf of Tribugá, their partial connections and the dialectical relationship between social ontologies, assemblages and practices. Illustration 1 has three parts divided by two red lines. Each of the sections, from top to bottom, respectively represent social ontologies, assemblages and practices. Last, red circles contain the main actors that perform the practices of each assemblage. The type of connections between the nodes of each of the sections illustrate the nature of the relationship between them.

As for the section dedicated to social ontologies, the illustration presents both black social ontology and the social ontology of modernity. In addition, this section presents the nature of the connections that these social ontologies have with the three assemblages present in the territory. Whereas the communitarianism/non-capitalist assemblage is part of black social ontology, the sustainability/multiculturalism assemblage, although it does not belong to black social ontology, partially promotes it through some of its practices. On the other hand, both the sustainability/multiculturalism and the developmentalism/capitalism assemblages are part of modern social ontology.

Regarding the assemblages in the middle section of Illustration 1, the communitarianism/non-capitalist assemblage is partially connected to the sustainability/multiculturalism assemblage, which, in turn, is also partially connected to the developmentalism/capitalism assemblage. The section on the bottom of Illustration 1 describes the practices and the actors that perform said practices. The groups of practices are organised in three groups. The first group represents those practices enacted mainly by black collectivities, NGOs and sometimes international cooperation. Although these practices belong to the communitarianism/non-capitalist assemblage, they are sometimes promoted by

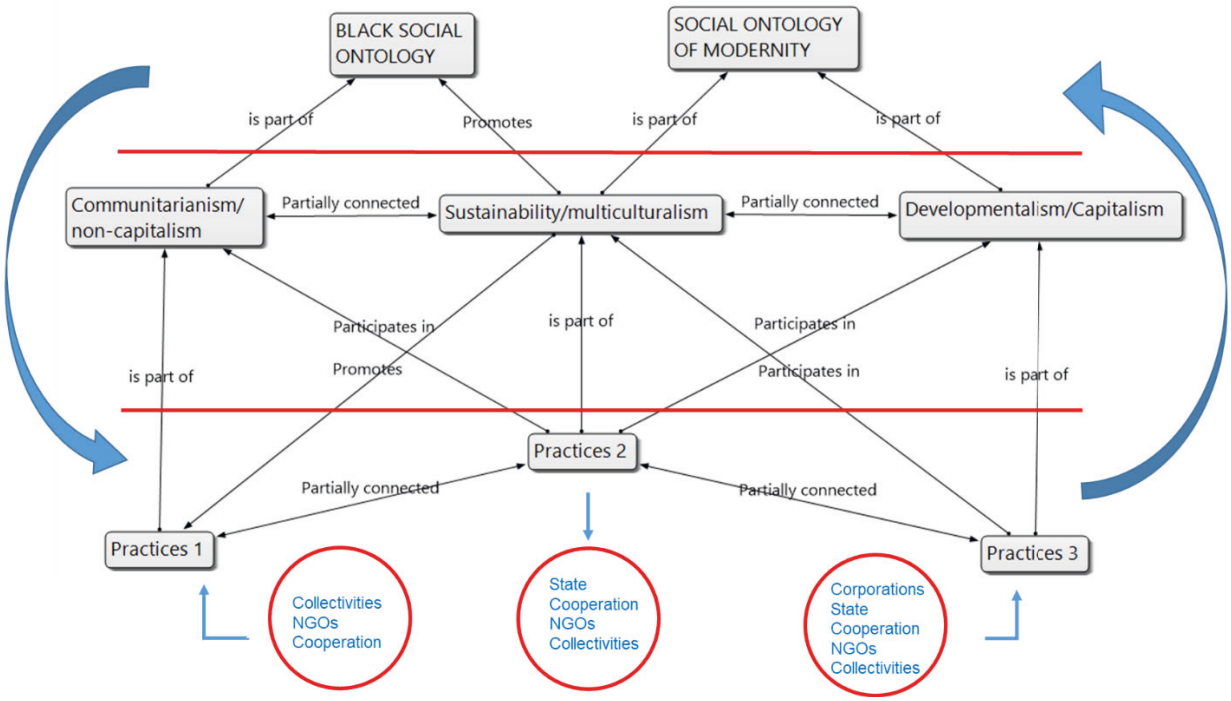
the sustainability/multiculturalism assemblage. Some practices performed in this group are livelihood economic practices, relational medical care practices and cultural manifestations as social cohesion.

As for the second group of practices, they belong to the assemblage of sustainability/multiculturalism but, at times, participate or enact the communitarianism/non-capitalist assemblage. This set of practices may cluster in the following performances: sustainable tourism, multiculturalism, folkloric exaltation, environmental conservation, sustainable enterprises. These performances are mainly enacted by the state, international cooperation, NGOs and local collectivities.

The last set of practices belong to the assemblage of developmentalism/capitalism but also participate in the sustainability/multiculturalism assemblage. Some of the practices that belong to this cluster are extractive economies, mega-infrastructure projects, industrial fishing and agroindustry. Its most important performers are capitalist corporations, the state, international cooperation, NGOs and local collectivities.

Furthermore, the blue arrows in Illustration 1 portray the dialectical nature of the triad "social ontology-assemblage-practice." As analysed in Section 5.1, social ontologies determine the framework in which sociocultures and assemblages take place and, consequently, give the epistemological and ontological fundament to the practices performed by human and non-human entities. In turn, to the extent that practices materialise both assemblages and social ontologies, the enactment of such practices make them emerge and exist. In the end, the blue arrows show the dialectical fact that the production and reproduction of social ontologies, assemblages and practices simultaneously depend on and condition each other.

Illustration 1. Social ontologies and complex assemblages in the Gulf of Tribugá



Source: Elaborated by the author.

As Illustration 1 indicates, local collectivities actively participate in all of the assemblages according to particular circumstances. For this reason, although occupying a marginal position among the collectivities in the gulf, some individuals and social organisations may work towards the use of the territory according to the developmentalism/capitalism assemblage. Furthermore, even though the assemblages of sustainability/multiculturalism and communitarianism/non-capitalism fundament themselves in different social ontologies and sociocultures, they partially share some of the practices and performances that each of them enacts. This means that the complexity of thinking the territory does not manifest itself only in the existence of three different assemblages but also in the fact that collectivities may participate in the enactment of all of them simultaneously.

With that in mind, in order to understand the complexity of each assemblage, the following pages describe and analyse each of their composing elements, the partial connections between them, their ontological and socio-ontological fundaments and the practices that materialise and re-create them. Although this chapter will present and make evident the openness, interconnectedness and partial connections between assemblages, in an attempt to simplify and categorise each of them, Table 1 summarises some of their most relevant elements.

Table 1. Assemblages in the Gulf of Tribugá

	Developmentalism / capitalism	**Sustainability / multiculturalism**	**Communitarianism / non-capitalism**
Ontologies and social ontologies	Naturalism and dualism, teleology, universalism and Eurocentrism	Naturalism and dualism, teleology, universalism and Eurocentrism	Relational ontology and both ways active interaction between human and other-than human beings
Sociocultures	Modern world-system, capitalism, developmentalism	Modern world-system, capitalism, sustainable developmentalism	Non-capitalist, reciprocity, "domestic use" of collective territories
Socio-economic and cultural practices	Extractive economies, mega-infrastructure projects, industrial fishing and agroindustry	Sustainable tourism, multiculturalism, folkloric exaltation, environmental conservation, sustainable enterprises	Livelihood economic practices, relational medical-care practices, cultural manifestations as social cohesion
Performers	Corporations, State, international cooperation, NGOs and collectivities	Corporations, States, international cooperation, NGOs and collectivities	Collectivities, international cooperation and NGOs

Source: Elaborated by the author.

To close, it is important to stress the unequal nature of the dispute between assemblages and the practices that perform them. Although each of these assemblages are open-ended, fluid and in constant flux, the structural conditions that foster their reproduction are neither even nor horizontal. Considering the analysis of the macro and micro levels of power (see Section 2.1) and the expansive nature of developmentalism as the most recent materialisation of the social ontology of modernity (see Section 1), the assemblages of developmentalism/capitalism and sustainability/multiculturalism represent the hegemonic effort to control and transform the Gulf of Tribugá.

In line with the discussion presented in Part I, to the extent that both assemblages enacting modern social ontology constitute hegemonic mechanisms in the reproduction of the modern

world-system, they both have their agents, discourses and practices currently in power. As will become evident in the present section and the following chapter, the unequal dispute over the territory materialises through the efforts black collectivities in the region are performing to challenge the hegemonic power in both its macro and micro levels. The dispute reveals the mechanisms through which these collectivities enact resistance against the expansion of the racialised, exclusive and extractive current materialisation of modern social ontology through capitalism and developmentalism, even in their sustainable versions.

6.1. Developmentalist/capitalist assemblage

The developmentalist/capitalist assemblage belongs to a series of socio-ontological features broadly analysed in previous sections of this research under the name "modernity." Recalling the analysis of previous chapters, briefly put, the ontology of modernity corresponds to that of naturalism, but it does not only claim a human-nature dualism: it also argues for an ontological separation of body-mind and subject-object. Furthermore, modern social ontology conceives of history as teleological, proposes the individual as the core of the social world and claims that its premises are universal. Moreover, with a few exceptions, capitalism has been its historical economic system and its global dimension is the modern world-system. The materialisation of this assemblage takes place through a series of practices institution and *habitus* promoted, performed and often imposed by local, national and international developmental agents (see Section 3). The materialisation of both the social ontology and the socioculture of this assemblage takes place mainly through mega-infrastructure projects, industrial fishing, cocaine production and trafficking, agroindustry and mining among others.

These interventions in the territory contrast with the important achievements made by the black communities in Chocó after the provision of Law 70 of 1993 (see Section 4.2) and represent a dispute between local collectivities and capitalist interests that aim to transform the territory in order to gain the most from its location and natural resources. Along with mega-infrastructure projects, industrial fishing, agroindustry and mining, one of the most transformative capitalist practices that generate conflict in the region is the distribution of cocaine. These socio-territorial interventions, whether legal or illegal, contribute to the intensification of conflict in the area, the hindering of local social ontologies and sociocultures and the decline of the autonomy of collectivities.

As analysed in Section 3.1, denying the complexity of poverty and assuming liberal capitalism as the end of history, developmentalist interventions fail in transforming the structures that produce and reproduce marginalisation. Understanding developmentalism as the latest manifestation of modernity, large-scale interventions assume that changing the territory would change the living conditions of its inhabitants, take them out of their "backwardness" and include them in the hegemonic discursive practice of modernity. In

short, all these types of interventions presume that they all lead local collectivities to the end of history:

> The supposed benefits of the exploitation and extraction of resources and infrastructure projects have not translated into guarantees of decent living conditions for the communities. At the same time, policies aimed at eradicating poverty framed within a limited understanding of the problem (Estrada Álvarez et al., 2013, 74).[79]

Infrastructure and mega projects

Besides the Port of Tribugá, which is analysed separately in Section 7 due its political relevance as the biggest, most ambitious and most recent attempt of the developmentalism/capitalism assemblage to expand its hegemony in the region, two main megaprojects have accompanied developmental discourse in Chocó since the expansion of modernity in the territory. The Interoceanic Canal and the Pan-American Highway. As for the first, since Vasco de Núñez de Balboa became the first European to sight the South Sea in 1513 (Friede, 1963), hegemonic powers have tried to control the routes between the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean. Since the sixteenth century, every European power (and later the United States) was interested in the construction of a canal between the two oceans. According to José E. Mosquera (2013), the European powers set their sights on this piece of land due to the fact that it was the key to controlling the main commercial routs in America.

For that reason, "the Spanish Crown prohibited its subjects from talking about the Canal with the warning of receiving the death penalty because of the danger that this project represented in the face of its rivalries with England and France" (Mosquera, 2013). At the end of the Spanish rule in the early nineteenth century, the Darien region became, once again, the focal point of the debates about the interoceanic canal. During the nineteenth century, the United Stated, France and England discussed the construction of a canal across México, Nicaragua or Colombia (Mosquera, 2013). In the end, it was the United States, taking advantage of geopolitical conditions at the end of the century and the separation of Panamá from Colombia in 1903, that built and opened the Panamá Canal in 1914.

Nonetheless, throughout the twentieth century, the hegemonic powers made plans and strategies to either open a new canal or broaden the existing one. In the case of the United States, apart from the economic advantages of controlling the canal, the canal was of critical importance in terms of national security during the Cold War:

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[79] Henceforth, my own translation from: Estrada Álvarez, J., Moreno Rubio, S., Ordóñez Gómez, F., Moore Torres, C., Naranjo, J. E., & Jiménez, C. A. (2013). *Procesos socio-territoriales Pacífico: Itinerarios y tendencias*. Bogotá: ILSA, Instituto para una Sociedad y un Derecho Alternativos.

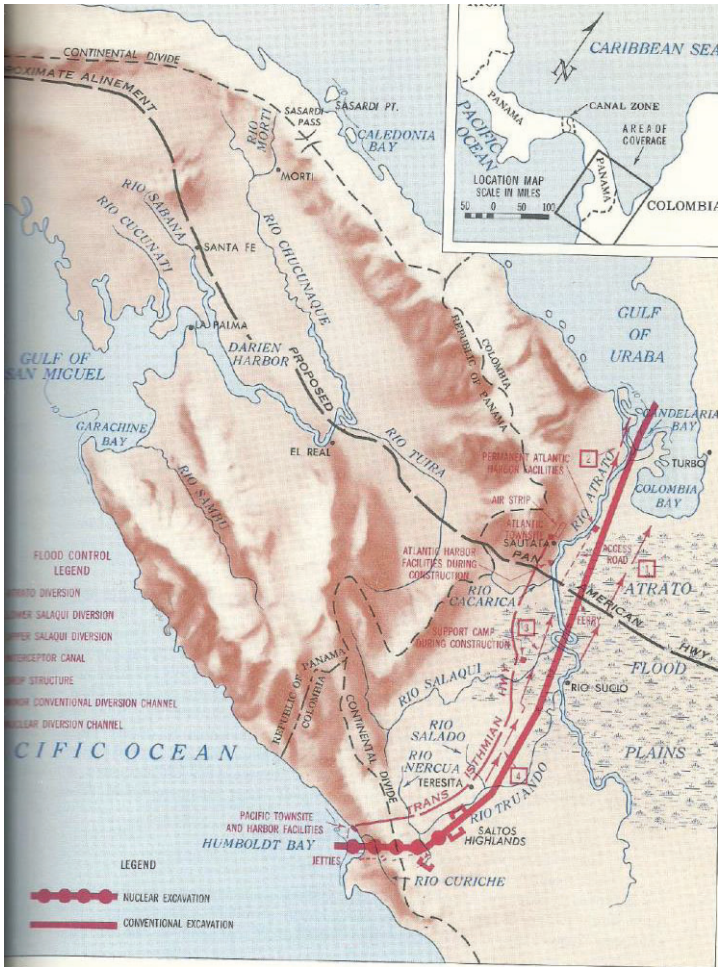
> The canal's major military importance is in the logistic support of combat forces overseas; internal United States transportation systems and port complexes could be severely burdened in wartime if cargo had to be diverted from canal routs […] The existing Panamá Canal is vulnerable to many forms of attack, even though extensive protective measures have been taken to strengthen then dams holding its water supply, to double-gate canal locks, and to guard its power sources (Atlantic-Pacific Interoceanic Canal Study Commission, 1970).

More recently, even after the expansion of the Panamá Canal between 2006 and 2016, there have been important efforts to build a new canal in Colombia that connects the Atrato and Truandó Rivers in the Department of Chocó (see Map 5):

> This work that seeks a passage does not transmit the transit of boats. Post Suez, and that its complexity exceeds. The results of the expansion of the Panamá Canal (2016) and the Suez Canal (2015), would not only save the historic debt with the Colombian Pacific, but would also substantially increase Colombia's GDP (Duque Escobar, 2018).[80]

Map 5. Interoceanic canal Atrato and Truandó

[80] Henceforth, my own translation from: Duque Escobar, G. (2018, July 30). El Canal Interoceánico Atrato-Truandó. *La Patria*. Retrieved from https://www.lapatria.com/opinion/columnas/gonzalo-duque-escobar/el-canal-interoceanico-atrato-truando.



Taken from: Atlantic-Pacific Interoceanic Canal Study Commission. (1970). *Interoceanic Canal Study 1970*. Washington D.C.

Second, the other significant infrastructure project is the Pan-American Highway that seeks to connect South America and North America. During the Fifth International Conference of American States in Santiago de Chile in 1923, the United States "proposed a hemispheric highway system that would pave permanent road links to every national capital in the Americas" (Miller, 2014, 190). Despite numerous efforts by the United States and some Latin American countries during the twentieth century, the highway is still yet to be completed. The missing section to completing the "dream of uniting North and South America by convenient means of overland communication" (Kelchner, 1938, 723) is the Darien Gap between Panamá and Colombia.

Since the conception of the project, politicians and planners have been aware of the characteristics of the Darien Gap and the difficulties the highway would face in that region. Following the developmentalist conception of the territory, committees and experts refer to the region as an obstacle to modernity. Furthermore, notions of "taming" or "overcoming"

the Darien Gap illustrates the relationship that hegemonic power has had with this territory. In 1938, Warren Kelchner wrote in the *Foreign Affairs Magazine* that from about 50 miles south of Panamá City to "Antioquia, Colombia a distance of about 300 miles, the country is largely swamp land which few if any white men have ever penetrated" (Kelchner, 1938, 727).

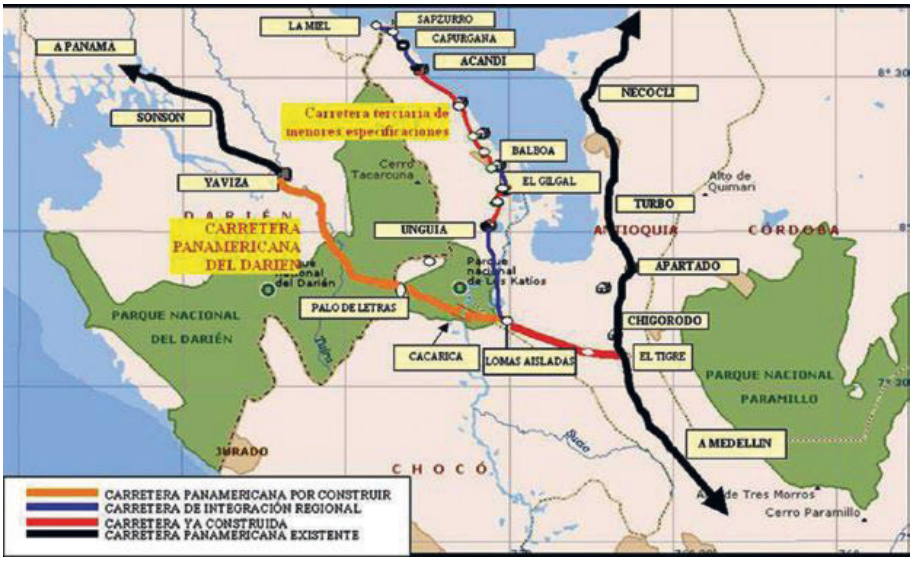
This area, shared by both countries, represents one of the most biodiverse places in the world and is the territory of different indigenous groups that have inhabited the territory for centuries. Moreover, nowadays, most of the Darien Gap is part of two national parks located in both Colombia and Panamá: respectively, the Darien National Park and the Los Katíos National Park.

According to Estrada Álvarez et al. (2013), "recently the bidding for the construction of the El Tigre – Lomas Aisladas – Cacarica – Palo de Letras – Yaviza road was approved, a work that will have environmental impacts such as ecosystem fragmentation, colonization and paddocking processes" (Estrada Álvarez et al., 2013, 71). It is important to notice that Palo de Letras is on the Colombian side of the border while Yaviza is in Panamá. Additionally, both towns are at the end of the road in their respective countries – Palo de las Letras from South to North and Yaviza from North to South.

In this vein, Molano (2017) argues that, since the 1990s, with the emergence of environmentalism as a global problem, the Pan-American Highway faces the "green consciousness." Moreover, in 1993, the World Wildlife Foundation (WWF) declared the conservation of the Darien Gap as one of its main objectives and, in 1994, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) declared the Los Katíos National Park a World Heritage Site (Molano, 2017). As Map 6 shows, the highway would cross through both national parks in Panamá and Colombia.

Map 6. The Pan-American Highway[81]

[81] Map 6 illustrates in orange colour the missing section of the highway needed to complete the project. In black, the map shows the sections of the highway that are already finished.



Taken from: Estrada Álvarez, J., Moreno Rubio, S., Ordóñez Gómez, F., Moore Torres, C., Naranjo, J. E., & Jiménez, C. A. (2013). *Procesos socio-territoriales Pacífico: Itinerarios y tendencias*. Bogotá: ILSA, Instituto para una Sociedad y un Derecho Alternativos.

Extractivist economies

For a better understanding of this component of the assemblage, it is necessary first to explain what extractivism is. According to Acosta (2011), extractivism is an economic practice that removes large volumes of unprocessed natural resources for exportation. This economic practice in Latin America has been an omnipresent economic activity since colonisation. It continues to contribute to structuring the international division of labour and reifying capitalism as the hegemonic economy of the modern world-system:

> Extractivism is a mode of accumulation that began to take shape on a massive scale 500 years ago. With the conquest and colonization of America, Africa and Asia, the world economy – the capitalist system – began to be structured. This extractivist mode of accumulation has been determined, ever since, by the demands of the metropolitan centres of nascent capitalism. Some regions specialized in the extraction and production of raw materials, i.e. primary goods, while others took on the role of producers of manufactures. The former exported nature, the latter imported it (Acosta, 2011, 85).

Some of the most important extractivist economies in the region are mining, industrial fishing, forestry and agroindustry, in which coca leaf production is included. Each in its own manner, these economic activities represent and encourage socio-territorial conflict because they all share the same strategy of deriving profit "by making use of collective territories,

[also] they have the characteristic that land appropriation is transitory and has no pretensions to exercise control over it for new uses" (Villa, 2014, 72).[82] With the exception of agroindustry, which arrived in the region rather recently, the origin of socio-territorial conflict in Chocó and the Gulf of Tribugá is not a dispute over the territory in a long term sense but over temporary control of the space in order to extract natural resources or control drug distributing routes.

Beginning the analysis with mining, the situation presents two intertwined facets: on the one hand, the illegal occupation of indigenous and black communities' territories by transnational companies; on the other hand, the "legal framework that undermines the labour rights of artisanal miners" (Estrada Álvarez et al., 2013, 72). According to the authors, while the government promotes large-scale mining by providing legal, tax and security guarantees to transnational companies, it declares traditional and artisanal mining illegal. Additionally, the authors claim that exploitation currently cover an area of 2,738,108 hectares – equivalent to 59% of the total territory of Chocó (Estrada Álvarez et al., 2013). Along the same vein, Villa (2014) argues that, by the beginning of the twenty-first century, gold mining represented 5% of the GDP of Chocó and by 2012 it represented 35%:

> If analysed, the current titling dynamics of mining areas with respect to the territories owned by indigenous communities, in Chocó and in the western region of Antioquia towards the Atrato river valley, in the cultural area where the Embera community dominates, it is observed that there have been issued titles in number that reaches 291, which affect 55 indigenous reserves. However, it also warns that in this same area there are requests for new titles in a figure that reaches 464, which affects 68 guards. Of the issued titles, 171 are owned by the company Anglo Gold Ashanti Colombia S.A, a fact that indicates the expectations woven over these areas (Villa, 2014, 72).

In the case of agroindustry, the most important products of monoculture extractivism are banana (for export), oil palm (used in different industries) and coca leaf (to export as cocaine). Although the practices around legal and illegal monoculture are similar, it is necessary to consider them separately. As for legal monoculture, oil palm is one of the most important and devastating extractivist economies in the region. Among the environmental and human effects, palm industry comes with a series of impacts such as the obstruction and canalisation of waterbodies, water pollution, deforestation, desiccation of rivers, soil contamination and other ecosystemic imbalances that do not only affect the environment but also make impossible the subsistence and reproduction of collectivities in the territories occupied by the industry.

[82] Henceforth, my own translation from: Villa, W. (2014). Resguardos y territorios colectivos en el Pacífico colombiano frente a la economía extractiva. *Semillas*, 70–73.

Furthermore, beyond the environmental and social effects of the agroindustry of oil palm production, this economic activity illegally occupies some land plots, ignoring the collective ownership of territory in question. Using different sources, Estrada Álvarez et al. (2013) argue that, in 2005, 93% of the total area dedicated to the production of oil palm took place in collective territories – that is, in territories illegally occupied by the industry.

In reference to timber extraction, the local population integrates into the market as servile labour. This strategy to hold local labour lies in the subjection of the woodcutter by means of the debt system. According to Villa (2014), the extractive model is expanded via credits to landowners that would be paid in kind. Additionally, the extraction of timber takes place in collective territories illegally occupied by armed actors, transnational companies and others using violent or ilegal tricks, such as the constitution of dummy corporations to hide the massive exploitation of timber as an instance of "domestic use" of collective territories (Estrada Álvarez et al., 2013). On the extraction of timber, Villa (2014) concludes:

> The way in which these forests are pillaged means that the owners of the collective territory dispose themselves at the base of the market chain, a modern form of servile labour, but it also requires that their local authorities act as intermediaries (Villa, 2014, 73).

In reference to the fish industry as extractive economy, the assemblage of developmentalist/capitalist reduces fish to an exploitable resource and marginalises the relational human-fish interaction present in the other assemblages (Satizábal & Dressler, 2019). Although the human-fish interaction enacted in this assemblage may partially connect with the sustainability/multiculturalism assemblage, there are constant tensions and negotiations between the enacting agents of all assemblages:

> Overall, the discursive association between fish depletion and the impacts of the industry and the use of gillnets has fuelled conflicts between coastal dwellers, industrial vessels, and gillnet users (Satizábal & Dressler, 2019, 12).

Last, the case of coca leaf production, besides the shared environmental and social effects of any agroindustry (such as environmental damage, destruction of the territories that secure the subsistence of local collectivities and accumulation by dispossession), the fact that coca leaf production is illegal involves new elements. As Molano (2017) argues, the emerges of coca leaf crops in the department responds to decrease in the price of gold. In addition, the author argues that, although most coca leaf production in the country takes place south of the Pacific basin, the number of coca land plots in Chocó is increasing (Molano, 2017).

Notwithstanding the fact that the climate particularities of Chocó do not allow satellite images to accurately estimate the amount of coca crops in the region, two main aspects

explain why the department is not yet a hub of coca production. First, the criminal economy in Chocó is multifaceted. If places such as Tumaco (in the southern Pacific basin) focus on coca production and cocaine distribution and the lower Cauca River focuses on mining, the illegal economy in Chocó is multiple and includes illegal mining, coca production, cocaine distribution, smuggling and human trafficking:

> That is a characteristic and a synergy that is not found elsewhere among criminal economies. The owner of a territory, the ruler of a criminal territory, the guy moves between coca and mining according to which it is giving more money. When the international price of gold goes up, people leave coca behind and go to mining. When the price of gold falls, the thing goes the other way around (Interview with Daniel Rico April 2019).

The second element that explains the relatively low amount of coca leaf crops in Chocó corresponds to the fact that cocaine production requires a certain proximity to urban areas in order to purchase chemicals and other supplies necessary to produce cocaine:

> Coca needs certain closeness to the industry, closeness with suppliers. No one can get into a crystallizer in the middle of the Baudó jungle, because it loses money and it is very difficult. Something that has protected Chocó is that it has no connecting roads, but the moment you have better roads and can penetrate the jungle, and above all a road for transport [then the conditions would change]. Because from Quibdó you can only leave by two routes of very poor quality. Therefore, things that do not produce there like sulfuric acid or cement make the drug trafficking chain very vulnerable (Interview with Daniel Rico April 2019).

According to Daniel Rico, expert in illegal economies in Colombia, the illegal appropriation of land for extractive economies, violent displacement of local collectivities and destruction of the environment will worsen in Chocó due to misguided public policies. Besides the misguided approach to dealing with the production and distribution of cocaine that has characterised the "War on drugs" since the 1970s, collectivities have been facing economic pressure from capitalist enterprises to incite them to plant coca leaf crops. The lack of tertiary roads to access local markets, monopolistic role of intermediaries and pressure from legal and illegal actors trying to expand their properties and investments threaten non-capitalist economies to the point that families start cultivating coca crops to increase income:

> My conclusion is that there it will only get worse. Criminal pressure, security pressure and the inability of the State to understand that this is the place to prevent. They will be late, as we arrived late in Tumaco, we will be 5 or 10 years later and then for what. At this moment in Chocó, we can have 10,000 hectares. You concentrate the efforts of the State and destroy the business, but no. You can have about 400 or 500 illegal

> mines there, the State has the capacity to face illegal mining in Chocó, but they send three people to do something and have a greeting to the flag. Therefore, they are not able to concentrate their capacity, such as generating a critical mass. Then that will get worse, more coca, more mining, more mercury, more dead, more homicides, more pressure for Afro-Colombians (Interview with Daniel Rico April 2019).

The distribution of cocaine to markets in the United States and Europe represents another element of the socio-territorial conflict in the region. Due to proximity to Panamá, some fishers in the Gulf of Tribugá resort to trafficking cocaine as an additional source of income. As witnessed during the fieldwork for this research, young men especially tend to get involved into this economic activity in order to increase and diversify their sources of income. Although this practice, also called *pesca blanca* ("white fishing") because fishermen collect packs of cocaine scattered in the ocean and take them to Panamá, is not yet widely practiced in the region, it lends evidence to the latent socio-ontological dispute taking place in the territory. Leaving aside the dangerous and illegal aspects of *pesca blanca*, it does not differ much from other capitalist practices. Along with mega-infrastructure projects, industrial fishing, agroindustry and mining, drug trafficking combines different elements through which collectivities and individuals insert themselves into a dynamic of stark competition, as well as into a particular series of aspirations and desires part of the developmentalist/capitalist assemblage.

The participation of locals in *pesca blanca* reflects both the effects of the macro and micro levels of power analysed in Section 2. On the one hand, the political economy of the "War on drugs", economic pressure and physical displacement of local collectivities due to the expansion of capitalism, lack of access to local markets to generate income and the position of the gulf as a peripheral provider of raw materials to the modern world-system correspond the macro level of power. On the other hand, the shaping of aspirations, desires and wills of black and indigenous collectivities in the area reflects the scope of the hegemonic power on the micro level of power:

> That is losing our culture. They [drug dealers] make a party, that is why the kids have gotten into the drug trafficking issue, and they all live around it. Because of course, I buy the best tennis shoes, the best glasses; I wear the best earrings, the best brand shirts, the best girls. That is not a good reflection for our culture. What that has done is that we have been losing that sense of belonging to the territory. All those bad actions (Interview with Fausto Moreno – Coquí – April 2019).

Insertion into capitalist logic through drug trafficking, along with violence, produces new challenges to reproducing black social ontology for two main reasons: i) it breaks with the particular interaction between humans and the inhabited territory and ii) it transforms certain non-capitalist activities that enact black social ontology. As witnessed in the fieldwork for

this research, considering that drug trafficking produces very high income in a very short time, the youth is more prone to take part in this activity. The rush to make "easy" money as a means to reach the age of mass consumption (see Section 3.1) rather than to work in those activities that do not necessarily jeopardise the other two assemblages threatens both the local social ontology with its relational nature and the space and practices from which that social ontology emerges.

Although the business related to cocaine production has not fully reached Nuquí, it has already disrupted the collectivity because it has killed many young people and, to a certain extent, transformed the economic practices of the territory:

> And many young men lost, many young men (have been) murdered by that drug issue, which has shown them that it is the way for them to get easy money. The city model brought the belief that money is the solution of every problem, that it is the solution for everything, and that the world moves through money. It is making people like robots thinking that money is only the way (out) (Interview with Fausto Moreno – Coquí – April 2019).

As an example of the effects of drug production and trafficking, the case of the southern area of the Pacific basin, where the Colombian historical conflict, drug trafficking and cocaine production have existed for long, is revealing. The town of Tumaco, close to the border with Ecuador, concentrates the largest amount of hectares with coca leaf plantations in Colombia and is one of the most important ports along drug trafficking routes:

> One night I was talking with some young people who had been in their 'things' [referring to drug dealing] and one of them said. 'Man, I do not buy shoes in Tumaco, I buy shoes outside.' They are shoes of 500,000 pesos [approximately €130]. They send someone to buy three pairs of shoes or make a trip and buy three pairs of shoes. Of course, that is his world, his aspiration. Then get that money, no matter taking a risk with a trip to Panamá or Costa Rica because he needs the money to give himself his cravings. That is his world, the world he found. Get money to buy fine things, expensive things to be well (Interview Oscar Saya – Nuquí April 2019).

To close this section, it is important to consider two more elements. First, it is important to note that, with all extractive economies, the very common illegal occupation of land plots and the subsequent claims of collectivities come with periods of violence, massive displacements of communities and the usufruct of natural resources. In this sense, control over these territories, besides a war strategy and a way to control drug trafficking routes, is also an opportunity to generate income for armed groups (Villa, 2014). The conflictual element of extractive economies, in addition to the illegal control and occupation of territories, is that, since the late nineties, the extraction of resources has financed different

sides of wars and has reduced the opportunities for the subsistence of black, indigenous and peasants collectivities (Villa, 2014).

Second, the characteristics and expansion of both extractive economies and mega-infrastructure projects described above evidence the ontological and socio-ontological nature of the dispute in the Gulf of Tribugá. What is at stake is not only the different uses that assemblages might give to the territory but, particularly, the dispute is over the re-creation, hegemonic prevalence and conditions of negotiation between the black social ontology and the social ontology of modernity.

6.2. Sustainability/multiculturalism assemblage

To the extent that the assemblage of sustainability/multiculturalism dialectically belongs to and enacts the social ontology of modernity, it represents a recent innovation of the developmentalism/capitalism assemblage. As a discursive practice of modernity, this assemblage also separates humans and non-humans, considers history as a teleological process (and positions itself at its end), situates individual entities as its centre, argues that modern epistemology is the only mechanism for reaching absolute truth and has universal claims (see Section 1.1).

Sharing and reproducing the same socio-ontological background of developmentalism/capitalism, the present sections focus on those innovative aspects of sustainability/multiculturalism that differentiate themselves from the orthodox form of developmentalism analysed in Section 3. These innovations focus mainly on the notions of sustainability, multiculturalism and neoliberalism multiculturalism. Acknowledging the positive elements that the sustainability discourse may have, such as some environmental and social benefits, under a critical lens, it also represent a series of challenges to the autonomy and self-determination of the black collectivities in the Gulf of Tribugá. More importantly, as argued in Chapter 4 and described in the discussion of tourism below, this assemblage inserts itself into the logic of neoliberal multiculturalism and takes socio-ontological and sociocultural differences as ornamental, folkloric and environmental assets of consumption.

Sustainability: the developmentalist response to global environmental concern

Sustainability is developmentalism's response to the global environmental concern in the late twentieth century. This slight shift in developmentalism sought to increase the productivity of those territories under ontological dispute while simultaneously conserving its natural resources. Under the name of "sustainable developmentalism," western modernity, following its naturalistic ontology, tries to reconcile the exploitation of non-human entities while conserving (or at least having minor impacts on) the biodiversity of such territories. In line with its ontological background, the enactment of the sustainability/multiculturalism

assemblage by different local and external agents contributes to manufacturing the ontological dispute present in the territory.

Sustainability/multiculturalism emerged as an assemblage linked to notions of the environment as a global problem and of nation-states as multi-ethnic. As a ramification of developmentalism, the discourse of sustainability argues that it is "possible to eradicate poverty and protect the environment in another great accomplishment of Western rationality" (Escobar, 2007, 323). Nevertheless, Escobar (2007) argues that this innovative discourse hides its real purpose: planning and studying how to make more efficient the extraction and use of natural resources. This innovation does not problematise the exploitation of nature itself (characteristic of the developmentalism/capitalism assemblage) but the efficiency of that exploitation. Along the same vein, sustainable developmentalism does not conceive of local collectivities as legitimate interlocutors in the enactment of new assemblages. Rather than learning from local social ontologies and sociocultures, sustainable development enacts reality through experts and trustees who try to reconcile conservation and exploitation:

> The Western scientist continues to speak on behalf of the Earth. God forbid that a Peruvian peasant, an African nomad or an Amazonian rubber worker has something to say about it (Escobar, 2007, 325).

The international concern over the environment inserted into the discourse of developmentalism reproduces most of the socio-ontological characteristics of modernity. In addition to the naturalistic ontology of sustainable developmentalism, coupled with the idea of universalism, the discursive practice of sustainability reproduces a pretend objectivity in which experts and scientists enunciate knowledge from a quasi-sacred position (see Section 1.2). According to this perspective, if knowledge is not culturally and historically located, it has a universal scope since it is not attached to any time-space constraint. Denying the place of such an enunciation, thinking the environment as devoid of socio-economic, political and historical conditions entails three main elements.

First, recognising the environment as a global problem without identifying its local manifestations or conditions, sustainable developmentalism does not recognise the power relations and the complex set of interests that take place in and shape the destruction of the environment. In other words, as it is a "global problem," indigenous, black and peasant communities in the Global South are presented as equally responsible for such destruction as corporations and states in both the Global North and South. By invisibilising the differentiation between responsibilities for environmental damage, peasants, indigenous and black collectivities in the Global South end up carrying the same burden as those agents that contribute the most to climate change and the destruction of life on the planet.

Second, by pointing out the possible degrading practices that local communities have in their territories, experts of sustainable developmentalism do not acknowledge the contextual and historical factors that led local communities to overuse the land the way that some collectivities currently do. The expansion of capitalism materialised in land grabbing, accumulation by dispossession, alteration of river courses and reduction of lands forced local communities to exert increased pressure on their local territories (Escobar, 2007).

Last, although including the environment in the discussion of capitalism might seem to challenge limitless exploitation and accumulation, it does not questions developmentalism itself. Rather that endorsing nature with an active role in the reproduction of life, sustainable developmentalism positions the environment as just one more element to consider in the production chain. Stuck to the modern ontological dualism and capitalism, this new version of developmentalism exclusively focuses on a more efficient use of natural resources. The main innovation of sustainable developmentalism is that it includes the environment – not as natural resources, but as such – in the production chain. After this innovation, any capitalist entrepreneurship should consider not only the raw materials it may need but also the environment, CO_2 emissions, its capacity for recycling-reusing, etc. Actually, since the 1990s, there has existed an important market based on CO_2 emissions that trades with the possibility of polluting more or less according to the capacity of countries and companies to purchase carbon credits.

As Sachs (1988) accurately argues, sustainable developmentalism reduces ecology and environmental concern to a more efficient and continuous way of exploitation:

> The proposed policies of resource management, I am afraid, ignore the option of intelligent self-limitation and reduce ecology to a higher form of efficiency. Such a reductionism, I claim, implicitly affirms the universal validity of the economic world-view and will eventually spread further the Westernization of minds and habits, a cultural fall-out that in the long run also endangers the overall goal of sustainability (Sachs, 1988, 21).

One of the latest discursive mechanisms that materialise sustainable developmentalism are the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) established by the United Nations in 2016 (United Nations, 2019d). Without going into much detail, after postponing the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) from 2000 to 2015, the United Nations came with a new strategy to promote and expand prosperity. As it states, "the Sustainable Development Goals are a call for action by all countries – poor, rich and middle-income – to promote prosperity while protecting the planet. They recognise that ending poverty must go hand-in-hand with strategies that build economic growth and address a range of social needs including education, health, social protection, and job opportunities, while tackling climate change and environmental protection" (United Nations, 2019a).

Clustered in seventeen groups and framed in the liberal tradition related to the HDI and the MPI (see Chapter 3), the United Nations aims to accomplish these goals by 2030. As an innovation in the expansion of developmentalism, the SDG also fail to take local collectivities, their social ontologies and their sociocultures into account as legitimate interlocutors in the construction and enactment of a territory. What is more, by invisibilising local social ontologies and sociocultures, the SDG also fail to identify its own conceptions of well-being and abundancy or poverty and scarcity (see Chapter 3). In this sense, although the SDG recognise the existence of local collectivities, due to its ontological pretension of universalism, they do not acknowledge socio-ontological difference and reduce the existence of such collectivities to folkloric expressions.

By renovating some of the goals of the MDG, such as economic growth and the end of poverty while advocating for the sustainable and resilient infrastructure, efficient use of natural resources, sustainable industrialisation and waste reduction, the SDG reproduce the perspective that sees socio-economic and environmental problems as technical impasses. Additionally, not questioning modern universalisms and pretending the transformation of every collectivity that do not stick to the goals, evidences both the constitutive belonging of the SDG to neoliberal multiculturalism, and its misacknowledgement of the macro level of power that operates in the creation and reproduction of poverty and marginalisation.

To sum up, while sustainable developmentalism, as a slight variation of the latest stage of modernity, responds to the global concern for the environment, it does not tackle the problem in all its complexity and dimension but reduces the destruction of life to a problem of efficiency. That is, it assumes that the main environmental problem is a misuse of resources and claims to represent a more rational, planned and continuous exploitation of nature. These limitations correspond to three main aspects: i) the misacknowledgement of power relations concerning the destruction of the environment, ii) the individualisation of environmental responsibilities and the blaming of local communities for misuse of resources and iii) not questioning developmentalism as the main cause of environmental degradation. As Sachs (1988) concludes:

> Consequently, the view on the globe they propose continues (in the tradition of 'development') to assume that all circumstances have first to be judged according to the imperative of production, be it even environmentally rational production. Ecological politics, however, which take the steady growth in demand for granted, and limit themselves to propagating efficient means, fall into the trap to push, in the name of ecology, for the further rationalization of the world (Sachs, 1988, 23).

In that sense, the practices that belong to and allow for the emergence of the assemblage of sustainability/multiculturalism combine two main elements. On the one hand, they reproduce representations of those spaces as a pristine, tropical abundancy, untouched by humans, that

have to be preserved for sustainable exploitation. On the other hand, rather than acknowledging the complexity of local collectivities and their transformative scope, these practices perform neoliberal multiculturalism and reduce socio-ontological diversity to exotic performances of consumption.

Visions of the territory under the sustainability/multiculturalism assemblage

Although partially connected with both notions of environmental preservation and resource exploitation, the assemblage of sustainability/multiculturalism conceives of the territory similar to the assemblage of developmentalism/capitalism. Sharing the same social ontology as the developmentalism/capitalism assemblage, the notion of "sustainable development" reproduces a perspective of the territory as emptied of its inhabitants, "backward," "savage" and in need of intervention. In that vein, hegemonic representations of the Pacific region reproduce colonial discourse in that the territory is presented as both full of opportunities and conflictive and wasted due to the irrational use by local collectivities (see Section 2.2).

Taking the current National Development Plan (PND 2018-2022) as reference, the shared social ontology between the assemblages of developmentalism/capitalism and sustainability/multiculturalism becomes evident in the tropicalist diagnosis of the territory and the mechanisms proposed to "improve" the region. This diagnosis of the territory highlights its biodiversity while underlining its isolation and the conflictive and precarious living conditions of its population. In its analysis, the PND 2018-2022 identifies three main problems that exemplify the "underdeveloped" condition of the Pacific region. First, using standardised models to estimate poverty (see Section 3.1), the diagnosis stresses the widespread poverty of its inhabitants that exceeds the national average:

> The Colombian Pacific is a territory that tends towards diversity for equity, peaceful co-existence and sustainable development. This vision seeks to address socio-economic difficulties that have undermined the potential of the region in terms of well-being, economic growth and environmental sustainability. Poverty is one of the difficulties that most affects the region. Chocó is the department with the highest monetary poverty rate in the region with 58.7% in 2017, 2.4 times higher than the national average, which reached 26.9%; Cauca (48.7%) and Nariño (40.2%) also have higher levels of poverty than the national one. On the other hand, Valle del Cauca had an incidence of 22%, well below the regional poverty rate (32.1%) (Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 2019a, 1175).[83]

[83] Henceforth, my own translation from: Departamento Nacional de Planeación. (2019a). *Bases del Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2018-2022. Pacto por Colombia. Pacto por la equidad.* Bogotá.

Second, denoting the conflictual condition of the territory, the presence of illegal crops such as coca leaf and cocaine trafficking represent one of the most important things that holds the region back. According to the document, "the Pacific concentrates 38% of the total area planted with coca, Nariño and Cauca are part of the departments with the largest number of hectares cultivated (45,735 and 15,960, respectively)" (Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 2019a, 1176).

Last, the document suggests that isolation reduces productivity and hinders the economic potential of the territory. As the PND 2018-2022 argues, a vital restriction to regional development is its lack of connectivity. As a central argument used to advance the construction of the Port of Tribugá in Nuquí and its adjacent highways, the promoters of the project justify the intervention with reference to this notion of isolation. Overall, isolation and disconnection are the backbone of the developmentalist discourse of the region:

> One of the limitations that slows down regional development is poor connectivity and transport infrastructure. The exit to the Pacific Ocean to mobilize products to and from the ports depends on two corridors: Buga-Buenaventura and Pasto-Tumaco and most of the roads are concentrated in the Andean area, as is the rail and airport infrastructure (Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 2019a, 1176).

Parallel to the portrayal of the territory as isolated, falling into a tropicalist portrayal of the region, experts and trustees also describe the region's abundance as an opportunity for development. In the particular case of sustainable developmentalism, this double perspective of the territory – as both isolated and abundant – incorporates an innovation regarding the limits, cycles and times the exploitation of natural resources should consider. As stated above, the main innovation of sustainable developmentalism is that, rather than questioning capitalism and its dualist human-nature interactions, it seeks more efficient and long-term forms of extraction. In contrast with a developmentalist perspective, which argues that employment, modernisation and economic progress are more important that the environment, the sustainability approach says that it is feasible to combine economic growth, extractive economies and environmental conservation. Noted in the pillar on sustainability in the PND 2018-2022 and in a recurrent slogan used by the Colombian government: produce while conserving and conserving while producing (Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 2019a).

In order to illustrate this contrast, a mainstream position in the assemblage of developmentalism/capitalism would argue that, after the provision of Law 70 of 1993, the inhabitants of Chocó are in a more precarious condition than before because all the environmental and social impediments that collectivities and organisation have imposed:

> Communities are poorer today than 25 years ago. What is the reason? On the subject of dependence, for example, great wooden predators existed in the Pacific zone,

> medium and low Atrato River, but they gave employment. That is, in the camp, they needed people and such. Environmental damage, collateral, but they had people (Interview with Diego Pardo Arquímides).

On the other hand, there are two non-exclusive positions regarding the sustainable development of the region. As stated above, such strategies seek to reconcile economic growth and extractive economies with the conservation of the region's natural abundance. First, the idea that, due to the geographical conditions of the area, the recovery capacity of any ecosystem is such that developmental interventions would not represent an environmental threat. From this standpoint, the environment should not become and obstacle for development because the natural abundance is such that any intervention would have minimal consequences in the long term:

> You cut [the forest] and in a month you have nowhere to walk. It is exuberant. The *yarumo*[84] that is to make the paper. In Chocó, you do not have to spend anything. You that went by plane, some forests with a regeneration, but regeneration is not that you need three years, at two years you already have to cut wood. It is that Chocó have not thought about it the way it should be, because the rain of the intertropical front is studied, which is what it really generates of those 10 thousand or 11 thousand millimetres (Interview with Armando Perea, former director of CODECHOCÓ)[85].

Second, most commonly associated with the idea of sustainable developmentalism, the current mainstream vision of the Pacific basin still conceives of the territory as unexploited but ready for interventions that take the conservation of natural resources as the main source of income and progress. This perspective, reproduced through discourses of sustainable developmentalism, suggests using the exoticism and abundance of landforms, animals and plants to generate income and progress through environmental services and sustainable businesses:

> However, in order to overcome the challenges and boost the opportunities represented by the sustainable use of biodiversity, the comprehensive implementation of public policies based on the premise of producing conserving and preserving conserving is required. For this, incentives to conservation and payments for environmental services arise as mechanisms to recognize conservation actions; and the bio economy, forestry economy, sustainable tourism and green businesses, as productive alternatives that allow the sustainable use of natural capital (Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 2019, 482).

[84] Its scientific name is Cecropia peltata.

[85] CODECHOCÓ is the Autonomous Regional Corporation for Sustainable Development of Chocó.

Along the same vein, one of the advisors in the conception and construction of the National Development Plan 2018-2022, following the idea that certain territories are unexploited and do not offer value to the national economy, suggests that it is necessary to capitalise on the environmental wealth of the territory by exploiting its resources. From this perspective, deepening two of the main modern conceptions of nature – nature as an exploitable resource due to the dualism human-nature – the environment becomes capital:

> Environmental services, green businesses, sustainable rural tourism. In other words, how to achieve the use of all that ecosystem-richness to appropriate it by the inhabitants of those territories and allow them to improve their living conditions because they are certainly the poorest of all (Interview with Juan Mauricio Ramírez, April 2019).

Furthermore, by conceiving the territory as an empty space, experts and trustees reproduce one of the clearest and most innovative forms of commodification of the environment. That is, considering the Pacific region as one of the best spots for the trade of CO_2 emissions. Due to its biodiversity and the sustainable and cyclic uses of the territory practiced by the communities, Chocó is the object of new strategies to incorporate this territory into new forms of commodification that break through mainstream mechanisms of the monetisation of nature under capitalism. That is, trading CO_2 emissions or paying for ecosystem services surpasses the exploitation of natural resources individually, commodifies entire ecosystems and puts a price on the environment as such:

> I see it as timber, *chontaduro*[86], fishing, tourism, agro-tourism. That is a matter of conservation and selling environmental services. So let us do some oxygen capture projects, I do not know, for people to live from that (Interview with Maria del Pilar Ruiz – Expert in rural development).

Along the same lines, in order to overcome the underdeveloped condition of the territory and its inhabitants, the PND 2018-2022 proposes the Pacific Pact (Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 2019a). This pact would contribute to the modernisation of the region and its incorporation into the national and global economy. It is important to highlight that the four main objectives of Pacific Pact correspond to the discourse of sustainable developmentalism. The pact aims to move forward through Rostow's six stages of economic growth (see Chapter 3) by using natural resources more efficiently. The objectives are:

1. Improve intermodal port, logistics and transport infrastructure. "This implies improving the intermodal connection of the region and between the country's production and collection centers with the ports, expanding the logistic capacity to

[86] *Bactris gasipaes* is a species of palm native to the tropical forests of South and Central America. In English, it is known as the "peach palm."

offer greater agility to facilitate the processes associated with foreign trade" (Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 2019a, 1177).

2. "To potentiate productive development according to particular vocations: it is important to increase the generation of value added that makes the most of the competitive advantages of the territories" (Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 2019a, 1177).
3. "Generate greater coverage and quality in the provision of public services to achieve greater equity: the Plan seeks to improve the quality of life of people and increase the competitiveness of the region, from the achievement of minimum levels of well-being, including the provision of public services" (Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 2019a, 1177).
4. "Improve the environmental management of the region by strengthening territorial planning: it is necessary to address environmental management from an ecosystemic approach that allows recognizing the interrelationship between environmental preservation, productivity and risk management" (Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 2019a, 1177).

The PND 2018-2022 concludes that, by achieving those objectives, the area would become a "more prosperous region and where the vision of diversity for equity, peaceful co-existence and sustainable development materializes" (Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 2019a, 1177).

Additionally, under the framework of sustainability/multiculturalism, some of the efforts implemented in the territory since the turn of the century focus on incorporating rural production into the national and international market and on increasing black communities' income through developmental interventions. As an example, the following lines present two initiatives that aim to bring modernity to the region by increasing connectivity, productivity and making black communities rural entrepreneurs. The first initiative, *Alianzas Productivas,* isrun by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and consists of contract farming. According to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, "this project is a model of organizational and business development that links organizations of small rural producers to competitive markets through marketing agreements with formal commercial allies. The project aims at small associated agricultural producers, with little capital for productive investment and who derive their income from the sale of their products and/or the remunerated work of household members" (Ministerio de Agricultura y Desarrollo Rural, 2019).[87]

[87] Henceforth my own translation from: Ministerio de Agricultura y Desarrollo Rural. (2019). Dirección de Desarrollo Rural. Retrieved 7 May 2019, from https://www.minagricultura.gov.co/ministerio/direcciones/Paginas/Direccion-de-Desarrollo-Rural.aspx

Furthermore, a prerequisite for participation is that peasants must be part of cooperatives or producers' associations. Although this is not a problem in itself, the main incentive of creating these associations is to improve productivity by increasing the scale of production. The problem with reducing social participation or social capital to new mechanisms of generating income reveals the partial but strong connection between the assemblages of developmentalism/capitalism and sustainability/multiculturalism. Although these assemblages may, at times, differ or contradict each other, both belong to the same social ontology, share the same standardised notions of well-being and progress, conceive history as lineal and refer to modern epistemology as a mechanism to improve "other" populations (see Section 3.2):

> There is one element that for me is super important. […] It is, let us organize ourselves to the market, so the organization makes sense there. You make sense of the social structure around the business. So look, the small is there, which is my land plot. Because the project supports the small that is my plot, the company, which is the association and the environment. It is a super thing, really sustainable development (Interview with Maria del Pilar Ruiz – Expert in rural development).

Similarly, the second initiative led by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) "seeks to strengthen legal economies in Colombia's conflict-affected territories by increasing the competitiveness of licit producers and the value of licit products. These territories are home to resilient communities and entrepreneurial human capital, which has long been plagued by illegal economies, violence, and underdevelopment. Precarious institutions and decades-long armed conflict have given rise to narco-trafficking, illegal mining, and trafficking in persons and arms, all which threaten stability, security, and peace" (USAID/COLOMBIA, 2018).

In particular, similar to *Alianzas Productivas*, the programs and interventions led by USAID focus on productivity and on the generation of income as the main strategy to overcome marginalisation. As one of its contractors suggests:

> For USAID, alternative development is the development of licit productive projects and generates new licit economies in the territories. That has not changed in the last 20 years. All the programs have productive projects, all without exception. So the projects that work with the black communities all have a productive component (Interview with Ana Maria Rivera, USAID).

With slight differences, the objectives of the PND 2018-2022, the initiative of *Alianzas Productivas* and USAID's alternative development initiative share the same socio-ontological background and purposes of developmentalism/capitalism. These projects strive for the stage of mass consumption (Rostow, 1959) while conserving natural resources and

incorporating local collectivities into the national and international market. As will be analysed in the final part of the research, the critique of the sustainable developmentalism assemblage does not claim a romantic perspective of pre-modern times but stands for an innovative, transmodern, intercultural and critical understanding of the role of black collectivities in the constitution of a new hegemonic common sense – that is, this critique acknowledges the ontological nature of the territorial dispute and recognises the social ontologies, lived experiences and transformative capacities of black collectivities to challenge the currently hegemonic macro and micro levels of power.

Practices and performances of sustainability/multiculturalism

The sustainability/multiculturalism assemblage emerges out of the friction and dispute between certain practices of the other two assemblages. Some of the practices enacted within the sustainability/multiculturalism assemblage may be affiliated with one or the other two assemblages according to the purpose and nature of the performance. Materialised through a series of developmental interventions, practices and economic activities, this assemblage shares the socio-ontological nature of the developmentalism/capitalism assemblage. Although the sustainability/multiculturalism assemblage tries to detach from some practices of mainstream developmentalism, they share the same social ontology. They both understand history as teleological, ontologically separate humans from nature, exclusively refer to modern epistemology to think reality and blindly trust bodies of experts and technocrats to "improve" any environmental, social and economic problems a given collectivity may have.

However, the sustainability/multiculturalism assemblage presents a series of performances closer to the communitarianism/non-capitalism assemblage than the developmentalism/capitalism assemblage. This does not mean that the assemblage under analysis reflects the local forms of interaction between humans and other-than-human beings or the relational nature of local social ontology, but that some of its practices may relate to those of the communitarianism/non-capitalism assemblage. Here resides the complexity of this assemblage: while belonging to modern social ontology, it contains some practices that, at times, may relate to those performed in the communitarianism/non-capitalism assemblage.

In order to illustrate the complexity of this assemblage and its double liaison, the following pages focus on three main socio-economic and environmental performances: exotic fishing, tourism and a workday of planting mangrove. Beginning with exotic sustainable fishing, this two-step practice shares elements with both developmentalism/capitalism and communitarianism/non-capitalist assemblages. The first step consists of the process of fishing in a traditional manner. Considering that it is fishers from the black local collectivity who perform this economic activity, while fishing, they enact a type of relationship with the fish, which corresponds to a non-capitalist, non-dualistic ontology, closer to the human-fish connection of relational ontologies described in the communitarianism/non-capitalism

assemblage (see Section 6.3). The second step of sustainable fishing shares some elements with the assemblage of developmentalism/capitalism and consists of two main elements: first, taking fish as exotic objects for later consumption is part of the tropicalist vision of the Pacific basin analysed in Section 4.2; second, the trading and consumption parts of exotic fishing performs developmentalism/capitalism, focuses on income, marginalises the fisher and the fish, puts a market value on the fish and sells it for consumption in gourmet restaurants in different cities of Colombia:

> Although fish in this assemblage might be somewhat less alienated from people and place, their market value is more abstract and discursively entangled in national ideals and global conservation discourses […] Fish meat in this assemblage is revealed as an extension of the Pacific's exotic waterscapes, evoking romantic imaginaries of timebound places and people (Satizábal & Dressler, 2019, 13).

The second performance relates to tourism, an activity that is becoming one of the most important economic sectors in the region due to its inclusion of other practices such fishery, agriculture, transportation, lodging and handcrafting. Similar to exotic fishing, tourism presents a series of elements associated with the re-creation of the local relational ontology, for it allows and creates the conditions for performing socio-economic and cultural practices that emerge and give rise to black social ontology. Nonetheless, this recently introduced economic activity presents a series of new challenges to the coastal-dwellers of the Gulf of Tribugá, as it may allow some of the elements of the developmentalism/capitalism assemblage to hegemonise the ontological dispute. Accordingly, it is necessary to structure a type of community-based tourism that rather that crack down on local sociocultures by imposing practices from the developmentalism/capitalism assemblage, recognising and strengthen it as a historical and cultural response to particular forms of interacting with the space:

> I think we should be very clear about how we are going to structure tourism, because we are still structuring it. [...] From there we have to start. Through tourism, we can generate many life options. Tourism is simply a tool to generate life quality through fishing, through agriculture, through everything we do, but without destroying our culture and our environment (Interview Fausto Moreno – Coquí April 2019).

In that sense, different actors in the territory promote and defend tourism as an important mechanism for generating income and reproducing the black socioculture and social ontology. It allows the combination of traditional economic activities and a relation to the market without threatening the autonomy of black collectivities. As the local economy is not a closed circuit (Escobar, 2008), tourism as a scenario of exchange with the market can strengthen black collectivities rather that weaken them:

> Through tourism, they can generate a lot of income that can be more representative than a job as a guard there in a port. […] For example a guidance inside a mangrove. That can generate important resources for a guide with a good knowledge of its territory and can provide excellent information to a tourist. Therefore, what we have to do is generate strategies to use the territory and its resources (Interview Oscar Saya – Nuquí April 2019).

Furthermore, tourism as an income source, part of the assemblage of sustainability/developmentalism and in dialogue with the communitarianism/non-capitalist assemblage, has become a strategy through which black collectivities reproduce their social ontology. Additionally, for its capacity to negotiate with both capitalist and non-capitalist assemblages, tourism has become an element of resistance in defence of the autonomy and self-determination of the collectivities in the Gulf of Tribugá. In this sense, tourism becomes one of the sources of income capable of disputing the hegemonic discourse of developmentalism. Tourism re-creates practices that enact the local type of relational ontology and its local sociocultures but, simultaneously, may provide some the goods and services required today that developmentalism falsely promises to bring. Among others, such goods and services are school supplies, televisions, cable TV, radios, computers, mobile phones and clothes:

> But tourism has also been a very beautiful resistance space because tourism has also allowed them to value what they have, and value nature. That is, understand the dimension of what they have. People who arrive every week tell them, you live in paradise. […] Then you talk to fishers, and talk to those who take you to see the whales and they already know that they live in paradise and they do not want that to end because their gold mine is tourism. They know that if that changes and that becomes ugly, and take oil [as an example of an extractive economy], it becomes a crap (Interview Ana María Arango – Quibdó April 2019).

Additionally, although likely evident in the testimonies referenced above, it is important to mention that the kind of tourism most locals are working to implement is not a massive, large-scale business but a community-driven, low scale experience. As the president of the Community Council Los Riscales argues:

> We do have a business idea: make a beachfront cabin and organize a restaurant and have native inns and a micro economy. They are doing a lot in all these communities. In Guachalito,[88] there are initiatives that are foreign and are native, but that are micro tourism, not mass tourism. No of masses. We do not have a mega project in terms of

[88] Guachalito is one of the most touristy areas of Nuquí.

> tourism in our cultural development model (Interview President Community Council Los Riscales – Nuquí April 2019).

Alongside the innovations that tourism may entail in reproducing the local relational ontology, while enacting some forms of developmentalism, this economic activity brings a series of risks concerning the reproduction of black social ontology and the autonomy of black collectivities. These risks may cluster in two groups. First, the risk of coastal dwellers focusing exclusively on responding to the demands of tourism and leaving behind self-consumption and other non-capitalist economic activities. Focusing exclusively on tourism implies a reduction of the autonomy of coastal collectivities because well-being, nutrition, income, social relations and interactions with the territory become dependent on, and become determined by, the flow of tourists and capital. Moreover, changing the purpose of economic practices and alienating black collectivities from nature, the products they produce and themselves hinders the social nature of black economic performances such as food sufficiency, food sovereignty and strengthening the social cohesion of the collectivity. Additionally, the possible alienation of black social collectivities ultimately erodes the relational component of black social ontology.

In conversation with María Paula Velazquez, anthropologist expert in the area, she argued that, among others, the role of men has drastically changed with tourism:

> Because they no longer get banana or a plantain there, they have to go get it from other *corregimientos*. Then it has already affected a part of the local economy. Men are no longer there [working in traditional sectors] but they are supposed to take care of native inns with women. Therefore, those activities transform towards the domestic, they have to be washing, cooking, then there is no time to go to the primary forest, there is no time to do many things (Interview María Paula Velázquez – Quibdó April 2019).

The second risk that tourism may present relates to the notion of neoliberal multiculturalism. Neoliberal multiculturalism may emerge through tourism to the extent that, to the eyes of promoters, tourists and the state, local practices may become an exotic curiosity of consumption rather than the legitimate performances that emerge from and simultaneously give rise to a particular social ontology. By transforming black practices, *habitus* and institutions into tourist attractions reduced to folkloric performances, this economic sector invisibilises the complexity behind the local practices enacted by the coastal-dwellers, the struggle over hegemonic discourse in their territory and the transformative proposal of such practices in interactions between different social ontologies. In short, turning black practices, *habitus* and institutions into folkloric exoticism for consumption misacknowledges the local social ontology in all its relational complexity and does not conceive its socioculture and enactments as historical and cultural responses to interacting with the territory. In the long

term, the misacknowledgement of local social ontology and its conversion into folkloric assets of consumption deepens the marginalisation of these collectivities:

> As also falling into this matter of exoticizing the other. Then, how tourist come and see how they [black collectivities] produce *viche.*[89] Then come and see. […] It is seeing people piling rice. That seems good to me because it involves people, but sometimes it can suddenly fall into stereotyping these productive spaces of women and men there (Interview María Paula Velázquez – Quibdó April 2019).

The third performance through which the assemblage of sustainability/multiculturalism materialises is the process of collective mangrove planting (see Picture 1, Picture 5 and Picture 6). This particular performance, although it belongs to and reproduces modern social ontology in that it conceives of nature as ontologically separate from humans and replicates the tropicalist vision of the territory, is also partially connected with the assemblage of communitarianism/non-capitalism. As for its belonging to the social ontology of modernity, its proximity with developmentalism becomes evident in terms of its own conception of the space and its own purpose. While ontologically separating humans from mangroves and invisibilising the structural conditions that may explain the current state of the mangroves, its main intention is to organise the space to conserve a fragile but important ecosystem.

Acknowledging that environmental conservation is a laudable task that deserves bigger efforts, the discourse of conservation establishes a particular form of the interaction between humans (in this case represented by the institutions promoting the planting session) and the landform. This particular interaction, in addition to marginalising the role of mangroves in the re-creation of reality in the Gulf of Tribugá, also invisibilises the relational interaction between human and other-than-human entities characteristic of black social ontology in the area.

As for its partial connection to the assemblage of communitarianism/non-capitalism, to the extent that it is the community itself that performs the sessions of mangrove planting, this activity is not a capitalist practice in and of itself. This practice reflects a type of interaction between black collectivities and their territory in which the mangrove is much more than an inert entity without any sort of agency. The form of interaction performed in the planting process dialectically corresponds to and allows for the emergence of the local social ontology in which this landform, although without human ontological features, plays an active role in the constitution of the collectivity and the performance of reality.

[89] *Viche* is an artisanal alcoholic drink from the Pacific basin. Besides its alcoholic effect, black collectivities use *viche* as medicine against stomach pain, parasites and other health problems. It is also known for is virtues of fertility and vigorousness. It comes from the juices of sugarcane cut before maturation.

This particular practice has partial connections with both a tropicalist, pristine and untouched perspective of the territory characteristic of global environmental concern and its intrinsic alliance with neoliberal multiculturalism, as well as with the local uses for and relational interactions humans have with mangroves. Although this particular performance is not a regular activity, the experience of a workday mangrove plantation was a process that involved a large part of the collectivity and that concerned all of it because of the ecological and economic importance of this ecosystem.

In this particular session of mangrove planting during the fieldwork in 2019, the National Aquaculture and Fisheries Authority (AUNAP) provided the community with approximately three thousand seeds to restore the areas of degraded mangrove. Once the community had the seeds, it went to the most affected areas and created working groups in order to cover a greater amount of land. Officials of the AUNAP, who were also from the region, accompanied this process. Some of the officials were acquaintances with members of the collectivity due to their previous work with the communities and, in some cases, for their role in the constitution of Law 70 of 1993.

Once in the area, each group took a bag of seeds and began walking and seeding the land. During the planting process, the organisers from the collectivity and the officials from the AUNAP distributed *aguapanela*[90] among the participants and, once the seeding process was finished, all collaborators shared a bottle of *viche* that one member of the community had prepared and brought.

Picture 1, Picture 2 and Picture 3: Collective planting of mangrove – Coquí

[90] *Aguapanela* is a drink found in Latin America and the Caribbean. It is an infusion made from unrefined whole cane sugar or *panela*. *Aguapanela* literally means "*panela* water."

Pictures taken by one of the officials of AUNAP.

6.3. Communitarianism/non-capitalism assemblage

> *In the worldview of black people, the territory is linked to the tasks of daily life, to that entanglement of the divine and the human. The territory and its natural resources, say plants, animals, water, elves, phantasms and spirits are determining factors that define the relations of respect, use, exploitation, organization and distribution of the territory within each community* (Los Riscales, 2007, 311).

Considering the history of the settlement in the region and its triple influence (see Chapter 4), the social ontology of the coastal-dwellers of the Gulf of Tribugá represents an original universe that constitutes a cultural code for the use of the territory. Additionally, the socio-ontological particularity of black collectivities in the region evidences epistemic and ontological marronage – that is, "as original and coherent cognitive and identity strategies that distort and recreate the imposed sociocultural models" (Losonczy, 1990, 116).[91]

The characteristics of the non-animist relational ontology that this research argues is present in the Gulf of Tribugá consists of two main distinctive elements: i) it claims a radical interconnectedness; ii) although it does not humanise other-than-human beings, these entities still have an important and decisive role in the collectivity. With these relational aspects in mind, the interconnectedness present in the Gulf of Tribugá gives rise to a particular social ontology that implies non-representational relations between humans and other-than-humans, a particular model of nature (including humans) and a symbolic classification of the world according to certain ontological conditions of each human and other-than-human entity. As will be analysed throughout the section, each of these socio-ontological features

[91] Henceforth, my own translation from: Losonczy, A. M. (1990). Del Ombligo a la Comunidad: Ritos de Nacimiento en la Cultura Negra del Litoral Pacífico Colombiano. *Caribbean Studies*, 115–123.

of the black collectivity in the Gulf of Tribugá has concrete practices and *habitus* that dialectically emerge from and give rise to its black social ontology.

For its relational nature, the social ontology of the coastal-dwellers of the gulf does not only *include* the role of the vegetable world but *centralises* it. In the particular case of these entities, unlike immobile minerals and mobile animals, plants have the capacity to travel without moving. This characteristic grants them a mediating role between what moves and is alive and what does not move and is not alive. The notion of the vegetable world traveling without moving corresponds to two main facts: first, seeds and grains spread with wind or rain; second, plants extend and multiply themselves horizontally – that is, without changing their original locations:

> As mobility is the main distinctive sign of living things for the blacks of Chocó and they associate immobility with death, the unity of mobility and immobility in vegetables gives them the role of mediators between the two fundamental ways of being existence (Losonczy, 1993, 40).[92]

Moreover, similar to the Embera indigenous group in the region, the black model of nature associates the vegetable world with the feminine and the air with the masculine. According to Losonczy (1993), the interaction between these two elements (vegetable world/feminine and air/masculine), besides producing the horizontal expansion of plants, serves as a metaphor of the procreation and extension of the black collectivities in the region. The distinction between the masculine and the feminine also codifies the distinction between the animal world and the vegetable world. As stated above, the vegetable world relates to the feminine and its categorisation and ontological nature vary according to its uses and locations. Once again, highlighting a practice-oriented understanding of social ontology, the ontological classification of the vegetable world relates to specific practices enacted by the collectivity. The categories of the ontological classification of the vegetable world are alimentary, healing/poisonous and hallucinogenic. The alimentary and the healing/poisonous categories are divided into those tamed and nurtured in the villages and those that grow wild. Within the alimentary group, there is a subcategory that include plants "which edible parts have a character of rarity from the point of view of its yield (avocado, papaya, lemon, pineapple, guava, and banana) and that – wild or domesticated – eat very rarely and always raw" (Losonczy, 1993, 41).

However, a transversal and predetermined system of classification that defines the ontology of every element is based on the thermal nature of each entity. Before the taxonomic differentiation of plants and their uses, the thermal condition of every element defines its role. Within black social ontology, a series of primordial elements afford a thermal condition

[92] Henceforth, my own translation from: Losonczy, A. M. (1993). *De lo vegetal a lo humano: Un modelo cognitivo afro-colombiano del Pacífico*. Instituto Colombiano de Antropología.

to every existing entity. These elements are soil, air, water, the sun, daylight and the moon (Losonczy, 1993). While sun and daylight are primary sources of heat, the soil, the air and the moon impart cold. In parallel, "water mixes both [heat and cold], which is why plants are privileged since they are seen as the fusion and synthesis of the opposing principles" (Escobar, 2008, 115). Thus, given that the thermal classification affects the entire universe, the centrality of the vegetable world in black social ontology also resides in the fact that it is the ideal type, for it is the primary condenser of the thermal categories (Losonczy, 1993).

The ontological categorisation of every existing element according to its thermal condition is fluid and changes according to the practices enacted upon a given entity. In line with the notion of reality as enacted practice, particularly with the ontological variation of anaemia (Mol, 1999) described above (see Section 5.2), according to black social ontology, the conditions of existence of every singularity change according to the instruments and the practices performed upon it. The characteristics and conditions of existence of any element and its relations with other elements vary according to whether it is used as food, medicine or other use-context (Losonczy, 1993). The fluidity of the thermal nature of every entity corresponds to three main aspects. In the case of vegetables, as condensers of soil, sun, air and moon, water modifies its thermal condition. To animals, the continuous ingestion of vegetables determines its thermal fluidity. Last, in the case of humans, according to the type of vegetables consumed by individuals and certain passage rituals, the ontological nature of a person would change, for they would change its thermal condition. In short, social ontology in the Gulf of Tribugá evidences a non-animist relational ontology in which the conditions and characteristics of existence for every human and other-than-human entity emerge in relation to the rest of the human and non-human entities. The ontological nature of every existing element is not only relational but emerges from the practices enacted by and upon such elements:

> The seawater – like all marine products (fish, minerals and salt) – is hot. On the other hand, water from rivers and fountains is cold at the time of taking it; boiled, it becomes lukewarm; boiled and left to rest overnight, it again becomes cold, like the water that is collected from the rain, while the water that comes into contact with the plants 'heats up.' Also, some healing plants, of a heat nature, become cold once boiled and preserved in jars for later use; in combination with other plants, they can turn lukewarm or neutral (Losonczy, 1993, 42-43).

Besides the system of classification based on the thermal condition of beings, there are two more mechanisms of organising the world and categorising other-than-human and more-than-human entities that are part of the collectivity and with which the collectivity interacts. First, there is a plane above the earthly terrain that is similar to a level on which Jesus Christ, saints, angels, Virgin Mary and little angels – kids who died without sin – reside. As evident as it is, the religiosity of the region is strongly influenced by Catholicism, but Catholic

representations are transformed and inscribed in local models of knowledge. Once immersed in the local universe, the representations of saints and virgins become humanised and instrumentalised, becoming part of the spiritual world of black collectivities that, far from being cold distant figures, become close companions, sensitive and possessing some of the desires and defects of their faithful followers (Escobar, 2008). One again, the relational ontology between different planes of existence becomes clear by two particular means: first, particular performances create active communication between two ontologically different beings; second, such interactions have repercussions on both ontological planes. The performances enacted by humans in relation to saints and more-than-human beings, such as little angels, may influence and transform the conditions of existence on the earthly terrain level. Examples include the *arrullos,* a type of music that help the saints "come down" and the *chigualo,* a ritual that helps dead kids enter the world above and become little angels (Urrea Giraldo & Vanín Romero, 1994).

Second, the system of classification of animals and plants contains specific elements associated with mobility, uses and reproductions. As expected, this system of classification differs from that of western modernity and sometimes puts animals and plants together in clusters not always evident from the perspective of the European taxonomical order. The first group belongs to animals, birds, shellfish and *avichuchos*. These animals have some sort of use for the collectivity, reproduce sexually and, although they cannot fly, move. *Avichuchos* share some of the qualities of animals, but they are not for use, might be dangerous, usually bite and are never edible (e.g., scorpions). Shellfish are aquatic entities and are usually used by the collectivity. The second group of classification consists of sticks or trees, bushes, herbs, *bejucos*[93] and palm trees. These are able to move – but only together, as a group. The identification system is the following: herbs are used for healing, bushes have simple leaves and fleshy trunks, palm trees are characterises by their peculiar trunks and their complete leaves, *bejucos* have elasticity and a certain fluidity that opposes the rigid structure of the stick. The third group entails a variety of things that emerge from the soil such as mushrooms and certain insects. This group of classification constitutes an intermediate realm between the other two groups (Escobar, 2008). Moreover, the author argues that:

> These orders are crossed by three semantic axes: *manso-arisco* (tame-wild), *de lo alto-de lo bajo* (belonging to the above or below), and *producido por el hombre-producido por la tierra* (produced by humans or by the earth or forest). According to the first axis, there are animals, yerbas, palos, pájaros, and so on that are tame and other that are wild. The second axis refers to an imaginary line in relation to the elevation from the ground; thus deer and rabbits are de lo bajo since their food and territorial habits never rise above the ground; animals that have arboreal life, such as the squirrel and the *perico* (parrot), as classified as de lo alto. This distinction also

[93] A climbing tree from Central and South America.

> applies to other animals and plants: eagles and tall trees are de lo alto, whereas jaguars, quails, turkeys, and bushes are de lo bajo. These axes structure the concrete position of every individual entity belonging to any of the three orders of seres de este mundo [beings of this world] (Escobar, 2008, 119)[94].

Before proceeding to the following section and analysing the practices that materialise the social ontology of the coastal-dwellers of the Gulf of Tribugá, it is necessary to highlight some elements considered above. Despite being a non-animistic ontology, the local social ontology conceives of an active interlocution between human and other-than-human beings. The relationality of certain ontologies does not depend on the humanity of landforms, plants or animals (as in the case of the Peruvian Andes or the Amazon, see Chapter 5) but on the non-representational relationships between humans and other-than-humans. Moreover, this type of relational ontology does not limit the influence of other-than-human entities to their possible human features but involves the autonomic and central role they may have as landforms, plants or animals in the enactment of reality. To close, as is evident in the social ontology of black collectivities in the Gulf of Tribugá, it is important to stress the idea that relational ontologies do not have to be animistic to be relational (see Chapter 5). However, this type of relational ontology must endorse the active roles that other-than-human beings have in the constitution of reality – not for their proximity to or distance from human ontology, but for their interactive participation in the enactment of reality as landforms, plants and animals.

Black practices, habitus and institutions in the Gulf of Tribugá

> *Spirituality is the foundation of our cultural existence, wherever we go there is our spirituality. We carry it with us always. In the field when we go to sow, to harvest, to hunt. In the classroom when we go to study, to learn to receive knowledge. To the quack when we are going to perform acts of healing, curing. In trade when we exchange our products. In politics when we defend our rights. In love when we express our affections to our fellow human beings, etc. We do not have a specific word to designate spirituality as such, but it accompanies us from our conception until after our physical death* (Los Riscales, 2007, 203).

The particular characteristics of black social ontology in the Gulf of Tribugá materialise through a series of practices, *habitus* and institutions that reveal its relational nature. As stated in different parts of this text, the relationship between social ontologies and the practices that enact and materialise them is dialectical. While social ontologies contain the framework of existence for certain given practices, practices, *habitus* and institutions reproduce and re-create the social ontologies to with they belong or correspond. As Escobar (2008) puts it,

[94] The italics and words in Spanish are from the original.

there is not a direct hierarchical line connecting meanings of space (of social ontology, for purposes of this research) and the uses of that space (practices), but it is a continuous amalgam of beings and things in constant creation and transformation. In short, as stated above, the relationship between social ontologies and practices is dialectically heterarchical.

Although fully acknowledging the complex relationship between black social ontology in the gulf and the practices, *habitus* and institutions that materialise and re-create it, for purposes of clarity, the present section divides these practices into interconnected thematic clusters. Considering that the assemblages enacted by these performances are communitarianism/non-capitalist, the clusters are non-dualist medical and care practices and non-capitalist socio-economic practices. Notwithstanding the thematic division, this texts points out and stresses the elements of each cluster that touch on or interconnect with the others.

a) Non-dualist medical and care practices

> *The medical practices carried out by the black communities of Nuquí have a pluricultural origin, as they are the result of centuries of learning. Beginning with the conservation and application of their African roots in the new continent and the adaptation to their traditions of knowledge from both Indo-American and European origins. This situation is evident in the biological diversity existing in the area, which includes both plants originating in America, as well as others introduced from the old world. Together with the introduction of these natural resources to this area, medical knowledge of various origins comes to this region, including knowledge of biology and magic* (Los Riscales, 2007, 217)

Both grounded in and grounding ontological categorisations based on the thermal conditions of existing entities, local conceptions of health and sickness refer to the (un)balanced state of the thermal order. In this sense, due to the fluid ontology of every entity and the relational nature of existence, the use of plants, parts of animals and mineral objects in medical and ritual practices is widely practiced. Furthermore, the therapeutic and ritual uses of plants, mineral objects and parts of animals vary according to their wild or domestic nature (the greater or lesser domain of humans over them) and the moments they were obtained (Losonczy, 1993).

In order to illustrate some of the practices that materialise the relational and malleable ontological nature of the human and other-than-human beings, and the relationships between them, a few examples might be useful. After briefly presenting some practices related to medicine, care and raising children, the section analyses the case of the *ombligada*, a particular ritual and medical praxis that brings out and evidences the complexity of the black social ontology in the Gulf of Tribugá.

The first example narrates a medical practice in which, after seeking help in hospitals that perform western conventional medicine, a person goes to an expert in local medicine – concretely, to an expert at reading urine. In this particular case, the medical practice involves a series of plants, beverages with different elements, massages and baths:

> I felt here [on the lower stomach] like a log, I lay on my back and felt like it had already tightened on me. I got desperate, went to Quibdó to a man that reads urine, and he told me many things. He saw my urine and told me that I was very cold, that I had a spasm, and that I had a lot of air in my body. I had big breasts, and I had big breasts because I had them full of air. […] He told me not to worry, that it was that I had the cold entangled. […] I made the first formula, some beverages, some drinks, some *sahumerios,*[95] some *sobijos,*[96] sitz-baths, everything. [… With one of the sitz-baths] I did not throw an herb because I did not find it, so he tells me; the bath was not well done because it missed an herb. Well, he gave me another formula, I came back to make my formula, I made my formula and I belched and ventilated every minute because I had an air coming out. And it disappeared what I had, and my breasts went down (Interview Cándida García – Nuquí April 2019).

Another example refers to the care that fishers take after rainy working days in order to avoid a reproductive disease called *liga* locally. In the black social ontology, the human body consists of two main sections: the upper, ontologically warm and the lower, ontologically cold. Remaining wet for many hours and drinking a hot beverage may cause *liga*, for it may unbalance the thermal composition of the body:

> From the waist down, where men and women get *liga*. A *liga* of cold. For example, if you go fishing, spend the whole day wet, arrive home wet, do not change those wet cloths, but rather eat a hot meal or coffee, then you are gathering all that cold. Because if you are all wet and drink or eat something that hot, then you heat the upper part of the body, but from the waist down it is cold. So that makes you catch the *liga* […] When that happens you should look for hot baths from the waist down, put yourself in a bucket of hot water and have someone to throw you cold water hard (Interview Cándida García – Nuquí April 2019).

These examples share a medical-care focus and challenge naturalism as the ontological understanding of reality of moder social ontology. The challenge that both examples present to the social ontology of modernity and its conception of nature and reality consists of two main elements: first, they question the idea that reality is a fixed, stable, external entity that humans should first understand in order to intervene; second, the interaction between different ontologically active elements such as water, air, temperature, humans, minerals,

[95] Smoke, incense.
[96] Massages.

herbs and animal elements reveals that reality does not consist of stable, univocal unities. Again, the relational nature of the social ontology present in the Gulf of Tribugá argues that every existing element has an active role in the organisation and re-creation of reality. A "reorganization oriented metaphorically or metonymically to evolve a condition or a phenomenon in the desired direction, by means of an innovative crossing of different classification axes that revolve around the thermal nucleus" (Losonczy, 1993, 43).

In reference to childrearing, a series of related practices evidence a convergence of the spiritual world, local conceptions of the body and social configurations and reproductions of the collectivity that reflect a socio-ontological framework and a relational understanding of reality. Concretely, Arango (2014) analyses a series of performances that help understand the relationship between medicinal care, the body, spirituality, territory, social organisations, landforms, plants and animals. All of these practices related to childrearing enact and re-create interactions between the local form of social organisation, the body and medicinal care that give content to the social ontology described above – such are the cases of leaving children on the floor, the practice of *chumbe* and child dancing. As for leaving children on the floor, Arango argues that:

> Actions such as bathing children with urine and leaving them lying on the floor of sand or tile, where people, dogs, cats, etc., transit, are socially agreed mechanisms that are carried out to generate a specific effect on children. This effect seeks to 'create' children who, in addition to healthy and strong, will be calm enough to allow moms to do their jobs (Arango, 2014, 68).[97]

The *chumbe* consists of "wrapping the baby with the diaper and with a strip. They said [the elder] that it is to adjust knees so that they do not fall. That is called *chumbar*" (Interview with Cándida García – Nuquí April 2019). Along the same vein, Arango (2014) argues that this practice seeks to "match" all the parts of children's' bodies. Moreover, the author states that the *chumbe* is usually accompanied by the application of rubs to different parts of the body. The elements used in these rubs depend on their purpose. For example, rubbing a child's legs with a mixture of gasoline and Atta ants supports strength and early walking.

Strengthening children's' bodies is also accomplished by dancing. Practicing spontaneous or planned dancing not only gives strength to children but also strengthens the community and gives hints as to how these children will contribute to the collectivity:

> Children's dances are a fundamental setting for the community. These spaces occur spontaneously or planned, but that among adults tacitly respond to a kind of tension,

[97] Henceforth, my own translation from: Arango, A. M. (2014). Construcción de cuerpos: Fortaleza y armonía en los ideales de cuerpo-sonido-movimiento en las poblaciones afrochocoanas. *Revista Corpo-Grafias, Estudios Críticos de y desde Los Cuerpos*, *1*(1), 61–69.

> because it is in these children's dances where beauty, grace, strength and body control are determined (Arango, 2014, 66).

Last, the ritual of the *ombligada* is a non-dualistic medicinal care practice that illustrates both the relational ontology present in the Gulf of Tribugá and the ontological transformation of reality through enacted practice. A description of the *ombligada* provides the elements for understanding how the relational ontology present in the Gulf of Tribugá, despite not being animistic, includes different forms of interactions between human and other-than-human beings that modify the conditions of existence of every entity and the types of connections among them. The ritual includes two parts in which both the relational aspect of black social ontology and the understanding of reality as enacted practice are exposed.

As for the first part of the *ombligada*, it consists of the burial of the placenta and the umbilical cord under the house (if the new-born is a girl) and under a tree on the edge of the forest (if the new-born is a boy) (Escobar, 2008; Losonczy, 1990). As Losonczy (1990) argues, burying the placenta and the umbilical cord of a new-born girl under the house roots her to the territory of her nuclear family and to the collectivity. On the other hand, burying the placenta and the umbilical cord of a new-born boy under a tree on the edge of the forest creates a relationship between the boy, the territory and its limits. The latter relationship begets familiarity with the forest, which becomes, for the future hunter, an extension of the village.

The second part of the ritual takes place a few days after the birth when the vestige of the umbilical cord that joined the foetus with the placenta detaches and leaves a small wound that, as it heals, leaves the navel (Ramírez Meza, 2010). In the process of healing the navel, midwifes introduce ritual substances from different animal, vegetal or mineral origins that provide potencies, virtues and qualities that the new-born boys and girls will develop and that will characterise them throughout their lives. According to Losonczy (1990), this ritual seeks to metaphorically transfer the characteristic features of the used element to the new-born and create a privileged relationship between the new-born, the particular substance carrier (animals and plants) and the substance itself (for example, water). In the case that the *ombligada* uses elements such as gold or the sweat of the midwife, the ritual has a metonymic rather than metaphorical character: the "substance represents a *part*, considered mediator of a positive relationship between the child and the whole evoked by that part" (Losonczy, 1990, 120).[98]

The difference between the metaphoric and the metonymic character of the *ombligada* lies in the purpose of the ritual and the expected future of the new-born. When the discursive practice is metaphorical, the ritual seeks to provide the new-born with the characteristics of

[98] Italics in the original.

the element such as the strength of the tapir, traveling like the water, caretaking like chickens and fertility of healing plants (the last two in the case of girls) (Losonczy, 1990). When the discourse is metonymic, the rituals seeks to provide the new-born with quality-forces concerning the domination of spaces that are partially controlled by humans. For example, when the *ombligada* is performed with dust of gold, it seeks to provide good luck in mining, to attract gold from the rivers (Losonczy, 1990).

Interestingly, just as the symbolic, social and economic aspirations of black collectivities in the territory have adapted to the needs that carry partial connections with the assemblage of developmentalism/capitalism, the *ombligada* has adapted to those aspirations and has included new elements in the ritual. Such incorporations include substances such as newspapers, pencils and notebooks in order to provide the new-born with the tools to go to school, move to the city and find a job in the urban world (Ramírez Meza, 2010). Along this vein, Ana María Arango[99] argues that she saw in "Pacurita[100] a mother who sat down to write multiplication tables in a notebook, in a little leaf. Burned the little leaf and then healed the child with the ashes of the little leaf so that the child does well in school" (Interview Ana María Arango Quibdó – April 2019).

Meza Ramírez (2010) presents a list of over 30 substances used in the ritual of *ombligada*, their functional virtue, their gender assignment and their origin. Here, I present some of them as an example:

Table 2. List of substances used in the ritual of *ombligada*

Substance	Functional virtue	Gender	Origin
Nail from anteater	Strength	Male	Animal
Lavender (*Lavandula latifolia*)	Wisdom in decision-making	Male and Female	Vegetable
Ashes from the stove	Homely and caretaker	Female	Vegetable
Spider	Body skills and healing powers against arachnids	Male and Female	Animal
Tiger fang	Strength and courage	Male	Animal
Stingray	Immunity and healing power	Male and Female	Animal

[99] Here I present my free translation of my personal communication with Ana María Arango, anthropology professor at the Universidad Tecnológica Del Choco Diego Luis Córdoba.
[100] Pacurita is a *corregimiento* of the Municipality of Quibdó, capital of the Department of Chocó.

Holy ground	Rooting to the land	Male and Female	Mineral
Pencil lead	Intelligence	Male and Female	Mineral
Newspaper	Intellectual qualities	Male and Female	Cultural
Atta ant	Good forest worker	Male	Animal

Adapted from: Ramírez Meza, C. A. (2010). *Tradiciones elaboradas y modernizaciones vividas por pueblos afrochocoanos en la vía al mar*. Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia.

The effects of the practices associated with parenting and childrearing do not only relate to the well-being of children; they also, while taking place, reproduce the local socioculture and social ontology. In line with the notion of reality as enacted practice (see Section 5.2), parenting practices carry two main entangled consequences: first, they perform a particular reality by shaping concrete particularities of children and the collectivity; second, they establish the conditions of existence and the elements necessary for the re-creation or/and transformation of the collectivity in the future:

> What I understand is that childcare is everything. In childcare, what is happening is that society is telling itself what is your role as a subject, to be subjected to a community. What happens with childcare is that they are supported in the territory, in making part of the territory, in the worldview, spirituality and in the community (Interview Ana María Arango – Quibdó April 2019).

Summing up, certain medical, care, parenting and ritual practices that take place in the Gulf of Tribugá reveal a series of elements of the social ontology of these coastal-dwellers. These practices and performances evidence the relational, but non-animistic, ontology present among black collectivities in the territory. Broadening the notion of relational ontology to include non-animistic ontologies, while the black collectivities in the Gulf of Tribugá do not imbue other-than-human entities with human features, they acknowledge the active role of such beings in the creation and re-creation of reality. To the extent that this black social ontology recognises certain animals, minerals and plants as interlocutors, the interaction between humans and other-than-humans stops being representational and becomes factual. Moreover, these interactions define and transform the ontology of individuals, the types of relationships between humans and other-than-humans and the conditions of existence of the collectivity in this living space.

b) Non-capitalist socio-economic practices

> *Traditionally, joint work and all its inherent manifestations have led to the establishment of a series of relationships that persist and take root, as it is about the collective construction of solidarity and joint work, with its values. Among these characteristics, we have: Minga [...], Changed Hand [...], Barter [...], Loans [...], Favor [...], Mortuary Boards [...], Gifts or alms [...]* (Los Riscales, 2007, 200).

The set of socio-economic practices that belongs to and reproduces the communitarianism/non-capitalism assemblage relate to certain individual and collective performances that have the triple function of providing income, securing food sufficiency and food sovereignty and strengthening the cohesion and social fabric of the collectivity. These particular practices respond to the relational ontology present in territory and the particular relationship between human and other-than-human beings characteristic of the black social ontology. In order to illustrate the non-capitalistic nature of some of the socio-economic relations present in the territory, the following pages describe and analyse four particular practices that perform the triple function of providing income, securing nutrition and reinforcing social cohesion.

To begin with, one of most common non-capitalist socio-economic practices among black collectivities, shared with the indigenous collectivities of the region, is called *minga* or *mano cambiada* (exchanged hands). Taken from the Quechua language, the *minga* means "the collective work done for the benefit of the community or in favour of an individual who fund the food and drink of his guests, who, on the other hand, work for free" (Orcasita & Sarmiento, 2005, 139).[101]

In order to explain the nature of the *minga*, the process of constructing a boat may serve as example (see Picture 4). The first part of this process is hiring a person to cut down a pre-selected tree from the higher parts of the territory. Usually, indigenous men are in charge of this job and are monetarily compensated. Once the tree is down, the interested person goes with family and friends to bring the tree down from the mountain to the town. As the whole process may take several days, the agreement between the interested person and his relatives and friends consists of free work in exchange of food and *viche* during the days of work. Once the trunk is in town, some of the relatives and friends help the owner in the process of carving, painting and making the final adjustments for the boat. As the interested person needs money to buy the supplies of the construction, such as nails, tools and gasoline for the machines, the whole process may last a couple of months or more:

[101] Henceforth, my own translation from: Orcasita, A. A. K., & Sarmiento, A. J. (2005). *Hacia la construcción del derecho solidario en Colombia*. U. Cooperativa de Colombia.

> Help me and I help you. Those are the things to keep, because when that transforms into payment, then I go where they pay me in cash, in money. If you do not have money to pay me, I do not go or if the one there pays me better, I do not go. However, if there is a bond of friendship that unites us, I leave the other [offer] and I help you (Interview with Oscar Saya – Nuquí April 2019).

The *minga* represents a mechanism that reproduces and strengthens cohesion within the collectivity, for its enactment depends on the tightness of the social fabric. The reciprocity of the *minga* manifests in two main ways: first, in any given future, those who collaborated in the *minga* will receive the same kind of help; second, in the short term, those who collaborated in the *minga* have the right to borrow the boat if necessary. For these reasons, due to its reciprocal nature, the *minga* avoids entering into the logic of the economic market.

Picture 4. Construction of a boat – Nuquí.

Source: Picture taken by the author.

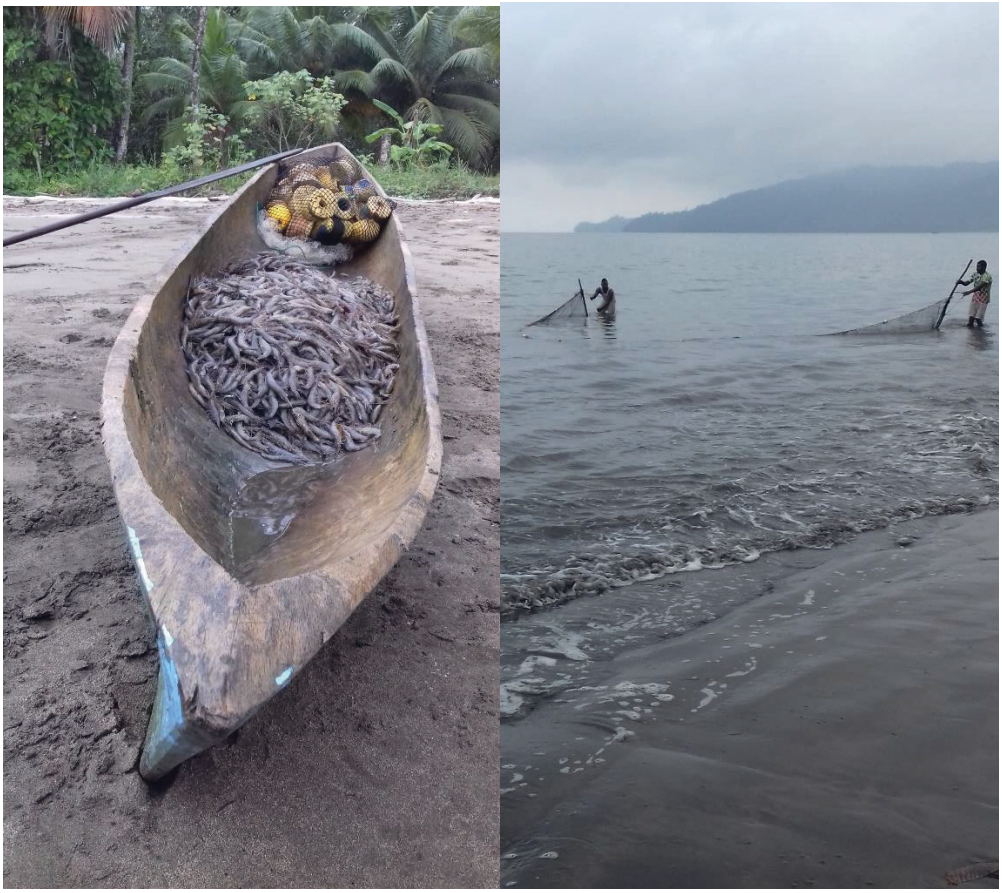
Another collective socio-economic practice that corresponds to the local social ontology is its particular non-representational human-fish interaction. The activity of artisanal fishing materialises the social ontology of the coastal-dwellers of the Gulf of Tribugá, for it enacts a particular interaction between humans and fish. Contrary to capitalism as the assemblage that concretises the social ontology of modernity, which understands the sea as a source of resources, locals consider fish to be milk, not only in terms of its nutritional importance but

also in terms of the maternal relationship that coastal-dwellers have with the sea. Along this vein, this particular practice enacted within both the assemblages of sustainability/multiculturalism and communitarianism/non-capitalism does not only define the outcome of the fishing day but also reveals the non-representational interaction between humans and fish:

> […] fish and maternal breast milk were the main sources of protein in local diets, implying that over time people transition from one milk to another. Like a mother and her infant, the sea, rivers, and mangroves feed local people with their milk. For many coastal dwellers, this relational dimension goes beyond nutritional and health values, fostering deep physical and emotional connection between them and the Gulf's waterscapes (Satizábal & Dressler, 2019, 8).

As part of the complex relational connection between humans and the sea, the practice of shrimp fishing also reveals a non-representational interaction between the two entities. Contrary to the *minga,* which is a reciprocal activity, shrimp fishing is not reciprocal; it also locates itself outside of capitalism and requires/reinforces social cohesion. It consists of a group of people – women, children and men – with different responsibilities collecting, cleaning and distributing shrimp. In teams of two, men pull a three-ended net close to the shore and catch the shrimp (see Picture 5 and Picture 3). Meanwhile, women and children help carry, clean and divide the shrimp among participants. After the fishing process, each participant, or family of participants, takes an estimated equal part of the production. To the extent that the production is mainly for self-consumption or, in some cases, goes to the local market, this practice does not participate in a capitalist market economy but enacts the communitarianism/non-capitalist assemblage embedded in the local social ontology. Moreover, as in the practice described above in which fish is milk (Satizábal & Dressler, 2019), in shrimp fishing, the interaction is not representational and reveals the relational nature of the local social ontology.

Picture 5 and Picture 6. Shrimp fishing – Coquí.



Source: Pictures taken by the author.

Last, the socio-economic practices of exchange and distribution of goods take place spontaneously and both evidence and reinforce the sturdiness of the social fabric. In particular, two exchanges might illustrate the nature of this socio-economic practice. First, the case of two women (one indigenous and one black) who, not being friends or relatives, constantly exchanges goods, especially food:

> Well, first, one day she passed by and they [the woman and her family] were waiting for a boat to take them and they had not eaten yet. Then I asked them if they had already eaten, then they said no and I offered them some lunch and they ate it. When they came back, they brought me plantain and then later when I had little fish I sent them or gave them when they came (Interview with Cándida García – Nuquí April 2019).

A second example took place in the *corregimiento* of Coquí and consisted of the distribution of food. After a family killed one of their pig, the wife in the family and other women of the

community made *morcilla* (blood sausage) and *sancocho.*[102] These separate processes consisted of many hours of work cutting and preparing all the ingredients, filling the intestines and setting and controlling the fire to cook the soup and the *morcilla.* After these two dishes were ready, the women who participated in the process and their families went for a bowl of soup and a piece of *morcilla.* Additionally, some people who did not participate in the process obtained a food ration. It is important to notice that not every person in the town came for a ration –only the families who were close to the owner of the pig. When the women were asked about this, they answered that, according to the proximity of the relationship, people would ask for a ration. In their words, they said, "you know who to ask."

In a general sense, following what the EDP 2007-2020 states, the socio-economic practices performed within the communitarianism/non-capitalism assemblage do not focus on accumulation like developmentalism/capitalism assemblage but, rather, on the livelihood of the collectivity:

> The economic system within our communities is based and sustained on the family, as a complementary and multifunctional productive unit based on the poly-activity of men and women from a conception of not accumulation and the implementation of forms of production to satisfy basic needs (Los Riscales, 2007, 236).

To close this section, the socio-economic practices described above dialectically emerge and give rise to the communitarianism/non-capitalism assemblage and the particular black social ontology present in the region. Among others, the relational nature of the local social ontology carries practices that challenge naturalistic, representational interactions with the territory, its landforms, animals and plants. The characteristics of black social ontology, apart from broadening the idea of relational ontology beyond animism, provides a series of elements that identify an innovative and historically and culturally localised relationship between human and other-than-human beings. This innovative social ontology that is neither naturalistic nor animistic does not provide other-than-human entities with human features but imbues them with a certain agency and autonomy in the constitution of reality. Such entities have an active role in the enactment of reality – not due to having human features due to the concrete interactions that humans perform with and upon them.

6.4. Ontological conflicts among assemblages and social ontologies: the dark side of developmentalism

Drawing upon the analysis of socio-territorial conflicts as ontological (see Chapter 5) and on the ontological differences between the "zone of being" and the "zone of non-being" (see

[102] *Sancocho* is a traditional soup in several regions of Latin America. In Colombia, it usually has different kinds of meat, cassava, potato, plantain, corn and different vegetables, such as tomato, onion, garlic and cilantro, among others. This particular *sancocho* was based on pork and included a tuber locally called "Chinese potato" (*Colocasia esculenta*).

Chapter 2), the present section describes some of the mechanisms through which the social ontology of modernity, through its particular assemblages, resorts to violence and deterritorialisation to solve socio-territorial disputes. Particularly, this section reviews some the cases in which the assemblage of developmentalism/capitalism has used violence in order to expand its presence in the territory under study.

In this sense, since the co-emergence of modernity, colonialism and capitalism (see Chapter 1), an abysmal line differentiates the strategies of conflict resolution between the zone of being and the zone of non-being. The abysmal difference in conflict resolution responds to the ontological difference between the fully modern *Dasein* and the peripheral, colonised and racialised subjects that have not yet reach their "complete" human condition. According to De Sousa Santos (2015), in the metropolis, where individuals are considered fully human, problems are solved through the dichotomy between regulation and emancipation. In the zone of being, Codes of law, rights, negotiation spaces and political actions that have the humanity of individuals as a starting point operate to solve conflicts. As Grosfoguel (2012) points out:

> There are civil/human/labour rights codes, civil relations, negotiation spaces, and political actions that are recognized by the 'Other' oppressed in their conflict with the 'I' within the area of being. Emancipation refers to discourses of freedom, autonomy and equality that are part of the discursive, institutional and legal purposes of conflict management in the area of being. As a trend, conflicts in the zone of being are regulated by non-violent methods. Violence is always used in exceptional moments. The latter does not deny that there are moments of violence in the zone of being. But they exist more as an exception than as a rule (Grosfoguel, 2012, 95).[103]

On the other hand, in the zones of non-being, the regulation/emancipation paradigm is unthinkable because its stands on the assumption that the "other" is a semi-being, a sub-human. As analysed in Chapter 2, to the eyes of European *Dasein*, there is an ontological difference between a fully human being in Europe and a "sub-other" in the peripheries It is a sub-ontological or ontological colonial difference that denies the humanity of the "other." In these territories, due to the dehumanisation of collectivities with non-western social ontologies, the dichotomy of appropriation/violence prevails (De Sousa Santos, 2015). The resolution of social conflicts bases its strategies on violence, deterritorialisation and the further elimination of "other" social ontologies and sociocultures:

> Since the humanity of people classified in the non-being zone is not recognized, since they are treated as non-human or sub-human, that is, without rights and civility norms,

[103] Henceforth, my own translation from: Grosfoguel, R. (2012). El concepto del racismo en Michel Foucault y Frantz Fanon: ¿teorizar desde la zona del ser o desde la zona del no ser? *Tabula Rasa*, *16*, 79–102.

> then acts of violence, violations and appropriations are allowed that in the zone of being would be unacceptable (Grosfoguel, 2012, 96).

Considering that the modern world-system situates the Colombian Pacific basin in the periphery and its inhabitants in the zone of non-being, it is through violence and appropriation that developmentalism, as a materialisation of the social ontology of modernity, has expanded its hegemony. Such is the case of the drug trafficking, extractive economies and infrastructure megaprojects described above (see Section 6.1). These economic activities have historically resorted to violence and deterritorialisation in their expansion and consolidation. Different manifestations of the developmentalism/capitalism assemblage in the region have transformed the material grounding of the local social ontology and have produced processes of deterritorialisation, land grabbing and violence. Regardless of the collective achievements of black communities in the Pacific basin with Law 70 of 1993 (see Section 4.2), since the 1990s, these communities have been displaced from their territories by different armed actors.

As Oslender (2004) argues, the appropriation and consequent use of these spaces requires the collaboration or displacement of local communities. In case the capitalist forces do not manage to co-opt or persuade communities to participate in the new economic activity, armed forces proceed to expel them from their territories. In doing so, the developmentalism/capitalism assemblage materialises via violence, as sacrificial acts on the path to the end of history – the universalist pretension of the social ontology of modernity (see Chapter 1):

> Thus, communities are co-opted or, more frequently, threatened and displaced. Paramilitary groups clear the land and prepare them for capital intervention. It is this logic of the great neoliberal nightmare: the destruction and cleaning of future intervention zones for the thirsty capital of new spheres of exploitation and appropriation, by state and extra-state agents (Oslender, 2004, 37).[104]

In this scenario, the notion of "geo-economic war" proposed by Oslender (2004b, 2004a) becomes relevant, for it characterises a new form of conflict that emerged during the turning of the century and the doctrine of the "War on terror". According to the author, this new form of war does not only focuses on access to and exploitation of resources, but also on the developmental interventions required after war (Oslender, 2004b). The clearest example of this form of war is the invasion of Iraq by the United States in 2003, for this war was not only for "geopolitical reasons and for territorial control that the United States needed to exercise

[104] Henceforth, my own translation from: Oslender, U. (2004b). Geografías de terror y desplazamiento forzado en el Pacífico colombiano: Conceptualizando el problema y buscando respuestas. In *Conflicto e (in) visibilidad. Retos en los estudios de la gente negra en Colombia* (pp. 35–52). Popayán: (Restrepo, Eduardo & Rojas Axel Eds.) Universidad del Cauca.

to establish a 'friendly' regime, but also concrete economic reasons negotiated in advance" (Oslender, 2004b, 38).

Furthermore, the use of violence in the resolution of ontological conflicts does not only operate on the macro level of power (in terms of the structure of land ownership or the local division of labour) – violence also operates on the micro level. To the extent that violence causes deterritorialisation and the transformation of socio-economic and cultural practices, the violence/appropriation dichotomy applied in ontological conflicts becomes one of the practices enacted in coloniality of power, knowledge and being (see Section 2.1). In this sense, violence and 243eterritorialization are practices that aim at both the macro and the micro levels of power, for it transforms both structures – land ownership, political participation and economic relations – and social ontology, revealing the dialectical nature of power (see Chapter 2).

The transformation and further elimination of social ontologies through the marginalisation or prohibition of specific practices and performances takes place through two main mechanisms: first, the physical displacement of people, towns and villages that have to relocate themselves in the peripheral areas of cities where they have to transform their practices; second, in the case the communities manage to remain in the territory, the transformation of space by the developmentalism/capitalism assemblage forces collectivities to put aside their practices and performances in order to adapt to new power structures.

The case of the Colombian Pacific basin illustrates both the dichotomy of appropriation/violence as the mechanism used to solve ontological disputes over the territory and its implications on both the macro and the micro levels of power. In that sense, the following pages seek to analyse both the process of deterritorialization and violence deployed by the developmentalism/capitalism assemblage and the effects of such violence in the practices, *habitus* and institutions of black collectivities.

Developmentalism, deterritorialization and armed conflict in Chocó

Although the focus of the research is not the analysis of the armed conflict in Colombia, but understanding the violent mechanisms used by the assemblages that belong to modern social ontology (particularly the assemblage of developmentalism/capitalism deployed in the region), it is necessary to make a brief account of the Colombian armed conflict from the late 1950s until 2016. Following the *Centro de Memoria Histórica* (CMH),[105] it is fundamental to emphasise that "appropriation, use and land tenure have been engines of origin and

[105] The CMH is an institution created in 2011 to contribute to integral reparation and the right to the truth about the war's victims and society as a whole. CMH enacts the state's duty of enshrining memory in terms of the violations within the framework of the Colombian armed conflict within a horizon of peace building, democratisation and reconciliation. Some of its main objectives are understanding the armed conflict in Colombia, the constitution of memory as a public right and contributing to peace building (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2014).

enduring of the armed conflict" (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2013).[106] Bearing in mind that the appropriation and use of land is the backbone of the conflict, the CMH recognises four main periods in the evolution of the internal Colombian conflict:

1. From 1958 to 1982 "marks the transition from bipartisan to subversive violence, characterized by the proliferation of guerrillas that contrasts with the rise of social mobilization and the marginality of the armed conflict" (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2013, 111).
2. The period from 1982 to 1996 evidenced a series of elements: political projection, territorial expansion and military growth of the guerrillas and the emergence of paramilitary groups; the crisis and partial collapse of the state, the new Constitution of 1991, peace processes with different guerrilla armies and some democratic reforms with partial and ambiguous results; last, the emergence and spread of drug trafficking, the positioning of drug trafficking on the global agenda, the peak and decline of the Cold War (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2013).
3. Third, from 1996 to 2005, the upsurge and recrudescence of the conflict represents "the simultaneous expansions of guerrillas and paramilitary groups, the crisis and recomposition of the State in the middle of the armed conflict and the political radicalization of public opinion towards a military solution of the armed conflict. The fight against drug trafficking and its overlap with the fight against terrorism renew international pressures that fuel the armed conflict, coupled with the expansion of drug trafficking and changes in its organization" (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2013, 111).
4. The fourth period, from 2005 to 2012, is when the "military offensive by the State reached its maximum degree of efficiency in counterinsurgency action, weakening but not bending the guerrillas, which even rearranged militarily. At the same time, there is a failure in political negotiation with paramilitary groups, which resulted in a rearmament accompanied by a violent internal rearrangement between highly fragmented, volatile and changing structures, strongly permeated by drug trafficking, more pragmatic in their criminal actions and more challenging against the State" (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2013, 111).

From 2012 until the signing of the peace agreement between the government and the guerrilla army FARC-EP in 2016, rates of violence reduced substantially. Since 2017, however, and with the FARC-EP coming to power as a right-wing government in 2018, rates of violence have rebounded. To illustrate the magnitude of the devastation that the use of the dichotomy

[106] Henceforth, my own translation from: Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica. (2013). *¡Basta ya! Colombia: Memorias de guerra y dignidad*. Bogotá: Imprenta Nacional.

violence/appropriation in the resolution of conflict has carried in Colombia, here some figures:

The armed conflict recognised by the state between 1985 and 2016 left, officially, 8,874,110 official victims (Unidad para la Atención y la Reparación Integral a las Víctimas, 2019). The number of people killed within the conflict are 262,197, of whom 215,005 belonged to the civil population and 46,813 were fighters. Moreover, the most frequent perpetrators were the paramilitary armies (with 94,754 kills), the guerrilla armies (with 35,683) and state agents (with 9,804) (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2018).

After 2016, the re-emergence of violence in the country has taken the life of more than a thousand environmental and human rights activists, journalists, land claimants and social leaders. Likewise, since the signature of the peace agreement, more than 197 former members of the FARC-EP have been killed (El Espectador, 2020). Following the same trend, in 2018, the anti-personnel mine cases increased in 300% compared to 2017 (Rodríguez, 2019). In 2020 alone, 112 activists and social leaders, as well as 25 former members of the FARC-EP, were murdered (INDEPAZ, 2020).

As for the particular cases of Chocó and Nuquí, their conflictual history is rather recent. It was not until the turn of the century that the armed conflict, violence and displacement erupted in the area. As people in the area recall, during the 1980s, drug trafficking, violence and armed conflict, although peripherally present, were not widespread phenomena:

> Look, this violence has been from 2000. For 20 years or so. Because when we were in that process that was in ’92, we were in the process of Law 70, we were walking on those beaches at night. We crossed those beaches and nothing happened. That was fine, quiet (Interview with Cándida García, April 2019).

According to Escobar (2004), it was in the late 1980s that large-scale developmental initiatives, such as the oil palm industry and industrial shrimp farming, entered in the region. Likewise, Agudelo (2001) argues that, until the late 1990s, the Pacific basin was considered a peaceful territory. With the arrival of paramilitary armies in the region, in collusion with the state and capitalist enterprises, violence acquired new dimensions. In particular, the northern part of the Department of Chocó was victim of the incursion of paramilitary actions with the support and endorsement of the National Army of Colombia aiming to control the territory, grab land, develop agroindustrial enterprises and break the new limitations to extractivism set by Law 70 of 1993 (see Section 4.2):

> In addition to the control of the territory for military purposes and the interest in the large projects planned in the region, it is about unlocking the possibilities of exploitation of natural resources (wood) restricted by the ecological protection

> provisions of the area and by the collective titling of territories law for black communities (Agudelo, 2001, 22).

In this sense, for a country that has known massive displacement since the mid-twentieth century, the problem is rather recent in Chocó and particularly recent in Nuquí. The fieldwork for this researched evidenced the use of different forms of violence apparently related to the construction of the Port of Tribugá and its adjacent roads. Concretely, the collectivity reports two displacements in the last few years:

> That is why I say, in Tribugá there was a displacement, there have been two displacements and I have always said it and they have told me to shut up because the theme of the port is difficult. In addition, as I said in a meeting, it is that you believe that the two displacements of Tribugá that have been made in vain, no. That has a political component. It is political and there is many things to come, and they will not be the only two displacements that will happen. Many displacements are going to happen because they need all the people from Tribugá to leave to make the port. Because they are not even going to buy the piece of land or the piece of house where you live. Because if you see the port, how is it possible that the five little houses will be inside the port. That is a lie. Get out of here, however. Therefore, there are going to be many displacements and many more problems (Interview with Fausto Moreno April 2019).

Moreover, in reference to the construction of the Port of Tribugá and its adjacent roads, a local social leader argues that, by the time the assemblage of developmentalism/capitalism begins with the intervention, the territory would be empty and all of its inhabitants would be gone or dead:

> "The road is made the day they make a port. Then, the Community Council is not worth it, the Indigenous Council is not worth, nothing is worth it because five years before they take us out of here, how, they form a war here, they shoot two rifles and everyone here is gone, we leave. That is the history of Colombia" (Interview with Oscar Saya, April 2019).

Reflecting on the conflictive experiences the region has been through, it is important to analyse how the violence/appropriation dichotomy operates in socio-ontological conflicts. The use of violence as the mainstream mechanism for dealing with individuals and collectivities situated in the zone of non-being entails a series of effects on different levels. Namely, to the extent that the intrusion of capitalism through violence abruptly transforms practices and assemblages, it has profound effects on both sociocultural and socio-ontological levels. According to Escobar (2004), capitalist modernity "has generated the massive displacement and impoverishment of our time and, at the same time, it is limited by

both phenomena, to the extent that its own instruments no longer seem to be sufficiently up to the task demanded by the circumstances" (Escobar, 2004, 55).[107]

Considering displacement and land grabbing as original forms of accumulation, it is impossible to detach deterritorialization and uprooting processes from either capitalist expansion or from capitalism itself as the economic system that materialises the social ontology of modernity. The processes of uprooting entails more than the physical displacement of collectivities from their living spaces: it implies the transformation of the territory that allows for the emergence and re-creation of by particular social ontologies, sociocultures and assemblages. The transformation of territories through violence reinforces the notion of modern social ontology in which there is only one correct and universal social ontology to inhabit, use and relate to a space. The exercise of violence through displacement or deterritorialization loses relevance and its tragic magnitude because, after land planning, demographic interventions and economic forecasting, every territory, regardless of the local social ontologies present, should follow Rostow's stages of economic growth (see Chapter 3) and mirror modernity. If western modernity promises that, at some point, every place and collectivity will reach the end of history, displacement stops being problematic and deterritorialization, as the loss of local social ontologies and sociocultures, becomes a technical problem of resettlement, losing its magnitude and dimension.

The simultaneous performance of violence, displacement and capitalism resides in the new mode of geo-economic warfare analysed by Oslender (2004a, 2004b). The conflict in the region, as a new scenario of the armed conflict in Colombia, responds to the implementation of large developmental projects (such as the Port of Tribugá and the interoceanic canal), the expansion of the agroindustries (such as palm oil, industrial fishing and coca leaf production), the trafficking of cocaine and the existence of natural resources such as gold. In this sense, displacement intends not only to physically destroy collectivities, but it also seeks to break the relational ontology of black collectivities and their characteristic human-nature interactions. In this regard, Escobar (2004) states that the objectives of displacement are the disintegration of communities, the end of social, cultural and economic local perspectives over a given territory and the seizure of natural resources.

Along this vein, the use of violence as the mechanism to deal with those social ontologies located in the zone of non-being is part of what Oslender (2004b) calls "geographies of terror." According to the author, six phenomena characterise this term:

[107] Henceforth my own translation from: Escobar, A. (2004). Desplazamientos, desarrollo y modernidad en el Pacífico colombiano. In *Conflicto e (in) visibilidad. Retos en los estudios de la gente negra en Colombia* (pp. 53–72). Popayán: (Restrepo, Eduardo & Rojas Axel Eds.) Universidad del Cauca.

1. The transformation of certain spaces into landscapes of fear is visible in two ways: i) the traces the agents of terror leave behind, such as destroyed or burnt houses; ii) empty spaces, such as abandoned towns.
2. Abrupt changes in routine space practices means that contexts of terror beaks everyday mobility by forbidding or "recommending" avoiding certain places.
3. Radical changes in the sense of place refer to the eruption of the meanings and relations that people have with their territories.
4. Processes of 248eterritorialization relate to the loss of territorial control by communities, not only though displacement but also through the impossibility of thinking, planning and relating to their territories.
5. Displacement caused by a context of terror.
6. New forms of resistance and strategies to think the territory within a context of fear and terror.

In brief, performing the dark side of developmentalism as a new stage of modernity (see Chapter 3), what the terror agents seek in the territories can be summed up in two ideas. First, the forced implementation of new practices, *habitus* and institutions and the homogenised subjection of the local assemblages to those of the hegemony. In the end, due to the dialectical relationship between practices and social ontologies, the use of violence in the expansion of capitalism and developmentalism has the main purpose of eliminating any socio-ontological difference and incorporating collectivities into the logic of western modernity. Second, considering reality as enacted practice (see Section 5.2), the use of violence in the transformation of performances enacted by individuals and collectivities becomes a strategy of creating a new realities with new assemblages attuned to those preached by modernity. In the case of the Gulf of Tribugá, this means the assemblages of developmentalism/capitalism and, to a lesser extent, the assemblage of sustainability/multiculturalism.

As Escobar (2004) states, what is happening in the Pacific basin, as in many other places in the world, is that developmentalism, via violence, seeks to subject these spaces to the economic, cultural and social demands of capitalist modernity. The author concludes, "this project must be contemplated in its triple dimension of simultaneous *transformation at the economic, ecological and cultural level*" (Escobar, 2004, 62). [108] Likewise, Molano (2017) explains the relationship between developmentalism and conflict:

> Development, progress and modernization show a growing hole, the tragedy of its contradictions. After being an ideal and a promise for the future, it has become a battlefield in which most of its victims do not belong to any of the armed sides (Molano, 2017, 198).

[108] Italics in the original.

Deterritorialisation and the micro level of power

As part of the universalist pretension of the social ontology of modernity analysed in Section 1.2, what the developmentalism/capitalism and, to a lesser extent, the sustainability/multiculturalism assemblages envision is the transformation of certain practices, *habitus* and institutions in order to create a reality according to their social ontology – even when the transformation of "other" social ontologies means the use of violence and deterritorialization. To do so, the assemblages of developmentalism/capitalism and sustainability/multiculturalism deploy a series of practices and performances enacted by both external actors and member of local collectivities that influence the micro level of power. The inclusion of new practices (at times forcibly imposed) redirects the performances that local individuals and collectivities enact in reproducing their social ontologies and re-creating reality.

The exercise of the micro level of power materialises through practices and mechanisms that seek to mould the common sense and aspirations of collectivities that do not subscribe to modern social ontology (see Chapter 1). The particular case of Nuquí provides a series of elements of great relevance to understanding the complexity of the exercise of the micro level of power, the transformation of practices and performances and the use of violence. In this sense, the exercise of power occurs through different intertwined levels and strategies that range from violence and physical elimination of individuals and collectivities to dismantling collective processes and local educational strategies, racialised representations of local socio-economic and cultural practices and increasing local dependence on the capitalist market economy.

One of the economic practices that reveals more clearly the interconnectedness of the mechanisms of the micro level of power is drug trafficking, for it represents one of the "fast" ways to reach the consumption levels demanded by capitalism and developmentalism. In the case of the Gulf of Tribugá, especially among the youth, drug trafficking has become an efficient path to reaching Rostow's age of mass consumption (see Chapter 3).

Although most of the socio-economic practices enacting the developmentalism/capitalism assemblage combine different elements, drug trafficking is one of the most paradigmatic performances through which the exercise of power inserts collectivities into the dynamic of armed conflict, the capitalist market economy and a series of practices that hinder the local social ontology:

> And many young men lost, many young men murdered by that drug issue, which has shown them that it is the way for them and the easy money. In addition, all the city models brought that believe that money is the solution of every problems, that it is the solution for things, and that the world moves through money. It is like making

> people very robot that only money is the way (Interview with Fausto Moreno April 2019).

Violent practices performed in order to hegemonise modern social ontology include the elimination of social and environmental leaders or activists. As part of the violence/appropriation dichotomy in the resolution of ontological conflicts, the developmentalism/capitalism assemblage frequently resorts to eliminating social, environmental and human right activists that oppose the practices enacted within and by the assemblage. In order to incorporate local collectivities into developmentalism/capitalism, hitmen and paramilitary armies paid by drug lords, land grabbers, extractivist enterprises and promoters of mega-infrastructure projects co-opt or murder social leaders in order to stop the particular processes that reinforce the practices enacting both the sustainability/multiculturalism and the communitarianism/non-capitalism assemblages:

> Another thing that drug trafficking does is that it changes leaderships. I mean nobody can be the leader of a community council and face drug trafficking, they kill him. Then you have to be half-tolerant or completely tolerant or favoured of drug trafficking, but then that makes the constructions of the common good very distorted. I saw it in do you know what? In the ages. I was going to speak in the indigenous reservations and talked to the community leader and the captain was a 50 years old man, 55 years old. With Afros, they were 25 or 30 years old. Then there it changed, there was a gap (Interview with Daniel Rico April 2019).

In line with the analysis presented in Section 2.2, apart from fear and violence in the transformation and shaping of social ontologies, the racialisation of non-western collectivities exists a structuring practice in the reproduction of both developmentalism/capitalism and sustainability/multiculturalism as the recent materialisation of the social ontology of modernity. In this sense, both the assemblages of developmentalism/capitalism and sustainability/multiculturalism seek to hinder the reinforcement and re-creation of local social ontologies by racialising and disparaging local socio-economic and cultural practices that do not correspond to the social ontology of modernity:

> Your way of life is bad, so that makes you feel so low in esteem, so low in capacity that you cannot face others and they will condition you at once (Interview with Fausto Moreno. April 2019).

The idea of poverty as non-western socio-economic and cultural practice, extendedly analysed in Section 3.1, implies that, by labelling certain practices and performances as "backward" or "unfit," hegemonic discourse legitimises and justifies the transformation of particular social ontologies. To the extent that modern social ontology considers its

enactments and performances as the only possible form of existence, it relegates other forms of performing reality to mere "erratic" and "wrong" folkloric manifestations. Moreover, racialising the idea of poverty and reducing it to the reproduction of specific practices, hegemonic discourse legitimises the intervention and transformation of territories considered poor or underdeveloped. As noted above, modifying living spaces hinders the enactment of practices that re-create social ontologies because they find themselves uprooted. Not having a space to enact local socio-economic and cultural practices implies that the inhabitants of such territories have to find their means of subsistence within the developmentalism/capitalism assemblage and become an asset in the production and reproduction of capital:

> [The market economy] enters with the industrial front of timber in the Darien, in all its expressions, but also enters with a popular front, with another type of conception of the land and the forest. That is the peasants' front from Antioquia and the peasants' front from Cordoba that comes to civilize lands. They say, all those mountains, all that full of trees. That is uncivilized, that we must civilize. Do as they did in Antioquia, grow grass and grow other things. Then it comes with that other conception (Interview with Jairo Miguel Guerra. April 2019).

The transformation of local practices and the increasing dependence on the capitalist market economy also implies a form of deterritorialisation, for spaces are devoid of the meanings that the local social ontology attributes to it through specific practices:

> And they have a party and that is why the boys have gotten into the drug trafficking issue and they all live around it, because of course, I buy the best tennis shoes, the best glasses, I wear the earrings, the brand shirts and the best girls. That is what it has done. That is why we have been losing that belonging to the territory (Interview with Fausto Moreno. April 2019).

Moreover, the becoming of the territory and the collectivities towards capitalist assets implies that every element of consumption (essential or not) can only be acquired with money. As exposed in the section dedicated to the communitarianism/non-capitalist assemblage (Section 6.3), local collectivities produce an important part of their essential needs. However, the hegemonisation of the developmentalism/capitalism assemblage means that collectivities have to dedicate most of their working time to generating income in order to acquire not only those goods that the territory itself does not provide, but also those that the territory does provide:

> That is also a strategy because everything is already written in the economy, so we all get money to get it back to them. The one who gets his money with coca, mining or whatever, is finally sending it to the capitalists at the end with beer or buying him

> whiskey, buying the televisions, the latest cell phones and in the end who of us has money, none. […] Now everything is a party, everything is a party, everything is joy, and everything is an excuse for the money to reach them. That is, is that capitalism is that, it is a monster that absorbs us (Interview with Oscar Saya. April 2019).

> Well, I do not know. I have always been saying that this is business. They make people see that this hurts, that this is bad, that this and that the other, but it is business for people to sell and when you get that in the head, the mind becomes ill believing that everything they say is true. […] That is why I always say, it is business what they are doing. They tell people that this is bad for them to sell something later. As simple as that (Interview with Cándida García. April 2019).

The conversion of living spaces and collectivities into capitalist assets, beyond the deterritorialisation and violence that such conversion implies, represents the loss of autonomy and further dependence on the market economy to survive. Considering the co-existence of the three assemblages in the Gulf of Tribugá, the critique of the transformation of the territory into a capitalist asset in both the developmentalism/capitalism and the sustainability/multiculturalism assemblages does not mean that collectivities are claiming or willing an isolated, romanticised image of themselves. On the contrary, struggling against making their territory a capitalist asset implies two main elements: first, the defence of their own dialectical relationship between territory, practice and social ontology; second, the right to autonomously decide which practices and performances from other assemblages they want to incorporate into their assemblage. At large, the struggle for autonomy refers to both the right to participate in the assemblages that allow for the reproduction of the local social ontology and, simultaneously, the right draw upon elements from other assemblages in order to renovate and re-create the local human-territory relational interactions:

> When we cut all these mountains we will no longer be the blacks we are, we would be from another world. When we cut all this, we lose our culture, we lose our identity, we lose our credibility and we lose everything. So we are no longer blacks, there we are white. There we are *paisas*[109] (Interview with Fausto Moreno. April 2019).

To close this section, it is important to highlight two intertwined complex relationships that emerge when identifying the ontological nature of socio-territorial conflicts. First, the relationship between the macro and the micro levels of power: the expansion of developmentalism in territories not yet hegemonised by capitalism implies the transformation or elimination of particular practices, *habitus* and institutions due to its inclusion in the racialised modern world-system. As analysed in the section dedicated to the coloniality of power, knowledge and being (Section 2.1), this refers to shaping subjectivities to perform

[109] Although *paisa* generally refers to the original people of the Department of Antioquia and the Colombian coffee-growing region, in the Pacific basin, *paisa* refers to any white Euro/Andean phenotype.

practices, *habitus* and institutions that enact the social ontology of modernity and its form of enacting reality.

Along that vein, the second complex relationship that emerges from thinking socio-territorial conflicts as ontological is the dialectical interaction between territory, practices and social ontologies. The transformations of the territory in order to include it in the capitalist market economy do not only physically displace and eliminate collectivities, but they also uproot the material element that holds and gives rise to particular social ontologies.

Summing up

After analysing the theoretical dialogue between political ontology, reality as enacted practice and relational ontology in terms of understanding the ontological dispute taking place in the Gulf of Tribugá, the present chapter presented each of the assemblages that currently operates in the territory. From this perspective, the ontological dispute over the gulf takes place between partially connected assemblages that co-exist, negotiate and dispute the hegemony of the reproduction of the social ontologies to which they belong. The hierarchical, uneven dispute over the territory between the assemblages results in complex, mobile and dynamic sets of practices that, while enacting the assemblages and social ontologies, are dialectically defined by them. In this sense, the dialectical relationship between social ontologies, assemblages and practices is threefold. While social ontologies determine the ontological and epistemological framework in which assemblages operate, the latter establish the limited domain in which human and non-human agents perform their practices. Simultaneously, such practices, enacted by a multiplicity of actors, concretise and give material rooting to the social ontologies and the assemblages.

Bearing in mind the risk of falling into simplifying the complexity, dynamism and malleability of each of the assemblages, this chapter described each assemblage, its practices and each of their levels of affiliation with and affinity to particular social ontologies. In this sense, the chapter argued that the current dispute over the Gulf of Tribugá is between two social ontologies but between three assemblages. As there is no assemblage without a socio-ontological foundation, one of the social ontologies – the social ontology of modernity – dialectically relates to two assemblages.

Concretely, this chapter presented the assemblages currently disputing the socio-ontological and sociocultural hegemony of the territory – namely, the developmentalism/capitalism, sustainability/multiculturalism and communitarianism/non-capitalism assemblages. In a general sense, the first belongs to the social ontology of modernity in that it ontologically separates humans from non-humans and conceives history as a linear process in which the European experience is the end. It materialises through particular practices associated with

mega-infrastructure projects, extractive economies, drug trafficking and agroindustry, among others.

The assemblage of sustainability/multiculturalism is also grounded in the social ontology of modernity. As in the previous assemblage, in this case, the ontology is also naturalist and considers history to be a Eurocentric, teleological process. Nevertheless, this assemblage differs from that of developmentalism/capitalism in some of its practices, for, at times, they are partially connected with those that enact the black social ontology. Its practices include the exaltation and financing of local cultural expressions, specific efforts in the conservation of the environment and the promotion of certain economic practices more clearly related to the communitarianism/non-capitalism assemblage.

Finally, the communitarianism/non-capitalism assemblage responds to the relational black social ontology present in the gulf, which, although it does not concedes human features to plants, landforms or animals, it does provide them with agency and active roles in the interactive enactment of reality. Among others practices, it materialises through non-dualist medical and care practices and non-capitalist economic practices such as reciprocity and solidarity economies.

After presenting each of the assemblages and their partial connections, the chapter analysed some of the mechanisms deployed by the assemblages of developmentalism/capitalism and sustainability/multiculturalism (particularly the former) in order to expand their presence and hegemony over the gulf. In this section, the chapter drew on the analysis of socio-territorial conflicts as ontological and on the ontological differences between those individuals and institution located in the in the zone of being and those in the zone of non-being. Labelled "the dark side of developmentalism," the last section of this chapter highlighted the violent practices, part of the colonial features of social modernity, that the assemblages of developmentalism/capitalism and sustainability/multiculturalism perform in their interactions with the black social ontology and its assemblage. Concretely, the section stressed the use of violence and deterritorialisation as mechanisms through which the social ontology of modernity, now materialised via developmentalism in its both manifestations, exercises its expansion.

Moreover, a subsection focused on some of the specific mechanisms of the micro level of power enacted by both external actors and members of local collectivities that seek to mould desires, aspirations and common sense. In the end, the main objective of such power devices and discourses is the elimination of the assemblage that enacts the black social ontology in order to incorporate the region and its population into the assemblages of either developmentalism/capitalism or sustainability/multiculturalism. In this sense, this section argues that, following the analysis presented in Chapter 2, the exercise of power occurs on two dialectically interconnected levels – the macro and the micro. Accordingly, the analysis

of the exercise of the micro level of power in the Gulf of Tribugá, as part of the ontological dispute over the territory, allows for the understanding of the complexity of the uneven dispute between assemblages and the use of violence in order to dismantle or hinder the local social ontology, its assemblage and its practices.

7. Assemblages and the construction of the Port of Tribugá

In addition to describing the specific practices performed in and by each of the assemblages in the Gulf of Tribugá and the complex interactions and partial connections among them, it is important to consider the different positions each assemblage has regarding the construction of the Port of Tribugá. Although each assemblage has a particular approach to the construction of the Port of Tribugá, there are only two possible positions concerning the construction of the port: in favour or against.

Interestingly, while there are only two social ontologies in the territory (the modern and the black social ontologies), there are three assemblages (see Chapter 6). The two assemblages that share the social ontology of modernity contradict each other. The developmentalism/capitalism assemblage is in favour of the port and the sustainability/multiculturalism assemblage is against it. Although both assemblages belong to and re-create the social ontology of modernity, they have different views on the project. This fact reflects the already analysed complexity of social ontologies, which may dialectically contain and be re-created by diverse and occasionally contradicting sociocultures and assemblages.

The present section analyses the perspectives of each of the assemblages regarding their views on the port. While presenting the arguments in favour or against the project, this research highlights the socio-ontological nature of each position. This research organises the debate in the two possible positions: being in favour of or against its construction. The first group corresponds to the assemblage of developmentalism/capitalism, which, in line with its belonging to the social ontology of modernity, considers the territory to be an unexploited source of income. Moreover, it considers the unavoidable environmental and social damages the port would carry to be affordable externalities compared to the economic benefit and progress it would provide for the region and the country.

On the other hand, although the assemblages of sustainability/multiculturalism and communitarianism/non-capitalism belong to different social ontologies, their partial connections lead them to share a common position concerning the construction of the Port of Tribugá. In this sense, both assemblages assert that the mega-infrastructure project would carry disastrous effects for the territory and its human and non-human inhabitants.

With this in mind, before continuing with positioning the assemblages and describing the voices in favour and against the construction of the port, in order to grasp the magnitude of the intervention and its potential implications, it is necessary to make a couple of clarifications. First, it is important to describe the region where the port would be located, as well as its environmental characteristics. Second, the discussion of the voices in favour of the project also describes the project, its scope and its magnitude.

7.1. Geographical and environmental description of the Gulf of Tribugá

The Gulf of Tribugá is located in the northern Colombian Pacific basin and goes from the *corregimiento* of Arusí in the Municipality of Nuquí to the north, until Punta San Francisco Solano in the Municipality of Bahía Solano (Castaño, 2002). The geographical formation contains the coves of Arusí, Coquí, Tribugá and Utría (declared Natural National Park in 1987) and the mouth of the Valle River, all framed by the Baudó mountain range that runs parallel to the western mountain range (Cordillera Occidental) and the coast (Castaño, 2002).

The region has three main biomes: first, "ecosystems and marine communities of pelagic and coastal habitats, with coral reefs" (Castaño, 2002);[110] second, "ecosystems and communities of the sea-land interface, with associations and consociation of mangroves, estuarine and delta areas, sandy and rocky beaches, as well as cliffs and communities" (Castaño, 2002); finally, "terrestrial ecosystems with quite heterogeneous forest of hills and mountains, with strong relief, which includes a special hydrological complex of rivers and streams" (Castaño, 2002).

Due to its ecosystemic characteristics, the fauna of the area is incredibly diverse. Castaño (2002) states that several species of beard whales (Mysticelos) and jagged whales (Odontocelos) inhabit the surrounding seas, including the humpback whale and cachalot. In addition, there are colourful fish, several species of shark and different coral formations. The territorial area, which partially includes the Baudó mountain range, which holds important fauna in the region, is "located within the Pacific corridor, which serves as an exchange bridge between elements of Central America and those typically South American" (Castaño, 2002). Birds comprise the largest number of vertebrates in the area with different endemic species. Last, the herpetofauna (amphibians and reptiles) is also very diverse, entailing about 70 different species (10% of the amphibians and reptiles registered in Colombia). Additionally, "in the estuaries and streams inhabit some species of aquatic and semi-aquatic turtles such as the *bache*,[111] the *chibigüí*,[112] the *pecho de carey*[113] and the *tapaculo;*[114] there is also the *caiman agujo*[115]" (Castaño, 2002).

Included in the Chocó biogeographic region, the Gulf of Tribugá is part of one of only 36 biodiverse hotspots in the world (Conservation International, 2019). According to Conservation International (2019), to qualify as a biodiversity hot spot, a region must meet two criteria. First, "it must have **at least 1,500 vascular plants as endemics** – which is to

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[110] Henceforth, my own translation from: Castaño, C. (2002). *Golfos y bahías de Colombia*. Banco de Occidente.

111 *Chelydra serpentina.*

[112] *Rhinoclemmys melanosterna,*

[113] Meso-American slider *(Trachemys venusta).* Also kwon in the country as *hicotea*.

[114] Scorpion mud turtle *(Kinosternon scorpioides).*

[115] American crocodile *(Crocodylus acutus).*

say, it must have a high percentage of plant life found nowhere else on the planet. A hotspot, in other words, is **irreplaceable**" (Conservation International, 2019). Second, "it must have **30% or less of its original natural vegetation**. In other words, it must be threatened" (2019). Nowadays, biodiversity hotspots represent "**2.4% of Earth's land surface**, but they support more than half of the world's plant species as endemics – i.e., species found no place else – and **nearly 43% of bird, mammal, reptile and amphibian** species as endemic" (Conservation International, 2019).[116]

Last, it is important to highlight the extensive presence of mangrove in the gulf. According to INVEMAR,[117] this biotic area is known for its high productivity and its importance in providing shelter and food for "all marine taxonomic groups, as well as the abundance of associated hydro biological resources, from which the local population obtains its livelihood" (INVEMAR, 2008).[118]

Moreover, in a region vulnerable to tsunamis such as the Colombian Pacific basin, "mangrove play an important role in wave attenuation, while their complex root system help in binding and consolidate sediments. Of course mangrove are not immune from erosion; but their presence can nevertheless make a difference between a stable or prograding coastline versus and eroding coastline" (Spalding, Kainuma, & Collins, 2010, 28).

7.2. Voices in favour

In line with the developmentalism/capitalism assemblage, the voices in favour of the project highlight its importance in terms of the economic benefits it would bring to the region and the country. Moreover, continues the argument, the Port of Tribugá would represent an important step towards the end of history (see Section 1.2). Since the late 1980s, supporters of the project have argued that the intervention entails a bigger picture than connecting inner Colombia to the international market via the Pacific Ocean. As Sánchez Valencia (2018) notes, the project entails not only a deep-water seaport in Nuquí (in the norther Pacific region of Colombia), but it is a project that would allow different parts of the country to increase their international trade, generate direct employment, improve competitiveness and, above all, boost socio-economic development in the Department of Chocó in a sustainable environment. Moreover, the intervention contemplates a road infrastructure that would connect Nuquí in the Pacific and the Atlantic Ocean via Venezuela (Prado Misas, 2018).

According to Dario Prado Misas (2018), strategists of the project and former advisor of the Ministry of Transport of Colombia, the proposal entails a long term infrastructure plan that

[116] Bold in the original.

[117] The José Benito Vives de Andréis Marine and Coastal Research Institute (INVEMAR) is a non-profit organisation linked to the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development of Colombia.

[118] Henceforth, my own translation from: INVEMAR. (2008). *Viabilidad ambiental: Componente marino y costero, de una eventual intervención portuaria en la ensenada de Tribugá-Nuquí, Chocó, Pacífico Colombiano*. Santa Marta.

seeks to integrate the countries of the Caribbean and Pacific basins with the rest of South America and the world. The mixed (public and private) initiative, called "Plan Arquímides," promotes the intervention as a "system of communication for the development of the Colombian Pacific region, in the context of the articulation of the American continents, the Pacific basin and the Great Caribbean" (Prado Misas, 2018, 66-67).[119]

Furthermore, according to Lucumí Rivas (2014), the new deep-water port would receive freighters up to the last generation and would decongest the high flow and service time losses at the port of Buenaventura. Additionally, the author suggests that a country that aims to be competitive must have one large port for every hundred kilometres of coast (Lucumí Rivas, 2014). The Port of Tribugá in Nuquí would reach 15 meters deep – 20 meters after having been dredged. Additionally, the cove of Tribugá has calm water that would allow for the manoeuvre of large draft ships since it does not have river mouths that would sediment it. Likewise, the area has the potential for urban development due to its flat land of 2,800 hectares that would allow for the construction of a city with more than 500,000 inhabitants: "Tribugá would be a transfer port for Hansysize, Panamax and Capesize container ships up to 40 feet, 228 meters and more that 100.000 dwt (dead weight tons) in the case of the Capsize" (Lucumí Rivas, 2014, 54-55).[120] Summing up, the project envisions the following:

> "It would be, therefore, the creation of a new metropolitan port equipped with all the key infrastructures for modern and global competitiveness (energy, airport, university, hospital complex, research centres, financial institutions, digital infrastructure, etc.). Designed in terms of sustainability and supported by innovative models of management, governance, ecological respect, cultural-ethnic respect, and with responsible territorial developmental policies" (Proyecto Arquímedes S.A., 2011, 2).[121]

Attached to the port, the project contemplates a highway connecting Tribugá to the inner country between the Municipality of Las Ánimas and Nuquí. According to Lucumí (2014), this highway would comparatively advantage the north and centre of the country in terms of trading with the other countries along the Pacific Basin, for it would enable faster communication with the port (see Map 7). Moreover, the road structure would connect Venezuela and Brazil to Pacific trade by connecting the centre of Colombia with the Pacific.

Map 7. Location of the Gulf of Tribugá

[119] Henceforth, my own translation from: Prado Misas, D. (2018). El Plan Arquímides. *Anales de Ingeniería*, (941), 64–69.

[120] Henceforth, my own translation from: Lucumí Rivas, G. (2014). El Chocó se abre a Colombia. *Anales de Ingeniería*, (929), 52–63.

[121] Henceforth, my own translation from: Proyecto Arquímedes S.A. (2011). *Nuquí, capital de base portuaria*. *3*(6).

Source: Instituto Nacional de Vías INVIAS. (2016). Con estudios y diseños para la vía Las Ánimas-Nuquí, se vislumbra salida al mar en el Chocó. Retrieved 10 February 2019, from https://www.invias.gov.co/index.php/mas/sala/noticias/2852-con-estudios-y-disenos-para-la-via-las-animas-nuqui-se-vislumbra-la-salida-al-mar-en-el-choco.

Now that the dimensions of the interventions have been described, it is important to discuss the voices in favour of the port in terms of the different sets of discourses they employed, including the increase of GDP, the connection with Asia and other countries of the Pacific basin, market competitiveness and developmentalism in the territory. As for the discourses based on competitiveness, connectivity and the increase of GDP, promoters of the port argue that building the first deep-water port along the Colombian Pacific coast would make the region a trading hub. One the one hand, it would be the base for the markets of Pacific Asia and the west coast of North America. On the other hand, it would connect Venezuela and Brazil with the pacific market:

> It is in these circumstances that a great opportunity emerges for the Department of Chocó to be competitively positioned, both in the productive activity of the country, and in the new international emerging scenario (Brazil, Venezuela), articulating its territory to the main trade networks and world transport, as well as other global circuits of wealth flow: tourism, knowledge, etc (Proyecto Arquímedes S.A., 2011, 1).

Along this vein, the Municipal Development Plan of Nuquí 2016-2019 (PDM 2016-2019) argues that both the road infrastructure and the port are necessary to develop the region and connect the country to the international market (Alcaldía de Nuquí, 2016). As stated in the

PDM 2016-2019, the country has required for over five decades for a road connecting Nuquí "with the centre of the department and through which the transport of cargo and passengers can be boosted at competitive prices" (Alcaldía de Nuquí, 2016, 43):[122]

> It cannot be that a highway does not cross a department with 48,000 km^2 today from north to south or from east to west. There is no department like that in the country (Interview former director of CODECHOCÓ – Medellin April 2019).

Furthermore, the former director of CODECHOCÓ argues that the project is mainly in the interest of the departments of Antioquia and those of the coffee-growing axis because their products would have a direct access to the Pacific market. As for the case of Antioquia, the interviewee states that:

> Of course, to Antioquia it is easier to reach the Pacific than the Gulf of Urabá itself [in the Caribbean Sea] that is there in front of their own eyes. Amazing. If Antioquia already has [a road] Ciudad Bolívar[123] – Quibdó, it can be 120 or 130 km on a more or less acceptable road. They know that after arriving to the Pacific, they already have the Atrato River and they have municipalities on the Atrato River such as Vigía del Fuerte, Murindó. Then they have all the trade they can do there (Interview former director of CODECHOCÓ – Medellin April 2019).

Related to the argument waged in terms of connectivity and regional competitiveness, promoters of the initiative state that the construction of the port would bring development, progress, employment and access to public services. The former director of CODECHOCÓ argues that such a large project would bring prosperity, not only to the departments in the inner country due to an increase in commercial activity but also to the inhabitants of Chocó. According to this perspective, the port would provide a large number of jobs, not only in terms of its construction but also in terms of its operation. In addition, as connectivity would increase, regional industries (such as the fishing sector, both from the Pacific Ocean or from the inner rivers) would industrialise and demand employees:

> But yes, it is a great fishing development for Antioquia and for the Chocó. I also say for Chocó because the employees are not going to be from Antioquia. It must be the people of the region, who already know the handling of the *bocachico*,[124] with all the techniques. That would produce a job. It would end the unemployment of the Chocó.

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[122] Henceforth, my own translation from: Alcaldía de Nuquí. (2016). *Plan de Desarrollo Municipal 2016-2019*. Nuquí.

[123] Municipality in the Department of Antioquia.

[124] *Prochilodus magdalenae* is a tropical freshwater fish from Colombia.

> Only with a project of that nature (Interview former director of CODECHOCÓ – Medellin April 2019).

Apart from the construction of the port itself, there is a deeper interest on the part of the financial stakeholders. An expert from Plan Arquímides argues that some of the investors in the initiative own large portions of the land where the port would be located:

> And Pereira, especially Risaralda, more than Caldas. Risaralda always looked at Nuquí. So much that there are some great investors in Nuquí. 30 years ago, they made very large investments there. They bought the land, so the land for the port today is private (Interview Plan Arquímides – Medellin April - 2019).

To close this section, three main observations can be made as to the manifested developmentalist framework of the intervention. First, following multiple constitutive elements of the social ontology of modernity such as the tropicalist vision over the territory (see section 4.2), the excerpt from Plan Arquímides considers that the development of the project is an opportunity for Chocó to "give back" to Colombia. That is, that in its isolation, the region can only provide value by developing its infrastructure and connectivity with projects like that of the Port of Tribugá. The interviewee argues: "it is the first time that Chocó has something to offer to the country. This project is a huge contribution. It is the first time Chocó has something to offer the country" (Interview Plan Arquímides – Medellin April – 2019).

Second, regarding the environmental and social damages that the port would bring to the region, the developmentalist perspective argues that, although the port and its adjacent roads may have some costs in terms of the rupture of the local social fabric, displacement and destruction of the environment, these should not be obstacles for the development of the region. This perspective exemplifies the sacrificial nature that the social ontology of modernity choses to perform against the "other" territories inhabited by those of sub-ontological difference in order to move forward towards the acquisition of a complete being (see Section 2.1):

> There is talk about migration [of whales], but I do not know how far one can see the routes affected. Well, in Chocó that [whale] district they have placed will limit it [the intervention]. In Chocó the roads cannot be done because of deforestation; a port cannot be made because the whales, so leave some mechanisms so the region can live (Interview former director of CODECHOCÓ – Medellin April 2019).

Last, the notion of non-western living standards as an obstacle to progress (see Section 3.1) materialises to the extent that, as some indigenous and black collectivities do not agree with the infrastructure attached to the port and exercise their rights granted by the Constitutions

of 1991 (see Section 4.2), they are responsible for their own "backwardness." As analysed in Chapters 1 and 3, portraying those collectivities that do not share the same living standards and social ontology of Eurocentric modernity as "savage," "backward" or "ignorant" was first a common practice among travellers and explorers and later among experts and technocrats of development:

> With the Law 70, very sincerely, many communities are responsible. As it happened in Nuquí with the road. The Colombian State wanted to establish two fronts. A front that was from Las Ánimas to Nuquí and another front that from Nuquí to Las Ánimas and there was a meeting point in the middle. The communities in Nuquí were a very serious problem with the contractors. They allowed working, but the price they put on beach material, a requirement to build a road, over passed the prices established by the ministry. There were very respectable firms that the communities themselves bored. Communities have also been at fault in that. In the development (Interview former director of CODECHOCÓ – Medellin April 2019).

7.3. Voices against

The voices against the port cluster in two main groups that partially connect with both the sustainability/multiculturalism and communitarianism/non-capitalism assemblages. First, an exclusively environmental perspective argues that the project would have devastating effects on the biodiversity of the region. Second, drawing on but surpassing the environmental perspective, a more complex argument held by some collectivities and social organisations states that the intervention would transform the territory and the environment that dialectically materialises and is materialised by the black social ontology, its sociocultures, practices and performances. This position evidences the ontological nature of this and any other socio-territorial conflict in which the social ontology of modernity tries to expand its scope through developmentalism and capitalism.

It is the partial connection between both assemblages that links the preoccupation about the environment and the effects of the construction of the port to the re-creation of the social ontologies of local coastal-dwellers. Due to the dialectical nature of the interaction between social ontology, socioculture and territory, environmental destruction implies a transformation of the conditions of existence and the re-creation of black sociocultures and black social ontology (see Section 6.3). That said, although the preoccupation of environmental destruction is laudable, in order to understand the complexity of the assemblage, it is necessary to have a critical perspective and identify some of its tropicalist assumptions (see Section 4.2).

Environmental concerns

The extraordinary biological characteristics of the Gulf of Tribugá, with its extended presence of mangroves, coral reefs, sandy beaches, cliffs and rocky beaches and its abundant diversity of birds, turtles and sea mammals like the humpback whale, compels almost every environmental institution to agree that any kind of intervention represent a critical risk to its ecosystemic balance. Moreover, according to INVEMAR,[125] the fishing resources of the gulf "[constitute] one of the most valuable breeding areas of a wide biodiversity and abundance of organisms that include invertebrates and fish" (INVEMAR, 2008, 14).

After analysing the environmental importance of the gulf in relation to the rest of the country and as a hotspot of biodiversity, the entity concludes: "considering the marine and coastal environmental quality prevailing in the Gulf of Tribugá, unique in Colombian coastal areas, it is not justified to make large infrastructure interventions with its consecutive impacts" (INVEMAR, 2008, 16).

INVEMAR (2008) highlights the importance of Tribugá not only as an ecosystem itself, but also as network of protected areas in the country:

> The results of the representation gap analysis[126] of the Colombian marine biodiversity, identified the cove of Tribugá as a priority conservation site (with a score of 11 points that correspond to a very high priority), and as one of the twelve sites in the Colombian Pacific basin proposed to form a network of protected marine areas (AMP) of the National System of Protected Areas (SINAP) (INVEMAR, 2008, 17).

Moreover, due to its environmental importance, the organisation Mission Blue (2019) included the Gulf of Tribugá as a "Hope Spot" of conservation. According to the organisation, "Hope Spots" are places that are critical to the health of the ocean and require special attention due to their ecosystemic relevance. In addition, Mission Blue (2019) argues that Hope Spots consist of places with:

1. "A special abundance or diversity of species, unusual or representative species, habitats or ecosystems.
2. Particular populations of rare, threatened or endemic species.
3. A site with potential to reverse damage from negative human impacts.

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[125] Henceforth, my own translation from: INVEMAR. (2008). *Viabilidad ambiental: Componente marino y costero, de una eventual intervención portuaria en la ensenada de Tribugá-Nuquí, Chocó, Pacífico Colombiano*. Santa Marta.

[126] "At its simplest, a gap analysis is an assessment of the extent to which a protected area system meets protection goals set by a nation or region to represent its biological diversity. Gap analyses can vary from simple exercises based on a spatial comparison of biodiversity with existing protected areas to complex studies that need detailed data gathering and analysis, mapping and use of software decision packages" (Convention on Biological Diversity, 2011).

4. The presence of natural processes such as major migration corridors or spawning grounds.
5. Significant historical, cultural or spiritual values.
6. Particular economic importance to the community" (Mission Blue, 2019).

In particular, Mission Blue categorises the Gulf of Tribugá as a Hope Spot because this region is "perhaps the most biodiverse in the world and chosen by magnificent animals like hammerhead sharks (Sphyrnidae) and humpback whales (Megaptera novaeangliae) to breed and raise their young" (Mission Blue, 2019). However, falling into a tropicalist perspective of the territory, the organisation argues:

> This beautiful pocket of the world is facing a threat to its natural wonders: the Colombian government is looking to build a Seaport in the Tribugá Gulf, right next to the existing National Park within it, threatening to end the local sustainable ecotourism that supports many people of the Chocó Province – not to mention the countless marine and land species that call the area home (Mission Blue, 2019).

The organisation concludes that "halting the construction of the port would be a wise investment in the local sustainable ecotourism and officially protecting the Gulf would preserve the lives of thousands of marine species and their stable ecosystems for generations to come" (Mission Blue, 2019).

Notwithstanding the well-intended statement of Mission Blue, it is necessary to highlight that its perspective reproduces some problematic representations of places where developmentalism/capitalism has not yet become the hegemonic assemblage. On the one hand, its tropicalist vision of the territory portrays it as pristine, not inhabited by human collectivities and ready for exploitation by means of sustainable tourism. On the other hand, this representation of the Gulf of Tribugá misacknowledges local socio-economic and cultural practices that actively interact with the territory. Representing the territory as pristine and inhabited by "good savages" that take care of the environment, the organisation invisibilises the complexity of the relational ontology enacted by black collectivities and essentialises the practices performed by local collectivities.

Complex territorial concerns

Partially connected to the perspective exclusively focused on the environment but overcoming a tropicalist understanding of the territory, the communitarianism/non-capitalism assemblage centres its critique on the entanglement of territory, practices and social ontologies. Following their relational ontology, the main concern of black collectivities is that the transformation of the territory would preclude the enactment of certain performances that give rise to both reality and their local social ontology. Without

ruling out the possibility of activities that generate income, local collectivities argue that the construction of the Port of Tribugá would destroy not only the environment but also the particular practices that involve specific forms of interaction between human and non-human beings that dialectically materialise and are materialised by the territory.

To the coastal-dwellers of the Gulf of Tribugá, the construction of the port exceeds the naturalist ontology of modern social ontology and focuses on the profound effects the intervention would have not only economically but also culturally and strike at the very heart of what makes them define themselves as black. As analysed in Section 6.4, there are multiple forms of deterritorialisation and of striping collectivities from the material, spiritual and cultural elements constitutive of their systems of classification and symbolic values. In short, to the extent that social ontology simultaneously fundaments and is fundamental to a particular space, the transformation of the territory would crack the black social ontology.

In line with their relational ontology, the claims of local collectivities focus on two intertwined elements. First, in line with the multiple dualisms to which the Eurocentric modernity refers (see Section 1.2), the intervention falls into a false separation between economy and society and presumes that such a project would not affect the social ontologies and sociocultures of local collectivities. Second, the environmental damages produced by the construction and operation of the port would compromise material elements with which, and from which, the local social ontology emerges and interacts through particular practices and performances:

> Let us say the people of Quibdó say we want the road, but it is because they are not living here, they are not suffering the need. For them it is very easy because they want to come easily to dance and have a drink and eat fish in Nuquí. Go eat a *bocachico* there [in Quibdó], they have it contaminated because they let it contaminate. It is a contradictory thing with human beings. We are seeing clear realities. In the centre of Chocó, they polluted all the rivers to find gold. Every river is contaminated. So how is it possible that they all are contaminated there, and we will allow them to contaminate other areas? It is ethical (Fausto Moreno - Nuquí April 2019).

The last quote, beyond its environmental focus, reflects the concern of local communities as to the transformation of their sociocultures. Particularly, the port and its adjacent road implies a violent eruption of the black social ontology and its sociocultures in that it would have concrete effects on the geographical characteristics of the territory. Such geographical transformation implies a rupture in terms of the possibility of enacting practices to re-create the human-non-human interactions present in the territory. As the president of the Community Council Los Riscales argues, the port implies the transformation the economic activities of black communities and their full integration into capitalist modernity. Furthermore, considering that reality emerges from enacting practices, in the long term, the

transformation of socio-economic and cultural performances implies the transformation of reality:

> Communities become more urban than rural. In other words, the occupations change. It is not that the communities will stop producing or stop working for their livelihoods, but that the occupations that people do in agriculture or fishing would take a turn in the sense that people become more urban (Interview President Los Riscales - Nuquí April 2019).

Along the same vein, an organiser of the Festival of Saint Francis of Assisi in Quibdó[127] and promoter of local cultural expressions argues that the port would not only end local sociocultures, but it would also diminish local knowledges and systems of classification that support them because the port would break the social fabric of the collectivity. Taking artisanal fishing as an example, the cultural promoter states that:

> At least the fishing, as it is today, that they do it artisanal, will not be that way anymore. […] That will come [the port], irrupts and everything breaks. All that knowledge is going to be lost because, let us say, the young man is going to have an interest in working in the port […] this urban and developmental project brings a rupture of social cohesion because they begin to deconfigure the existing social fabric or modify it (Interview San Pacho – Quibdó April 2019).

In addition to compromising the territory, the construction of the port may imply the physical elimination of some members of the collectivity. As described in Section 6.4, the transformation of the territories and the further elimination of the practices of local social ontologies usually comes with periods of violence and deterritorialisation. As a sacrificial process, developmentalism resorts to violence and deterritorialisation in order to expand its presence and make the developmentalism/capitalist assemblage hegemonic in the territory (see Section 6.1):

> For many people in the region, the Port of Tribugá is the solution for development. Environmentalists say that the forests are going to be destroyed, non-environmentalists say it is worth destroying that forest for bringing medicine, food, better quality of life to the territory. […] And then our biodiversity is over, we stop being the lungs of the world, the community is over and our young people continue

[127] The Festival of Saint Francis of Assisi (or San Pacho) is one of the most important festivals of the Colombian Pacific basin. According to UNESCO, it is "a celebration the community's Afro-descendant Chocó identity, embedded in popular-rooted religion" (UNESCO, 2019). Moreover, UNESCO considers the festival to be "the main symbolic space in the life of Quibdó. It strengthens Chocó identity and promotes social cohesion within the community, while promoting creativity and innovation through its revival and recreation of traditional knowledge and respect towards nature" (UNESCO, 2019). Since 2012, it has been part of the Intangible Cultural Heritages of UNESCO.

> to be killed, they continue to rape our women and continue to deteriorate our being (Interview Johanna Valoyes - Quibdó April 2019).

Echoing the analysis of deterritorialisation, the process of transforming social ontologies through the transformation of socio-economic and cultural performances takes place through two particular mechanisms. First, physical displacement from villages and towns to marginalised sectors of cities implies that black collectivities will be forced to adapt to new living conditions by changing their practices, which would eventually lead to the transformation or disappearance of their social ontology. Second, deterritorialisation also means the transformations of spaces with which the collectivities interact in the enactment of reality. Considering that being-in-the-world is contextual (*Dasein)*, that social ontologies are culturally and historically located and that practices define and are defined by social ontologies, the transformation of the territory means the transformation of the conditions that emerge from and give rise to specific forms of being-in-the-world and enacting reality. If the physical characteristics of certain spaces hold the conditions for the emergence of a particular social ontology and its sociocultures, the transformation of the space precludes the reproduction of local sociocultures and social ontologies. Even when violent displacement does not occur, territories become spaces of extraction, the material rooting of non-western social ontologies loses its ground due to the dialectical triad of space, practices and social ontology. The spaces that perform the practices that materialise social ontologies no longer exist:

> Moreover, they will not do it for us. That is something that people should understand. Because if that were designed for our benefit, it would be under our standards. The road would already be open and a small port would be made for cabotage boats, for the flow of goods and passengers for the region. But that [the intervention] is thought to benefit the interior, for other beneficiaries. The most risky of this is that when it becomes a reality, there will be a displacement. They will make a displacement, so the work for us will not be good or bad, because we will no longer exist in this territory. That is what people have to understand. It is not just cultural destruction it is displacement. Then everyone will have to leave and there is a free territory for those who want to invest (Interview with Oscar Saya – Nuquí April 2019).

Along the same vein, acknowledging that the construction of the port does not couple with the socio-economic and cultural practices of the inhabitants of the area, the coastal-dwellers argue that the project would only benefit individuals or companies from different parts of Colombian and the world –not the local collectivities. The following quote highlights both implications of the port: first, the exclusive economic gain for non-local companies and individuals; second, the implications the port would have for socio-economic and cultural local initiatives and, in the particular, for interactions between human and non-human entities in the territory:

> That the port is going to bring us economy and development. That is a lie. First, we are not competitive to compete with big businesspersons worldwide, because that is a competition, we do not have companies or have anything to put out from here. We do not have fishing companies, we do not have plantain companies, and we do not have a cocoa company to put a full container abroad. That is a lie. Therefore, we are not competitive. The port is not for the *Chocoanos*, it is not for the *Nuquiseños*,[128] nor is it for the Colombians; the port is for some Japanese foreigners, rich Colombians of the same families that have kept us below. Those who have ruled in Colombia and simply do nothing. What the port does is destroying the entire ecosystem we have here. Then we can no longer present the proposal of ecological tourism (Interview with Fausto Moreno – Nuquí April 2019).

Moreover, concern over violence and deterritorialisation also corresponds to the likely increase of drug trafficking in the region. Considering that cocaine trafficking is already a decisive element in the ontological dispute between assemblages, the Port of Tribugá would likely become an important hub along trafficking routs. The conversion of the gulf into a trafficking spot would mean the insertion of local collectivities into the dynamic of armed conflict and the violent advancement of the developmentalism/capitalism assemblage in the ontological dispute:

> My question is, when they make a road, if we are a strong drug rout, do you think that with a road that one in 3 hours you can reach Nuquí, crime is not going to overflow? Are we as a society prepared for that? (Interview Johanna Valoyes – Quibdó April 2019).

In particular, some inhabitants of the region refer to the experiences of two of the most important ports in the Colombian Pacific basin: Tumaco and Buenaventura. As for the first case, despite the strength and resistance of its inhabitants, the advancement of the developmentalism/capitalism assemblage through violence has been devastating. Considering that the Colombian historical conflict, drug trafficking and coca leaf plantations have been present for longerm in Tumaco, the area of this town and port (close to the border with Ecuador) concentrates the largest amount of hectares with coca leaf plantations in Colombia and is one of the most important ports along the drug trafficking routes

The other case is the port of Buenaventura, currently the biggest port in Colombia but one of the most dangerous cities in the country. According to Molano (2017), although Buenaventura moves the equivalent to 60% of the Colombian international trade, it is a city of about 350,000 inhabitants of whom 256,000 live in poverty, 147,000 in misery and about 30% of whom are unemployed. Moreover, its rates of violence and the presence of different

[128] Chocoano and Nuquiseño are the demonyms of Chocó and Nuquí, respectively.

armed groups and drug dealing gangs has led to a scenario of terror concerning the control of areas of the city and the illegal trafficking routes. The most gruesome materialisation of the violence in the city are the "chop houses," or *casas de pique,* where illegal organisations torture and dismember their victims alive:[129]

> The horror technique demands that people realize but do not tell; see the capture of the victim in the neighbourhood, the way they drag it, and hear the cries for help, the screams of forgiveness and clemency and, finally, the howls of pain. The screams are going to stay to live in people's heads. Everyone is afraid to be next on a list that nobody makes. The neighbours hear, the neighbourhood hears, the area knows, the city knows. The authorities do not hear, do not see, and do not know (Molano 2017, 127).

Along this vein, the experience of Buenaventura represents one of the most important components of opposition to the construction of the port in the Gulf of Tribugá. In addition to sociocultural eruption, the expanded violence, unemployment, terror and displacement that the collectivities in Buenaventura experienced and continue to experience have led to fundamental resistance to the idea of the project:

> In Colombia there are no ports that one would say: this is an example of a port. Is there an example port? Yes, but negative. For example, Buenaventura. Buenaventura being the richest city in Colombia, now it is the most dangerous city in the world and the poorest in the world. So in Nuquí you cannot expect the port to solve problems (Interview Fausto Moreno – Nuquí April 2019).

To close this section, there are two main social ontologies involved in the debate over the construction of the Port of Tribugá: modern social ontology and black social ontology. The modern social ontology includes two antagonising positions enacted by the developmentalism/capitalism assemblage (in favour of the intervention) and the sustainability/multiculturalism assemblage (against it). Both assemblages belong to the social ontology of modernity and share a teleological perspective of history, a series of dualisms (such as human/nature, body/mind and object/subject), individualism and the pretension to universalism, but they differ as to what is the most efficient way to use the resources the territory offers. In comparison, the reasons behind the rejection of the project by coastal-dwellers corresponds to the fact that the transformation of the territory, besides carrying violence and deterritorialisation, would erupt the local social ontology, its characteristic relationality and the non-capitalist performances enacted through human-nature interactions.

[129] Since the end of 2020, the violence in Buenaventura is radically out of control due to the disputes over the territory between gang bands. "The Buenaventura of this decade today is clouded by hopelessness caused by violence, drug trafficking, state abandonment, and displacement, the recruitment of minors and internal displacement that does not stop (…)" (Pacifista, 2021).

PART III. THE GULF OF TRIBUGÁ AND THE PACIFIC REGION: WHAT IS NEXT?

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops,
Weakened by my soulful cries?

Does my haughtiness offend you?
Don't you take it awful hard
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
Diggin' in my own backyard.

You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?
Does it come as a surprise
That I dance like I've got diamonds
At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise.

"Still I rise" - Maya Angelou

8. Towards a transmodern and intercultural enactment of development and well-being in the Gulf of Tribugá

Having established the ontological complexity of the Gulf of Tribugá, where different social ontologies, sociocultures and assemblages co-exist, negotiate and dispute hegemony in the territory, it is necessary to bring into the discussion some of the theoretical and practical elements that help envision the co-existence of heterogeneous realities enacted by a plurality of collectivities. In the long term, the co-presence of multiple, but partially connected (Strathern, 2005) social ontologies constitutes what various authors call the "pluriverse" (Blaser, 2013a; Blaser & De la Cadena, 2018; Dussel, 2016; Escobar, 2018a, 2018b; Fornet-Betancourt, 2009; Grosfoguel, 2008; Kothari et al., 2019). The idea of the pluriverse, both as a political horizon and as a methodological approach, becomes an "analytical tool useful for producing ethnographic compositions capable of conceiving ecologies of practices across heterogeneous(ly) entangled worlds" (Blaser & De la Cadena, 2018, 4).

With this in mind, thinking with and towards the pluriverse implies bringing into conversation concepts such as intercultural philosophy, transmodernity, multiple ecologies and cosmopolitics, which offer innovative ways to understand and unravel the monologue of western modernity over its partial exteriorities. Those elements, along with some of the practices enacted by non-western collectivities in their struggle over the territory and some of their mechanisms of resistance against the expansion of capitalist practices, allow for the picturing of a future in which socio-ontological diversity is not reduced to folkloric manifestations, nor to supposedly stagnated sociocultures and social ontologies.

Picturing the recognition and interaction between socio-ontological heterogeneity implies avoiding the co-optation of the notion of interculturality or transmodernity by the monocultural hegemonic model in the "sense of a western cultural imperialism and a consumerist postmodernism" (Estermann, 2009, 52).[130] In this sense, both discourses – transmodernity and interculturality – require a critical dialogue with the notion of decoloniality in order to elude any form of stagnation in the intentional or interpersonal level and to avoid reducing interculturality to neoliberal multiculturalism.[131]

In its contribution to intercultural dialogue, decolonial thought stresses the asymmetrical character of interactions between Europe and non-western collectivities since the expansion of the former in the sixteenth century. Although every collectivity is a product of cultural interaction, decoloniality focuses on the violence, domination and marginalisation within encounters between the core and periphery of the modern world-system. Without that critical

[130] Henceforth, my own translation from: Estermann, J. (2009). Colonialidad, descolonización e interculturalidad. Apuntes desde la Filosofía Intercultural. In *Interculturalidad crítica y descolonización. Fundamentos para el debate* (pp. 51–70). Instituto Internacional de Integración Convenio Andrés Bello.

[131] Likewise, to the extent that interculturality rejects any form of cultural essentialism or cultural purism, it enriches decolonial thought, which sometimes falls into claiming a bucolic and pristine past.

perspective, as in liberal and neoliberal multiculturalism, hegemonic discourse would co-opt and exploit interculturality with the result of the "incorporation" of the non-hegemonic culture into the dominant one:

> Today, as well, there is talk of 'interculturality' in the offices of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the G-8, but also in postmodern *yuppie* circles. We must be very careful not to become the 'inclusive' and 'included' instrument of a discourse that, in reality, excludes (Estermann, 2009, 64).[132]

However, besides the theoretical elements provided by notions like transmodernity and intercultural philosophy, it is necessary to identify the main challenges of non-hierarchical interactions. The co-existence of multiple social ontologies requires important efforts towards the constitution of multiple ecologies or the pluriverse, in which the complexity of every social ontology, socioculture and practice takes part in the conversation. Along that vein, transmodern and intercultural interactions imply that each interlocutor recognises the existence of multiple realities that correspond to specific social ontologies that individuals and collectivities enact through particular practices. The interaction of multiple enacted realities means, then, "heterogeneous worldings coming together as a political ecology of practices, negotiating their difficult being together in heterogeneity" (Blaser & De la Cadena, 2018, 4).

In other words, the fundament of any ecological interaction between collectivities towards the constitution of the pluriverse resides in recognising the existence of multiple worlds. Otherwise, ethnocentric supremacies would permeate the conversation and reproduce the nature of the interaction between the core and the periphery of the modern world-system, in a Eurocentric monologue takes place rather than a dialogue.

Along this vein, avoiding any form of monologue in the interaction between collectivities implies not only questioning but also appropriating certain Eurocentric abstract universalisms in order to materialise them according to each social ontology. A world with multiple worlds requires the subaltern appropriation of those Eurocentric notions that have become Trojan horses in the marginalisation, dehumanisation and segregation of non-western collectivities. As analysed throughout this research, although Eurocentric abstract universalisms may have changed in form over time (see Chapters 1 and 3), they still constitute the discursive practice of classifying, dominating, transforming and eliminating difference. Currently, those abstract universalisms relate to notions of development, progress, market, prosperity and sustainability among others.

[132] Italics in the original.

Appropriating and concretising hegemonic abstract universalisms such as the idea of development implies questioning notions of poverty and well-being, which, in interaction with developmentalist discursive practices, may become transmodern innovations that reflect transfigurations carried by particular collectivities. To the extent that collectivities participate in different assemblages and are partially connected with different sociocultures (see Chapter 6), the appropriation of those universalism take place in each of the assemblages and sociocultures with which the collectivity interacts. The concretisation of universalisms does not claim a pristine, essential past in which non-western collectivities may project themselves; it takes the positive elements of such concepts, strips them from their Eurocentrism, adapts them to the disputed entanglement of assemblages and puts them in practice through particular performances.

Concretising the Eurocentric universalism of development involves performing practices that, while stripping development from its Eurocentrism, reproduce and re-create local social ontologies and sociocultures. This double movement leads to a series of practices towards the well-being of the collectivities and the ecosystemic balance of the territory. After questioning the Eurocentric character of the idea of development, each local collectivity should critically review its own sociocultures and define whether its practices foster well-being, intercultural dialogue with other collectivities, food sovereignty and autonomy. Later, the appropriation of the idea of development implies the creation of innovative mechanisms through which a given collectivity, aware of the unequal dispute over its territory and using some elements from both western modernity and its own social ontology, manages to establish the path leading to its own conceptions of well-being.

Such is the case of the black collectivity in the Gulf of Tribugá. Considering that the socio-ontological dispute over the territory consists of the struggle of coastal-dwellers claiming their rightful self-determination and autonomy, they take abstract universalisms present in both the developmentalism/capitalism and sustainability/multiculturalism assemblages (see Chapter 6) in order to achieve their political purposes while moving towards well-being. Due to its partial connections, the communitarianism/non-capitalism assemblage appropriates specific universalisms of the other two assemblages in order to design its own current and contemporary perspectives on well-being.

Moreover, in order to illustrate the transmodernity in the local notion of well-being and its intercultural inclination, the present chapter describes two concrete strategies designed and performed by the collectivity towards the constitution of their well-being under the current socio-ontological dispute. This does not mean that the Gulf of Tribugá represents a transmodern, intercultural space, but that the local conception of well-being and the practices performed towards its materialisation represent important efforts for a region in which multiple worlds can co-exist. In particular, the *Ethno-development Plan: Vision of life of the*

black communities of the Gulf of Tribugá (2007-2020) (EDP 2007-2020),[133] and the *Regional District of Integrated Management* (DRMI) are two of the most relevant mechanisms designed and performed by the collectivity towards a pluriversal region.

With this in mind, this chapter contains four sections. *Transmodernity and interculturality: theoretical contributions to the idea of pluriversalism* deals with the theoretical fundaments of transmodernity and intercultural philosophy. With a few examples, this section also discusses the similarities and differences between these two concepts. *Challenges of ontological pluralism: controlled equivocations, ecology of sociocultures and cosmopolitics* deals with the challenges that the horizon of a world with multiple worlds faces and some of the possible mechanisms that could be used to overcome those obstacles. In particular, both the notions of ecology of sociocultures and cosmopolitics provide some of theoretical and practical elements that can be used to solve the possible impasses of the pluriverse. *A transmodern understanding of well-being: a proposal from the Gulf of Tribugá* focuses on the particular notion of well-being developed by the coastal-dwellers. This section seeks to describe the transmodern complexity of the local notion of well-being, for it responds to the current partial connections the collectivity has with the assemblages described in the former chapter. *Two transmodern and intercultural efforts towards the autonomy and self-determination of black collectivities in the Gulf of Tribugá* describes the aforementioned mechanisms of the EDP 2007-2020 and the DRMI as strategic performances to materialise the conception of well-being according to the local social ontology and socioculture.

8.1. Transmodernity and intercultural philosophy: theoretical contributions to the idea of pluriversalism

The first meeting point between the projects of transmodernity and intercultural philosophy relates to their shared critique of Eurocentrism, neoliberal multiculturalism and the effects the expansion of Europe since the sixteenth century has had on epistemic and socio-ontological plurality. Moreover, both approaches share the same horizon in which different, partially connected, philosophical traditions originated in both the Global South and North, participate in a horizontal dialogue that equally contemplates every participating epistemology. The following pages seek to create a dialogue between both approaches, highlighting their similarities and identifying their possible differences.

Both projects challenge what De Sousa Santos, cited in Walsh (2004), calls the "monoculture of knowledge." The monoculture of knowledge is embedded in the colonial notion that only western epistemology is able to understand reality and that all other approaches to understanding the world are just localised interpretations. Moreover, both projects distance themselves from the notion of multiculturality as the sum of different cultures and of the

[133] Its name in Spanish is *Plan de Etnodesarrollo: Visión de vida de las comunidades negras del Golfo de Tribugá 2007-2020*.

superficial relationships between cultures (proposed by neoliberalism). Intercultural philosophy and transmodernity are intertwined processes that begin in the collectivities themselves and work towards the construction of a way of thinking, a political practice and an innovative social horizon. The transmodern-intercultural project aims to transform the thinking, the practices and the power structures of those collectivities that share the same historical experience of colonialism. As Walsh (2004) puts it:

> This interculturality marks and constructs different ways of thinking about, and acting in relation to or against modernity/coloniality and the geopolitical hegemony of knowledge. It is a paradigm of disruption, thought through political praxis and towards the construction of a more just world (Walsh, 2004, 339).[134]

Having a different sections for each theoretical approach does not imply their incompatibility but strives to highlight their similarities and differences. Although, in the end, both approaches aim towards the ecological interaction among equals, the elements with which each reach to their conclusions varies and enriches the discussion. In this sense, it only remains to be said that transmodern manifestations do not necessarily imply intercultural dialogues, nor does intercultural dialogue requires a transmodern approach. As for the transmodern (but not intercultural dialogues), cases such as the Haitian Revolution or the "veil case" in France did not emerge from a dialogue between western and non-western epistemologies, but from the appropriation of abstract universalisms concretised by collectivities towards their autonomy and self-determination. On the other hand, two or more collectivities from the Global South might have intercultural experiences without going through modernity. Finally, the EDP 2007-2020 (analysed in the Section 8.4) combines transmodernity and interculturality in that it seeks to create the conditions for the reproduction of the black social ontology and sociocultures in dialogue with others in the territory. In particular, although limited and in a very precarious stage of materialisation due to the advancement of the hegemonic developmentalism/capitalism assemblage, it seeks to create the conditions for the reproduction of black sociocultures in dialogue with the state, NGOs and other peripheral collectivities in the area. It simultaneously converses with other marginalised epistemologies in the regions (such as the indigenous and peasants collectivities) and with the hegemonic discourse materialised through official state entities, NGOs and international cooperation.

Transmodernity

"Transmodernity" is a term coined by Enrique Dussel (1994, 2016) to describe a new age in the history of philosophy focused on the acceptance of each regional philosophical tradition

[134] Henceforth, my own translation from: Walsh, C. (2004). Colonialidad, conocimiento y diáspora afro-andina: Construyendo etnoeducación e interculturalidad en la universidad. *Conflicto e (in) Visibilidad Retos En Los Estudios de La Gente Negra En Colombia*, *331*.

of the sense, value and history of every other tradition. Accordingly, this new stage would be the first time in the history of philosophy that diverse philosophical traditions partake in an authentic and symmetrical dialogue, from which each will learn from other traditions. As this conversation has as its fundament the symmetrical acknowledgment of every philosophical tradition, it surpasses and eliminates the currently hegemonic modern Eurocentric perspective.

The main topic of this multiple and complex conversation would be what Dussel (2016) calls "universal problems nuclei." These are the set of fundamental ontological questions that *Homo sapiens* have asked at different points in history. Some of these questions are:

> What are *real things* and how do they behave in their entirety; from astronomical phenomena to the simple fall of a stone or the artificial production of fire? What is the mystery of the own *subjectivity*, the self, the human interiority? How can one think about the fact of human spontaneity, freedom, the *ethical* and *social world*? In the end, how can the *ultimate foundation* of all reality, of the universe, be interpreted? – Which raises the question about the ontological in that of "Why *being* and not rather *nothing*? (Dussel, 2016, 12).[135][136]

Among others, to the extent that this set of questions may be part of any tradition, they may provide an extensive myriad of answers and rational narratives that seek to understand and explain such phenomena. Some of these answers belong to processes of myth productions as rational mechanisms used to interpret the world. Myths and symbolic narrations (as rational stratagems) do not refer to singular phenomena but provide a double sense that requires hermeneutic reasoning. However, the turn from mythological reason and symbolic narrations to conceptual and univocal terminology requires a methodical process that moves from the particular to the general and seeks precise meanings. Although philosophical discourse does not necessarily cancel mythological reason as such, it may deny some of its premises if it loses its empirical argumentation. That is, philosophical thinking replaces the mythological narrative when it becomes inadequate to providing meanings. Nonetheless, some philosophical conceptualisations carry mythological elements inadvertently, which Dussel (2016) calls "non-intentional ideologies." Some of these mythological traces are notions such as the soul, a higher good or the end of history.

Although the turn from mythological narrations to a structure of conceptual categories took place in multiple moments and places such India, China, Mesopotamia, Egypt, Mesoamerica and the Andes, the Eurocentric narrative argues that philosophy is an exclusively Hellenic invention. As analysed in Chapter 1, despite the multiple locations, cultures and periods in

[135] Henceforth, my own translation from: Dussel, E. (2016). *Filosofías del Sur. Descolonización y Transmodernidad*. Ediciones Akal.
[136] Italics in the original.

which philosophical thinking emerged, the conversion of European thought from one regional philosophy among many to "Philosophy" started with the expansion of Europe to the Americas. With this expansion, European philosophy reached an innovative development never seen in any other place in the world that converted its regional nature to a universal pretension (Dussel, 2016). This pretension to universalism means that, although every culture is ethnocentric, only the modern philosophical tradition of Northern Europe managed to evolve its ethnocentrism into a pretension to universalism.

This pretension to universalism encounters its limit when other philosophical traditions value their own history of thought and, in particular, localise their philosophical thought. Nevertheless, to the extent that each of these philosophical traditions deals with fundamental problem nuclei, localised philosophies and their critique of western pretensions to universalism do not exclude the possibility of carrying out discussions among philosophical traditions with the intention of reaching universally valid answers.

Reaching universally valid answers via inter-philosophical discussions requires conceding to each argumentative position a symmetric condition in the conversation. Otherwise, the conclusion of the discussion would not be of universal validity, for not all of the participants would intervene under the same conditions. As Dussel (2016) puts it, this condition of possibility is the formal etic-epistemic principle that would allow for inter-philosophical discussions towards universally valid concepts. That means that this form of meta-philosophy, although given in a particular space-time framework, represents both a non-ethnocentric mechanism for overcoming any form of epistemic fundamentalism and a strategy for reaching universal concepts.

According to Dussel (2016), this type of meta-philosophy should be the project of philosophy in the twenty-first century. Due to centuries of colonialism and to the re-validation that philosophies from the Global South require, this inter-philosophical dialogue should contain two sets of non-exclusive conversations: first, a dialogue between the hegemonic modern tradition and those traditions historically despised in the peripheries of the modern world-system; second, a conversation between philosophical traditions in the Global South.

The first step towards creating the conditions for these two parallel conversations to take place is questioning the Eurocentrism and parochialism of modern western philosophy and its argumentative focus on "proving" the intrinsic superiority of the European civilisation and its philosophy. As analysed in Chapters 1 and 2, since the sixteenth century, colonial praxis relied on a philosophical justification to legitimise its behaviour against collectivities in the zone of non-being and to deny the ontological status of those individuals in the peripheral areas of the modern world-system. In this sense, the modern narration of the history of philosophy diminished (or tried to eliminate) any regional philosophical manifestation in the periphery of the modern world-system. In addition to economic, social

and geopolitical challenges, a post-colonial condition or situation requires a critical perspective that seeks to overcome this form of coloniality of philosophy or coloniality of knowledge (see Chapter 2).

Claiming the regional manifestation and localisation of every philosophical production instead of its pretend objectivity (what Dussel (2016) calls the "fallacy of dislocation") means recognising the historical compromise of every philosophical tradition. That is, philosophical narratives are not detached from the cultural, economic and political circumstances from which they emerge. Any technical or scientific achievements, including those that belong to philosophy, rather than existing as solipsistic, intra-scientific events, manifest the extra-scientific conditions that determined them (Dussel, 2016).

Accepting this historical compromise of philosophy implies accepting the existence of multiple philosophies and the impossibility of claiming a dislocated philosophical narrative. This means validating the historical processes and circumstances that give rise to localised narratives and forms of reasoning. In the particular case of the Global South, rather that denying its localisation and reducing itself to solely commenting the European tradition, philosophy in the zone of non-being should fundament its reasoning in its own reality, its own concerns and its own collectivities.

In a general sense, these are the conditions for an inter-philosophical conversation in a situation beyond Eurocentric modernity. However, this new scenario would not be "postmodern" (a definition that would only apply to Europe) but "transmodern," for it proposes a radical change to the modern *ethos.* From a transmodern perspective, humanity is neither defined by nor classified in the univocal universality of one single culture – it is brought into the resulting plurality of its universality. Rather that universalism, there would be pluriversalism:

> It will be, as we have indicated, an age in which, thanks to new economic relations, capitalism will have been overcome. Because the ecological and life demands of the majority of the Earth's population – that will have embraced a participatory democracy beyond liberalism – will no longer allow a system based on the exploitation of the most vulnerable by the increase in the rate of profit and the inequality of the world's citizens (Dussel, 2016, 101).

Defining humanity in terms of its plurality implies questioning the notion of multiculturality in its liberal and neoliberal understandings (see Section 4.3). Transmodernity strives for a plural dialogue between different cultures and recognises the current asymmetries among participants. As stated in different sections (see Chapters 1 and 2), the constitutive character of capitalism, modernity and colonialism tipped the scales towards the Eurocentric version of history and its philosophical narrative. This unbalanced epistemic, economic, social and

geopolitical scale currently makes impossible the symmetrical dialogue between the core and the periphery of the modern world-system.

This form of multiculturalism demands that all the participants of the conversation accept certain procedural principles profoundly biased towards the western tradition. Moreover, this form of multicultural conversation supposes the acceptance and compliance of every participant in the liberal state in its multicultural version without questioning either its structure, its power dynamics or its elements of marginalisation. Along this vein, to the extent that this form of multiculturalism takes for granted certain liberal and neoliberal premises, it does not have the capacity to include critical perspectives on capitalism, the state, political participation, land use, multiple histories or different perspectives on the future. In the end, multicultural liberalism and neoliberalism foster an aseptic dialogue that defends liberal western culture. In some cases, the defence of the western liberal culture resorts to violent means when collectivities in the zone of non-being question its epistemological and ontological basis (see Sections 2.1 and 6.4).

Despite the initial epistemic violence and physical elimination of non-western collectivities, and the later reduction of its epistemologies and ontologies to folkloric manifestations, these social ontologies and sociocultures have managed to survive amidst the invisibilisation and marginalisation perpetrated by western modernity. Due to their peripheral condition, these collectivities managed to persist – not as unaltered and pristine cultures but as innovative and creative traditions partially exterior to modernity. The idea of "partial exteriority," related to that of "partial connections" developed by Strathern (2005), argues that, besides a few examples of uncontacted peoples in India, South America and some of the Pacific Islands, there are no "non-modern" collectivities.[137] For this reason, rather than calling collectivities in the zone of non-being "exterior to" modernity, they are better understood as "partially exterior" to modernity.

Stating that non-western collectivities are in the margins of modernity implies that they are part of it rather than radical exterior to modernity or non-modern (such a condition does not exist) – such collectivities are "partially exterior." As illustrated in the analysis of the black collectivity in the Gulf of Tribugá (see Chapter 4), the presence of these collectivities in the region is the result of the modern slave trade. The ongoing racialised representation of these collectivities is the result of the modern classification of humans according to race. The destruction of their territory is the result of the expansion of capitalist practice. In short, these collectivities have been part of modernity – not in its centre, but in its margins as partial exteriorities.

[137] Even in these cases, the lives of these collectivities are determined, among other factors, by the expansion of modernity in their inhabited territories. To put it shortly, every collectivity in the world is influenced by and constitutive of modernity.

Accepting the partial exteriority of collectivities in the zone of non-being and simultaneously making efforts to question western universalism suggests that, although it is important to recognise the modern aspects of these collectivities, it is also necessary to claim and highlight their cultural differences. This form of double belonging or "border thinking" (Mignolo, 2012), different from the idea of "double consciousness" (Du Bois, 2012), characterises the peripheral collectivities of the modern world-system and implies the enactment of practices that simultaneously belong to both western and the non-western traditions. As discussed in the previous chapter, collectivities do only perform practices that belong to one single assemblage but rather move along different assemblages according to circumstance. For this reason, under the theoretical framework of transmodernity that suggests that every collectivity is partially connected with modernity, there is no such a thing as passive cultural hybridity when trying to describe racialised peripheral collectivities.

The idea of "cultural hybridity," widely analysed by García Canclini (2005), argues that the interaction between the modern and the traditional, instead of creating practices partially connected with both worlds, produces a hybrid cultural mixture. By questioning the idea of cultural purism (advocated by both traditionalists and in modernists), the author argues that culture in Latin-American is a mixed *mestizo* culture that takes from both worlds and creates its own:

> The place from which several thousand Latin American artists write, paint, or compose music is no longer the city in which they spent their infancy, nor the one they have lived in for several years, but rather a hybrid place in which the places really lived are crossed (García Canclini, 2005, 242).

In addition to the contrapositions between the notion of cultural hybridity and those of transmodernity and interculturality (for if there is hybridity, there is homogenisation, ergo there is no need for transmodern-intercultural dialogue), Rivera Cusicanqui (2010) argues that indigenous collectivities neither have a rigid identity nor are they subsumed in the discourse of hybridisation (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2010). According to this author, both discourses of neoliberal multiculturalism and hybridity are essentialist and historicist in that they hide new forms of the colonisation of indigenous collectivities. Her critique of hybridity be can easily extrapolated to other collectivities with partial connections with modernity which are neither subsumed by it nor by the idea of national or continental hybridity:

> The notion of 'hybridity' proposed by García Canclini is a genetic metaphor, which connotes sterility. The mule is a hybrid species and cannot reproduce. Hybridity assumes the possibility that a completely new third, a third race or social group capable of merging the traits of their ancestors into a harmonious and above all

> unprecedented mix, may emerge from the mixture of two different ones (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2010, 70).[138]

To transcend any form of purism – from either modernists, traditionalists or hybridists – Rivera Cusicanqui (2010, 2018) proposes the term *ch'ixi*. The term seeks to account for those realities in which multiple cultural practices co-exist without merging into one, but antagonising or complementing each other. The emergence of these multiple co-existing assemblages (see Section 5.3 and Chapter 6) responds to the fact that the attempt to discipline difference and "obliterate our supposed 'anomalies' stumble[s] – and keep[s] stumbling – with a proliferating heterogeneity, which renews and radicalizes with every step" (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2018, 22).[139] In words of the author, the notion of *ch'ixi* refers to the following:

> The word ch'ixi has various connotations: it is a colour produced by juxtaposition, in small spots or steins, of two opposite or contrasting colours: white and black, red and green, etc. It is that mottled grey resulting from the imperceptible mix of white and black, which are confused for perception without ever mixing at all. The ch'ixi notion, like many others (*allqa*, *ayni*) obeys to the Aymara idea of something that is and is not at the same time, that is, the logic of the included third party. A ch'ixi grey colour is white and it is not white at the same time, it is white and it is also black, its opposite. The ch'ixi stone, therefore, hides in its bosom mythical animals such as the snake, the lizard, the spiders or the toad, ch'ixi animals that belong to time immemorial, to the *jaya mara*. Times of undifferentiation, when animals talked to humans. The power of the undifferentiated is that it combines the opposites. Just as allqamari combines black and white in symmetrical perfection, ch'ixi combines the Indian world with its opposite, without ever mixing with it. But its heteronym, chhixi, in turn alludes to the idea of a mess, of loss of substance and energy. Chhixi is the firewood that burns very quickly, of what is soft and intermingled. It corresponds, then, to that fashionable notion of 'light' cultural hybridization, conforming to contemporary cultural domination (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2010, 69-70).[140]

In that it provides the possibility of double belonging or double binding, *ch'ixi* dialogues with notions of border thinking and transmodernity in that they all conceive of modernity in the periphery as an in-between place inhabited by collectivities that interact with and perform multiple worlds simultaneously. In the end, all these concepts share the idea that modernity is a process experienced both in the core and in the periphery of the modern world-system. However, as explored in Part I of this research, the nature of these experiences radically

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[138] Henceforth, my own translation from: Rivera Cusicanqui, S. (2010). *Ch'ixinakax utxiwa. Una reflexión sobre prácticas y discursos descolonizadores*. Tinta limón.

[139] Henceforth, my own translation from: Rivera Cusicanqui, S. (2018). *Un mundo ch'ixi es posible. Ensayos desde un presente en crisis*. Tinta limón.

[140] Italics in the original.

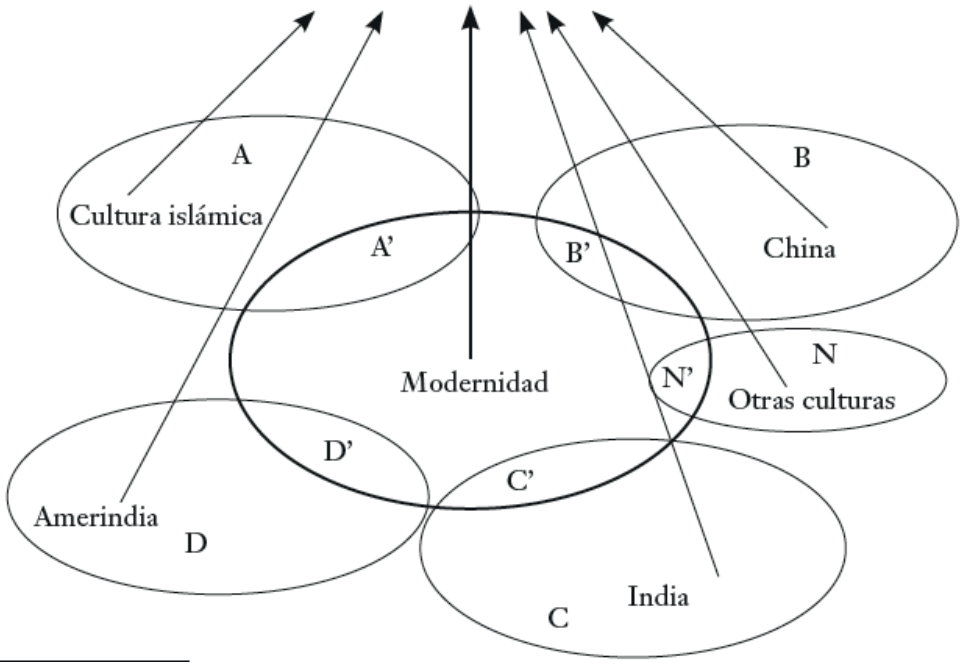
varies between the core and the periphery as the former experience modernity from the hegemonic zone of being and the latter from the subalternised zone of non-being.

Despite the multiple forms of coloniality widely analysed throughout this research (see Section 2.1), modern but non-western social ontologies and sociocultures manage to reproduce, interact with and dispute the performances enacted in the periphery of the modern world-system. Characterising peripheral collectivities as "modern" carries with it two main implications. First, it acknowledges the existence of the "dark side of modernity," in which marginalised collectivities and territories, rather than being mere recipients of modernity, are constitutive of it. Modernity creates two types of subjects: those inhabiting in the zone of being and those inhabiting in the zone of non-being. Despite their ontological differences, both are constitutive parts of modernity (see Chapters 1 and 2). Second, it allows thinking non-western social ontologies and sociocultures not only as contemporary with modernity, but also as legitimate in terms of their strategies that respond to current local and global challenges.

The *ch'ixi* nature and partial exteriority of collectivities located in the peripheral areas of the modern world-system imply that the transmodern project does not aim to the homogeneous hybridisation of regions or collectivities, but a transversal dialogue and interaction between social ontologies and sociocultures in both the Global South and North. Furthermore, as the experience of colonialism in the periphery does not produce heterogeneous kaleidoscopic differences but multiple partial connections between different peripheries and between core and peripheries, the dialogue should include multiple peripheries as well as the core. However, not every intercultural conversation has to go through the core because the partial exteriorities of modernity dialogue from their own negativities without having to go through the centre. These type of conversations that do not stop or go through the hegemonic discourses occur from feminist movements to anticolonial struggles, from antiracist vindications to indigenous movements. To use an analogy, Dussel (2016) argues that intercultural dialogue should also take place among and between peripheries in their shared condition of partial exteriority. The dialogue does not have to go through the core of the modern world-system (see Illustration 2):

> Frequently the big megalopolises have underground services that go from the suburban neighbourhoods to the centre; but the suburban sub-centres are not connected to each other. Exactly by analogy it happens with intercultural dialogue (Dussel, 2016, 284).

Illustration 2. Transmodernity



Taken from: Dussel, E. (2016). *Filosofías del Sur. Descolonización y Transmodernidad*. Ediciones Akal.

Avoiding going through the core of modernity means questioning its abstract universalisms and proposing a type of universality that contains all particulars (see Section 1.2). Unlike the western epistemological tradition that aims to identify a certain ubiquity in its concepts, transmodernity advocates for localised knowledge in the constitution of universality. In this sense, the proposal to validate particular epistemologies does not represent provincialism because it does not limit itself to that, nor does it get lost in abstract universalisms. As analysed by Grosfoguel (2008), the project of transmodernity proposes a kind of universality that affirms each particularity without falling into provincialisms (like European epistemology) because it consists of intercultural dialogues between concrete, materialised conceptualisations of the world by partial exteriorities of modernity:

> This does not represent a call to seek fundamentalist or nationalist solutions to the global coloniality of power. It is a call to seek in epistemic diversality and transmodernity a strategy or an epistemic mechanism towards a decolonized, transmodern world that moves us beyond both the Eurocentric First-Worldist and Eurocentric Third-Worldist fundamentalisms (Grosfoguel, 2008, 97).

This dialogue between partial exteriorities of modernity requires the self-affirmation of the value of each peripheral culture. According to Dussel (2016), this process of affirmation requires the negation of the negation. That is, those collectivities positioned in the zone of non-being, whose humanity has been denied or negated, have to reclaim their own value,

their accuracy and their importance before entering into any intercultural dialogue. In order to avoid fundamentalist perspectives that seek to reconstruct a supposedly pristine past, the process of negating the negation must go through self-critique. The only way to be part of an intercultural South-South or North-South dialogue to is have an actively critical perspective on one's own values and assumptions. This form of critique of one's own assumptions has to consider elements of both one's own tradition and of modernity. However, in self-critique, elements borrowed from modernity are neither imposed nor forced. A given collectivity critically decides which concepts of modernity nurture their self-critique and enrich the reconstruction of its their tradition – not as a fix substance but as an entity in constant flux.

In this sense, critiques from inside a given collectivity should locate themselves in between two traditions: its own and that of modernity. This double critique is a form of border thinking in that it questions both modernity and one's own tradition. In this scenario, intercultural dialogue is not between apologists, who would try to praise the virtues of each tradition, but between critics of each culture.

In short, according to Dussel (2016), the project of transmodernity supposes a series of elements in the long term. First, it supposes the affirmation of one's own culture in terms of negating the negation of the humanity of non-western collectivities imposed since the expansion of Europe in the sixteenth century. Second, each cultural assumption should be critically revised from inside using a given collectivity's own hermeneutical instruments. Third, in order to avoid non-critical eulogists, it requires criticism located in between modernity, one's own culture and other partially connected cultures. It demands border thinking. It is a dialogue between critical perspectives that do not start from a perspective of modernity, but from its partial exteriority, from its border condition. In the end, the project of transmodernity aims for:

> The affirmation and development of the cultural alterity of the post-colonial peoples, subsuming at the same time the best of Modernity, should display not a cultural style that tends to a globalized, undifferentiated or empty unity, but to a *trans*-modern pluriverse (with many universalities: European, Islamic, Vedanta, Taoist, Buddhist, Latin American, Bantu, etc.), multicultural, in critical intercultural dialogue (Dussel, 2016, 294).[141]

Intercultural philosophy

Although the ideas of intercultural philosophy and transmodernity share the same purpose, the particular approach of intercultural philosophy seeks to provide elements aimed at putting in practice the dialogue between different epistemological traditions. Leaving aside the

[141] Italics in the original.

analysis of how and to what extent each collectivity is partially connected to modernity and represents its partial exteriority, the main concern of the project of interculturality focuses on creating the conditions for interactive dialogue between multiple cultures based on the full recognition of each epistemological tradition.

Traditionally associated with German speaking philosophers and theologians, but now expanded, incorporated and discussed by different collectivities around the globe, according to Fornet-Betancourt (2007), intercultural philosophy (which latter expanded to other realms of knowledges) implies a radical transformation of the way the western epistemological tradition thinks, names and generates knowledge. It stands on the fact that the western philosophical tradition must seek its own transformation because it has epistemological characteristics that emerge from the ongoing history of western colonialism. Any intercultural project must be aware that its perspective comes in an epistemological context mostly 287egemonized by the dominant scientific culture. Moreover, any intercultural project should understand the dominant scientific culture, not only as an "abstract constellation of more or less relevant knowledge for the human being and its being in the world today, but also as a power concentration device that conditions and mortgages the very production of knowledge, as well as its transmission, administration, employment, organization and institutionalization" (Fornet-Betancourt, 2009, 9).[142]

In line with the idea of transmodernity, intercultural philosophy argues that the expansion of Europe since the sixteenth century is also the history of the destruction of scientific-technological alternatives and the impoverishment of the cognitive repertoire of humanity. This process, also called "epistemicide" by De Sousa Santos (2013), is still an integral part of the constitution of the global hegemony of western epistemology. A constitutive aspect of such epistemic violence is the elimination of any possible dialogue among different systems of knowledge. The lack of dialogue between epistemologies is a direct consequence of the project of universalism carried out by the hegemonic epistemic model, which, in turn, invariably leads to a sort of epistemic fundamentalism that denies any possible approach to reality but its own (Fornet-Betancourt, 2009). In no way do these statements seek to deny the universal importance and significance of the knowledges and discoveries achieved by western scientific thought. The critique of western epistemology does not focus on its achievements but on its pretension to universalise the scientific paradigm as the only possible method of knowing, relating with nature and organising the social world. As both Grosfoguel (2008) and Castro-Gómez (2019) argue, its main critique concerns the abstract universalisms of western epistemology.

[142] Henceforth, my own translation from: Fornet-Betancourt, R. (2009). La pluralidad de conocimientos en el diálogo intercultural. In *Interculturalidad crítica y descolonización. Fundamentos para el debate* (pp. 9–20). Instituto Internacional de Integración Convenio Andrés Bello.

By identifying and challenging the epistemic fundamentalism of western epistemology, intercultural philosophy argues that cultural diversity, although marginalised and in some cases eliminated by the hegemonic epistemic model, represents an alternative proposal to respond to current global challenges that seem to surpass the epistemological tools of modernity. This implies incorporating non-western epistemologies, in all their complexity, in the dialogue to construct and understand reality by not reducing them to simple decorations of entertainment and consumption as is pretended by neoliberal multiculturalism.

Considering the above, the first step of the intercultural project – regardless of its realm of knowledge – implies identifying and questioning both the violence perpetrated by western epistemic universalisms and the Eurocentric notion that philosophy and complex thinking are epistemological tools exclusively developed in the European tradition. Moving away from transmodernity (which proposes a dialogue that excludes mythological thought), intercultural philosophy proposes a dialogue that includes those forms of thought and knowledge usually associated with mythological or religious thinking. As Wimmer (2002) states, the Eurocentric notion that argues that philosophy only developed within the European tradition bases "not on the reflections of the contents but rather of certain forms of thinking and argumentation" (Wimmer, 2002, 8). This perspective of mainstream philosophy places non-western thinkers in two main groups: those restricted to antiquity and scarcely relevant to contemporary philosophy and those from the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries that may have some contributions to contemporary philosophy. According to mainstream philosophy, the latter group, in turn, subdivides in two: those who behave like western philosophers but are not considered representatives of their own cultures and those who behave like their ancestors were supposed to behave such that contemporary academic philosophers would not feel bound to take their arguments seriously. In any case, argues Wimmer (2002), they are excluded from the history of philosophy:

> And again, in such a general view of the history of philosophy, the mentioning of African philosophy is not yet to be expected. African thinkers may be either ignored or else treated in one of two ways: being 'authentic' but irrelevant to general philosophy, or representing but one stream of contemporary philosophy but not authentic African thought (Wimmer, 2002, 11).

Moreover, continues the author, as long as this line of though continues and does not find a way to overcome its Eurocentrism (the author calls it "occidentation"), "going forward to true globalization, it [philosophy] will fail to give answers to human kind in the future" (Wimmer, 2002, 8). Surpassing occidentation in contemporary academic philosophy means relating to different cognitive experiences of humanity –not just part of it (Fornet-Betancourt, 2007). Additionally, it implies accepting that philosophy has many origins that developed independently in different parts of the world. It does not come, as the Eurocentric narrative argues, from a straightforward line that started in Greece and ended up in Northern Europe

(see Section 1.1). It also means acknowledging that philosophy, rather than existing as a monolithic system, is a complex web of thought and argumentation that has influenced and continues to influence all of its nodes.

In this vein, overcoming Eurocentrism means that contemporary academic philosophy has to rid itself of its fixation on Europe as the only historical practitioner of philosophy and acknowledge that the philosophical traditions in Asia, Latin American, Africa or any part of the peripheral areas of the modern world-system are not just curiosities for ethnographers, but philosophy in every possible sense. In other words, philosophy has to revisit and "reconstruct its own ideology, in order to establish an egalitarian basis of communication between philosophies from different parts of the world, a basis of polylogue communication" (Wimmer, 2002, 12).

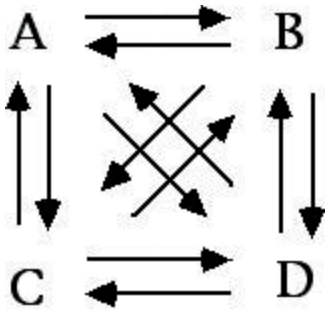
After identifying the ethical and philosophical flaws of Eurocentrism and the notion of Europe as the recipient of the world's philosophical history (see Section 1.1), the task of intercultural philosophy consists of three main parts: i) reflecting on the cultural and regional particularities of each kind of thinking; ii) identifying universally valid arguments and concepts; and iii) doing justice to respective localised philosophical traditions (Wimmer, 2002). Although these arguments may seem prone to cultural relativism or what Wimmer (2002) calls "ethnophilosophy," such an intercultural project seeks to surpass a postmodern perspective of culture in which different traditions do not dialogue or compete because each has its own objectivity. The intercultural project conceives of culture not as a closed structure (a perspective that, by the way, would work perfectly well for conservative and nationalist interests) but as an open-ended structure that, despite having traditions and belonging to specific a time-space context, is in constant flux, innovating and adapting to new circumstances. The project of interculturality, while acknowledging and fostering cultural diversity and culturally and temporarily localised systems of thought, is aware of the risks and the threat that a relativistic perspective of culture carries. In other words, questioning parochialism in Eurocentrism and acknowledging the relevance of cultural diversity raises the question of how to avoid parochialism in one's own interpretation.

To avoid parochialism, after questioning Eurocentrism and reconstructing and validating different philosophical traditions, intercultural philosophy proposes what its promoters call a "polylogue." According to (Wimmer, 2002), a polylogue consists of an ideal form of communication that, although not yet realistic because communication is permeated and determined by power relations and structures, seeks to provide a regulative ideal scheme of horizontal intercultural communication (see **¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**):

> This again is not depicting reality. But it is important to ask whether such an ideal can serve as a regulative idea for practicing philosophy on a global scale. It seems

preferable from logical reasons, since there will be no presupposition of absolute rightness, as long as there are different views. The presupposition here merely is that activating human reason in as many directions as possible will be effective (Wimmer, 2002, 29).

Illustration 3. Polylogue



Taken from: Wimmer, F. M. (2002). *Essays on intercultural philosophy*. Satya Nilayam Publications.

To begin with, in a polylogical scenario, the first questions should focus on those systemic enquires of philosophy that different traditions may have developed and continue to discuss today. Similar to the idea of fundamental problem nuclei, intercultural philosophy proposes fundamental questions that every collectivity has asked in their history. In relation to the argument of this research, among others, those questions should focus on what is the nature of humanity, who and what contain human features, who and what is part of the collectivity, what is well-being, how to achieve prosperity, what constitutes or defines the living space. These are the questions that philosophers, anthropologist, policy makers, trustees and experts should have in mind before embarking on any type of analysis or intervention in any given territory. As Wimmer (2002) puts it, the only way of avoiding both Eurocentrism and relativism is to develop complex, constant and active polylogues between as many traditions as possible in order to find universally valid concepts. Likewise, in the scenario of programs and efforts to transform collectivities and territories (such as those described in this research), it is essential to establish deep conversations between social ontologies and their philosophical conceptualisations of reality. Only then might the ontological conflicts over particular territories find fruitful solutions.

The notion of the polylogue echoes that of "collective learning" proposed by Pelfini (2007), which consists of the ability to reflect on the limits and consequences of individual actions. Moreover, it proposes establishing certain barriers to and regulations for such actions in order to take into consideration the expectations and interests of other actors. In this sense, the notion of collective learning and the project of interculturality share the horizon of a plural conversation among collectivities that co-exist in the same space. However, contrary to the

focus of transmodernity and intercultural philosophy on universal problem nuclei, collective learning proposes focusing on issues of everyday life in a shared territory such as common goods, their preservation and their sustainable use (Pelfini, 2007).

Despite the importance of having intercultural and transcultural conversations about fundamental problem nuclei, it is also necessary to focus the discussion on issues that, in the short term, may define the material living conditions of collectivities according to their own conceptions of well-being. Such concerns may involve access to land, water, resources, public services, education and so on. Furthermore, after including the topics and concerns of historically marginalised collectivities, collective learning strives to normalise multiplicity rather than singularity. Overcoming the Eurocentric monologue, collective learning fosters the collective creation of flexible norms and regulations that contemplate the plurality of social ontologies and sociocultures present in almost every territory.

In the end, in line with transmodernity and intercultural philosophy, the main purpose of collective learning is to create practical mechanisms for non-Eurocentric, non-solipsistic and non-hegemonic cognitive structures – fostering the conditions for the constitution of the pluriverse through multiple polylogues concerning both fundamental problem nuclei and everyday practical concerns.

However, acknowledging the importance of starting a polylogue between different collectivities, two sets of questions emerge. The first and possibly more complex set of questions includes asking how to deal with the power relations within the polylogue? How would the polylogue avoid or transcend the current hegemony of Eurocentrism and the western narrative? How would the polylogue avoid the power dynamic of the current socio-economic conditions that interfere in the conversation? These questions emerge as a critique of the apparent superficial optimism that naively supposes a certain symmetry between the parts that compose the polylogue.

The second set of questions that arises relates to some practical matters of the polylogue. In the hypothetical case that a horizontal conversation between equally valued epistemologies takes place, one of the most important questions of intercultural philosophy emerges: "how can philosophy, which never can be expressed independently from linguistic and conceptual tools coming from particular languages and cultures, aim to provide us with answers which are intended to be universally true or valuable?" (Wimmer, 2002, 9). Likewise, how would it be possible to "achieve transcultural, globally valid insights or truths if our perceptions of the world -and the means to express them- are embedded in a particular context?" (Wimmer, 2002, 13).

As for the first set of questions, to overcome Eurocentrism and the epistemicidal impulses of the current hegemonic epistemology, it is necessary for individuals and collectivities that

belong to both the western tradition and non-western traditions to reflect on any pretensions to universalism or to the univocal quality of reality. In words of Fornet-Betancourt (2009), besides claiming the value and the legitimacy of every epistemological tradition, what the intercultural project seeks is to "help the West, reduced by a capitalist and Eurocentric project, reconsider, regain critical sensitivity and ask itself what it has done with its own plurality of knowledge" (Fornet-Betancourt, 2009, 17).

Concerning the second set of questions, the following section deals with different notions that may shed some light on how to create a fruitful dialogue that does not get lost in translation. Ideas such as "control equivocations" (Viveiros de Castro, 2004), "cosmopolitics" (Stengers, 2005b, 2018) and "intercultural translation" (De Sousa Santos, 2015; Viaña & Claros, 2009) help clarify how to perform horizontal intercultural conversations. A few examples of transmodern transfigurations or intercultural performances may help identify the scope and limitations of such experiences.

Transmodernity and interculturality in practice: some examples

Although both notions of transmodernity and interculturality on a global scale might represent a utopic horizon, it does not mean that there have not been transmodern or intercultural events in history. Multiple cases of appropriating western abstract universalism abound in history as one of the multiple mechanisms used by collectivities in the zone of non-being to move towards the acquisition or fulfilment of their rights. Among other positive or emancipatory elements of modernity, questioning republicanism through localised epistemologies and using it to strengthen the autonomy and self-determination of non-western collectivities is what Castro-Gómez (2019) defines as transmodern republicanism. Taken from the text *El Tonto y los Canallas. Notas para un republicanismo transmoderno* (Castro-Gómez, 2019) but deepened according to the current discussion, the examples presented below evidence the claim and incorporation of some positive elements of republicanism. Moreover, the following experiences, in line with the particular struggles of non-western collectivities in the periphery, seek to overcome both Eurocentric universalism and any form of epistemic fundamentalism. The notion of "transmodern republicanism" seeks to recover the republican values – not in its aristocratic and modern form, but in a more common and transmodern manner. It means politically going through modernity from those collectivities, spaces and epistemologies excluded by the Eurocentric abstract notion of republicanism:

> The notion points specifically to the way in which subjects excluded from the condition of humanity defined by the 1789 Declaration (and who live 'below' the

> threshold), appropriate these normative criteria to 'deny' its westernized and Eurocentric form (Castro-Gómez, 2019, 199).[143]

One of the most illustrative examples of transmodern republicanism is the Haitian Revolution that took place between 1781 and 1804 and precipitated the independence of the country and the ascent to power of former enslaved individuals. In this particular case, argues Castro-Gómez (2019), black enslaved people took the ideals of the French Revolution and transformed them to use them against European slavers and challenge the capitalist institution of slavery in the name of republican values. The enslaved people, soon to become rulers of the island, took certain abstract universalisms of the French Revolution (such as equality and freedom) only to make use of them in their own struggle and concretise them through specific practices beyond the repetition of the Eurocentric values of the French Revolution. The "black Jacobins," as James (1989) names his book and terms the protagonists of this story, did not carry an anti-systemic revolution but constituted an transfiguration and appropriation of the republican values in one of the most important peripheries of the French colonial world.

Using the abstract universalisms of equality and liberty, the enslaved population of Haiti denounced injustices, legitimised their struggle and, later, not only achieved their independence but also extended the abolition of slavery to all other French colonies. In other words, the enslaved leaders of the Haitian Revolution concretised the abstract ideals of their European masters to be used against them by saying that the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen had an incomplete understanding of humanity because it did not include them. The concretisation of the abstract ideas of liberty and equality materialise in the Constitution of 1801, written under the rule of Toussaint L'Ouverture:

> Slavery was forever abolished. Every man, whatever his colour, was admissible to all employments, and there was to exist no other distinction than that of the virtues and talents, and no other superiority than that which the law gives in the exercise of public function (James, 1989, 263).

Moving forward, to a certain extent, the second example of transmodern republicanism is unique, for it does not take place in the periphery of the modern world-system but in its core. The protagonist of this transmodern transfiguration is a collectivity that, although geographically located in the core, still belong to the zone of non-being. This case refers to the struggle for the legal recognition of non-Christian religions in European societies and the particular case of the "veil affair." In this globally known case, the French state argued that, to protect young Muslim women who suffer sexism, it is necessary prohibit the the use of

[143] Henceforth, my own translation from: Castro-Gómez, S. (2019). *El Tonto y los Canallas. Notas para un republicanismo transmoderno*. Pontificia Universidad Javeriana.

any religious symbols in public schools. Under this legal framework, the republican school would become a laic space that relativises any religious or ideological belief that students may have learned at home. This legal framework sought to ease the entrance of Muslim youth into the public sphere of citizenship even though the process would have to violently sever individuals from their identities (Castro-Gómez, 2019).

To western modernity, the Muslim veil is a sign of the "uncivilised" character of the Islamic world and getting rid of the hijab in public schools represented a form of liberation from the Muslim patriarchy. In this sense, Castro-Gómez (2019) argues that the principle of laicity operates as a colonial discourse because, framed in Eurocentric universalism, the discourse hides its Christian and western particular conception used to stigmatise and discriminate against the French population of Arabic-Muslim origin. Additionally, such universalism invisibilises the victims of sexism that French white women live in their own country, by arguing that they are not as marginalised or in as bad a situation as Muslim women.

The transmodern nature of the "veil case" in France resides in the fact that it was the Muslim community in the country (not French judges) who, going through modernity, took the abstract universality of freedom of worship, concretised it and rendered it transmodern. Although the struggle of this faction of Islamic feminism in France has not managed to change the law of laicity, they have taken a constitutive value of republicanism and demand their full citizenship as both French and Muslim. Simply put, the Muslim feminist struggle in France argues that there is no contradiction between being French and Muslim. Moreover, their struggle opened a debate as to the importance of recognising interculturality in human rights as the "common sense" of international law (Castro-Gómez, 2019).

The struggle of Islamic feminism in France over striping the "common sense" of international law from its epistemological and religious tradition is also *ch'ixi* in that it emerges from the interaction between the western and Islamic traditions. Due to its *ch'ixi* nature, it is able to concretise the abstract universalism of modernity and deploy a double critique: first, against the orientalist and neo-orientalist representations that western discourses use to describe Muslim women, Islam in general and the Arab world in particular; second, Islamic feminism questions the supposedly single interpretation of religious texts and claims its democratisation (Lamrabet, 2014):

> We can conclude by saying that it is legitimate for Muslim women today to question both modernity and emancipation, and the way in which these concepts have been and continue to be manipulated by universal hegemonic ideological discourses and geopolitical strategies. Likewise, it is legitimate for them to question the unique and consensual interpretation of religious texts. […] And nobody has the right to close the interpretation of a spiritual message. We must here vindicate the right to interpretive diversity and its democratization. We can no longer tolerate the fact that the question

> of the meaning of life and spirituality are under the monopoly of religious institutions or groups of people – generally men – who speak in the name of divine authority. […] As Muslim women, we have the right to make constructive criticism of our own misogynistic traditions, but still be who we are within our community. Nor are we going to endorse the Eurocentric myths of emancipation, humanism and a certain feminism that wants to speak on our behalf. A pluralistic critical thinking of Muslim feminists must start from this 'periphery' of the world where we speak, live and carry out our own struggles (Lamrabet, 2014, 45).[144]

The final example relates to the attempt to transform the modern state by constitutional processes during the turn of the twenty-first century in Ecuador and Bolivia. In these particular cases, it was not an insurrection of indigenous collectivities against the modern state but a counterhegemonic alliance between indigenous and non-indigenous collectivities that managed to expand the political field beyond the state (Castro-Gómez, 2019). The demands, articulated by indigenous collectivities but surpassing their own historical struggles, included historical claims of the general population to rights such as access to work, public health and quality education. Collectivities historically located in the zone of non-being, treated as minors, illiterate and ignorant, managed to reach the National Assembly, appropriate the discourse of equality and transform the constitutions of each country.

One of the most important shifts in the constitutions consisted of changing the idea of the nation-state. Succinctly, the notion of the nation-state is based on the pretension of including every collectivity into the same national identity. However, recognising the colonial character of the national project in both countries, the new constitutions argue that Bolivia and Ecuador are not one single nation but rather consist of multiple nations that co-exist within the same state. Transforming the republican idea of the nation-state towards a plurinational state represents a shift from modern republicanism to a transmodern version.

In practice, this means accepting that different forms of justice, public management and institutions may co-exist in a state that, with coordination, would become a "republic of republics" (Castro-Gómez, 2019)." It means going through and surpassing the political horizon of the modern state by including topics such as self-determination, collective rights, self-government, multiple democracies and multiple legalities. At large, it is a claim over the co-existence of multiple social ontologies and sociocultures (see Section 8.2). All these claims represent a challenge to the constitution of the modern state because they take certain elements of modern rationality and appropriate and transfigure them into counterhegemonic

[144] Henceforth, my own translation from: Lamrabet, A. (2014). El velo (el hiyab) de las mujeres musulmanas: Entre la ideología colonialista y el discurso islámico: Una visión decolonial. *Tabula Rasa*, *21*, 31–46.

mechanisms to include in the conversation those collectivities that western modernity had located in the zone of non-being.

However, the important claims of these new constitutions have had a limited scope in practice. In the particular case of Bolivia, Rivera Cusicanqui (2018) argues that although the former president and vice-president (Evo Morales and Álvaro García Linera, respectively) enjoyed international prestige for the constitution of a plurinational state, colonial, authoritative and neoliberal practices are still practiced:

> Ten years later the mask cracks and we observe paradoxical regressions. To the neoliberal era with its savage forms of capitalist looting and contempt for the value of labour; to prebendal and lobbyist populism of the fifties; to military authoritarianism of the sixties and seventies; to colonial and machist forms of recruitment and seduction of ordinary people, rooted in careerism and chiefdom hypergamy of the colonial centuries (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2018, 94).

Notwithstanding the limitations of the discourse of national plurality, these efforts have created a form of counterhegemonic power against capitalism. Publicly and financially fostering solidarity economies, conceding rights to nature and proposing a renovated relationship with nature constitutes a counterbalance to capitalist logic. The degree of success of these policies is a different argument because, although limited, they take the current structures and open the discussion towards new mechanisms that challenge those structures themselves. In words of Castro-Gómez (2019):

> In any case, I think that politics is not the art of proposing impossible objectives, but the art of starting from the possible, and *from there* changing the coordinates of what is defined as "possible" (Castro-Gómez, 2019, 210).[145]

8.2. Challenges of ontological pluralism: controlled equivocations, ecology of sociocultures and cosmopolitics

Controlled equivocations and the challenges of intercultural translation

According to Viveiros de Castro (2004), considering that "doing anthropology means comparing anthropologies, nothing more - but nothing less" (Viveiros de Castro, 2004, 4) one of the most serious challenges for the discipline is identifying methods to effectively compare one world with the elements of the other. To put in the terms of the present research, the challenge of any intercultural effort (which includes anthropology itself) consists of grasping particular worlds based on social ontologies and sociocultures that the interlocutors do not share. Moreover, considering that specific performances give rise to specific realities,

[145] Italics in the original.

such dissonance between worlds does not reduce into language as if there was only one single reality (as the scientific tradition argues) but rather refers to reality itself. In this sense, as stated in the section on intercultural philosophy (see Section 8.1), the main question of any type of dialogue between social ontologies and sociocultures is how to create a conversation if the interlocutors, when referring to one object, might be signifying something completely different.

Drawing on his research on Amerindian perspectivism (see Section 5.2), Viveiros de Castro (2004) argues that the aim of translation is not to find equivalents of one concept in another language but to have in sight the apparently hidden equivocal homonymous between one language and another "since we and they are never talking about the same things" (Viveiros de Castro, 2004). To the extent that specific practices enact specific realities, the words used to describe or express elements of one reality may not have equivalents in the other reality. This ontological distance of one word expressed in multiple realities is what the author calls "equivocation." Rather than flaws in the act of translation, these equivocations are "a failure to understand that understandings are necessarily not the same, and that they are not related to imaginary ways of 'seeing the world' but to the real worlds that are being seen" (Viveiros de Castro, 2004, 11).

Moreover, equivocations are a constitutive element of anthropology and should be part of any intercultural project, for they "consist in exploring the differences between the concepts, grammars, and practices that compose the equivocation that the interlocutors inhabit and through which they communicate" (De la Cadena, 2015, 27). Along that vein, the real question that any intercultural dialogue should ask is not how other collectivities see the world but how that particular world is expressed by such other collectivities. The equivocations in any intercultural project, rather than existing as errors, should be the foundation of any conversation that involves more than one social ontology – it is a conversation between the practices and knowledges that construct multiple realities. If equivocations were errors, it would imply that a given premise or a concept is a homogenously constituted notion of a single reality or an absolute truth as opposed to accepting the heterogeneity, not of meaning, but of the worlds to which words belong or refer.

Considering the existence of multiple realities enacted through specific practices and performances, equivocations are multiple and open-ended challenges faced by every intercultural dialogue. Identifying equivocations should not lead to finding middle points, agreements, contradictions or accuracies, for they are not subjective failures of interpretation but tools of objectification:

> Instead, the equivocation is the limiting condition of every social relation, a condition that itself becomes superobjectified [sic] in the extreme case of so called interethnic

> or intercultural relations, where the language games diverge maximally (Viveiros de Castro, 2004, 12).

With this in mind, an intercultural dialogue, much more complex than searching for consensus among interlocutors as in liberal multiculturalism, consists of including into the conversation those possible ontological differences of the objects to which each interlocutor refers. It may imply considering landforms and animals as human or partially human entities, conceding agency to territories, thinking under the premise of radical relational interconnectivity or including into the conversation more-than-human entities. The most ambitious challenge of interculturality is having a conversation in which specific entities, while interacting, do not lose the ontological content that any given social ontology attributes them. The risk of intercultural translation is referring to a mountain, a river or the sea as if all of the interlocutors in the conversation shared the same reality in which landforms or animals also share their ontological nature. To not include the notion of multiple realities into an intercultural conversation not only means the inability to correctly grasp or identify a term, but it also means the exclusion of social ontologies and practices that give emergence to particular realities in which landforms, animal and other entities may have agency:

> What is lost is not meaning or the mode of signification; what is lost in translation is the earth-being itself, and with it the worlding practice in which runakuna and tirakuna are together without the mediation of meaning: naming suffices (De la Cadena, 2015, 30).

However, in order to avoid losing any manifestation of reality, it is necessary to control those equivocations (Viveiros de Castro, 2004) by creating dialogues and translations that go beyond superficial literalities and manage to grasp world and its multiple realities. As Viveiros de Castro puts it, "controlling this translative comparison between anthropologies is precisely what comprises the art of anthropology" (Viveiros de Castro, 2004, 5). In the words of De Sousa Santos (2015), translation is the procedure that allows for the creation of reciprocal intelligibility between experiences without attributing to any set of experiences the status of "totality" (as occurs in Eurocentric thought). In this sense, controlling an equivocation via translation becomes a diatopical hermeneutics (De Sousa Santos, 2015) of practices and knowledges, for it is a group of interpretations between two or more cultures with the purpose of identifying shared concerns. In line with fundamental problem nuclei, De Sousa Santos (2015) provides a series of examples relevant to the topic at hand concerning what he calls "isomorphic preoccupations," such as human rights from the west in relation to the Islamic concept of *umma* and the Hindu concept of *dharma,* as well as the notion of capitalist development in conversation with the Hindu notion of *swadeshi* based on sustainability and reciprocity.

Controlling equivocations, as the main challenge of any intercultural translation, first and foremost must focus on the source language rather than its destination. Centred on the analysis of translation in itself, Walter Benjamin's (2002) text *The Task of the Translator* sheds some light on the importance of concentrating on the efforts on the emissary rather than the receiver. In his work, Benjamin states, "in the appreciation of a work of art or an art form, consideration of the receiver never proves fruitful. […] No poem is intended for the reader, no picture for the beholder, no symphony for the audience" (Benjamin, 2002, 253). Moreover, to the extent that it is necessary to "betray" the destination language, it is impossible for any translation to reach absolute likeness because, even when translating the words literally, the meaning, implication and scope of the words might vary. This limitation proves that "no translation would be possible if in its ultimate essence it strove for likeness to the original" (Benjamin, 2002, 253).

To illustrate the point, Benjamin (2002) provides an example of the differences between the word "bread" in French and German (*pain* and *Brot*, respectively). The author argues that, although both languages focus on the same object, the implications, circumstances and intentions of the word in each language are not the same. In short, although both languages might refer to the same object, the words are not interchangeable in a simplistic translation in that they refer to different things. Literal translations would lose the complex rooting of words:

> In the words *Brot* and *pain*, what is meant is the same, but the way of meaning it is not. This difference in the way of meaning permits the word *Brot* to mean something other to a German than what the word *pain* means to a Frenchman, so that these words are not interchangeable for them; in fact, they strive to exclude each other. As to what is meant, however, the two words signify the very same thing (Benjamin, 2002, 257).

Both Benjamin's (2002) ideas on remaining loyal to the origin language and acknowledging that simple translations lose the complexity of what is said contribute some tools to the effort to establish counter-hegemonic dialogues between different social ontologies. In the case of translating peripheral languages, focusing on the original language and its social ontology does not only confront Eurocentrism, because its starting point is non-hegemonic, but it also helps get rid of (or at least reduce) the colonial history of interactions between the core and the peripheries of the modern world-system. Furthermore, taking the peripheral language as a starting point implies accepting the world to which it refers. Basing a given translation on the original language implies basing the translation on the original world. Any attempt to make a complex and accurate translation entails, first, understanding what the language means by using any given word. To put it in the term of this research, translating means understanding the social ontology and sociocultures manifested through the origin language in order to have a better notion of the intentions and the meanings of any designation. For example, when translating a language spoken by a collectivity that attributes human features

to landforms or animals, the translator must incorporate in the translation the actual ontology of such landforms or animals. Likewise, when translating a language that expresses the relational ontology in which a given collectivity participates, the translator must be able to communicate the ontological nature of designated elements.

Remaining loyal not only to the original language but also to the particular reality of that origin is the best means to move towards the control of equivocations and avoid missing the actual ontology of reality in any intercultural interaction. These two premises may carry with them a transformation in the relations within the Global South and, particularly, in the interactions between the Global South and North. Both forms of interaction require, first, questioning the epistemological pretension to universalism, for it denies the idea of multiple realities. Only by questioning the colonial nature of western universalisms can collectivities in both the core and the periphery of the modern world-system create the momentum to identify and appreciate the value of localised epistemologies and their dialectical relation with the enactment of reality. After questioning western epistemology and its pretensions to universalism, intercultural dialogues would pass through modernity only when the participantes would consider it relevant. Devoid of the illusion of universalism, the conversation would focus on the historically and culturally located social ontologies, sociocultures and practices that enact reality. The interaction would start by acknowledging, celebrating and fostering heterogeneity in the enactment of reality.

Additionally, questioning western universalisms means taking a big step towards surpassing the "dark side of modernity," for it would be, for the first time since the expansion of Europe, centring the conversation on the diversity of historical experiences of collectivities in the periphery rather than on one single experience. It means decentring history and knowledge from Europe and re-centring multiple scenarios, realities and experiences. Challenging the hegemonic position of western epistemology in South-North interactions means fostering a horizontal intercultural dialogue in which not one single experience would prevail over the others –that would constitute the type of parochialism in which Eurocentrism is currently trapped.

Moreover, transforming the hegemonic imbalance that characterises the current interactions between the core and the periphery of the modern world-system also means transforming the colonial representations that Europe makes of its "other" (see Section 2.2). Considering that this new kind of South-North interaction would only take place when the currently hegemonic epistemology acknowledges ontological pluralism, the entire structure of classification based on a teleological perspective of history and on the stages of economic growth would necessarily fall. Such a new form of interaction would disassemble the mythological features of modernity and its pretension to represent the end of history. It would overcome exploitative and extractive capitalist relations and transcend the colonial notion of

non-western territories as "savage" and ripe for exploitation. Finally, it would appropriate and transform notions such as "development," "progress" and "cooperation."

Intercultural dialogue around notions of "development," "progress" and "cooperation" implies questioning definitions of poverty, prosperity and well-being. In the transmodern, intercultural project, peripheral collectivities would concretise the abstract universalism of the "fight against poverty" and appropriate the discursive practice of developmentalism. Accepting the existence of multiple realities enacted through practices would create the conditions to think and tackle the notion of poverty in a localised, concrete and transmodern manner. These new understandings of poverties and well-beings (in plural), rather than reflecting the imposition performed by developmentalism, would respond to the particular social ontologies and sociocultures of each collectivity and its particular conditions of existence.

To close, whether discussing development, territory or well-being, controlling equivocations implies working towards radical interculturality and requires the elimination of abstract universalisms, avoiding notions claiming the singularity of reality and the pretension to any objective, immobile truth. Acknowledging the emergence of reality through particular practices, the transmodern intercultural project strives for a world in which the plurality of the current forms of performing reality interact, negotiate and co-exist. In short, transmodernity and the intercultural project belong to the idea of the pluriverse: a world in which many worlds co-exist. Controlling equivocations via intercultural translation means creating intelligibility, coherence and articulation in a world with multiple worlds.

A world with multiple worlds: multiple ecologies and other efforts towards the pluriverse

According to Isabelle Stengers (2018), the idea of "ecology" refers to the interaction between heterogeneous "beings as such, without a transcendent common interest, or without an arbiter distributing the roles, or without a mutual understanding" (Stengers, 2018, 91). Moreover, although conflicts of interest might be the rule in any form of ecology, remarkable events create symbiosis and weave together connections between entities or beings whose interests and ways of enacting their worlds diverge while still occasionally referring to and needing each other (Stengers, 2018). In the end, reaching a sort of agreement regarding common definitions or understandings beyond divergence, in addition to overcoming the idea of a single truth, is the main purpose of ecological interactions.

With this in mind, authors such as Stengers (2005a, 2018) and De Sousa Santos (2013, 2015) devise a series of ecologies that, in practice, would constitute the realisation of the pluriverse. Despite partial differences between each of these ecologies, their realisation would represent an "ecology of sociocultures," for this term not only manages to contemplate every category to which these authors refer but also contributes its own categories. Namely, Stengers (2005a,

2018) works on the "ecology of practices" and De Sousa Santos (2013, 2015) on ecologies of epistemologies, temporalities, recognitions, trans-scales and productivities. In order to understand the complexity and challenges of the ecological co-existence of multiple collectivities, it is necessary to understand each of the ecologies ideated by these authors.

To begin with Stengers (2005a, 2018), the idea of an "ecology of practices" argues that any practice – that is, any form of enacting reality – is like any other. Critical analysis of particular practices should focus on testing their limits and experiment with questions that the practitioners might find relevant, even if they are not their own questions. Rather than posing insulting ethnocentric questions, part of intercultural dialogue is having a critical perspective on practices and the interactions between them. Otherwise, superficial critiques that do not consider the complexity of practices and their functions in the constitution of reality would lead to fundamentalist defences and the rejection to any sort of conversation.

In this sense, the idea of an ecology of practices is a methodological tool of analysis and for understanding of reality that, far from being neutral, seeks to resist any concept or approach that requires the destruction of other practices as its condition of reproduction (Stengers, 2005a). Parallel to the critique of Eurocentrism, thinking reality through an ecology of practices would affront the Eurocentric notion of absolute truth, which depends on eliminating "other" forms of enacting reality. An ecology of practices would avoid thinking in what Stengers (2018) calls the "major key" – that is, avoiding bombastic narratives that foreclose any possible analysis of its framework and create a situation in which any practice exists only in relation to the major key.

However, giving prominence to the "minor key" does not mean abandoning big, structural narratives, as they also operate in the enactment of reality (see Section 5.2). Focusing on the minor key localises practices. In line with the analysis of political ontology (see Section 5.1), an ecology of practices as a methodology argues that no theory is capable of disentangling a given entity or practice from its particular surroundings. In other words, there is no possible theory that allows going beyond the particular "towards something we would be able to recognise and grasp in spite of particular appearances" (Stengers, 2005a, 187). The importance of thinking in a minor key is that it allows one to take into consideration the particular conditions of existence of practices and social ontologies. On the contrary, resorting to a major key to explain any phenomenon implies conceding priority to ethnocentric political and ethical projects. In the particular case of current hegemonic discourse, notions of development, progress and economic growth characterise the major key. Furthermore, as analysed in different sections of this research (see Chapters 1, 2 and 3) the pretension to universal truth, the teleological perspective of history and multiple ontological dualisms have constituted the socio-ontological major key with which scientists, experts and trustees have judged and intervened the peripheries of the modern world-system.

Agreeing on the importance of focusing the on contexts – the minor key – rather than on general narratives – the major key – implies surpassing not only the notion of an omnipresent ethical, political and epistemological project, but also overcoming the liberal idea of simply tolerating difference. The notion of an ecology of practices, rather than promoting a light tolerance of difference, implies questioning the modern "obligation" of moving through the world judging, deconstructing or disqualifying what appears non-scientific or non-modern.

With this in mind, an ecology of practices means struggling against what Stengers (2018) calls the "hegemonic machine" because it only knows and accepts its own frameworks and considers its practices universal. This does not mean going against localised western forms of enacting reality, but it is a critique of the western fixation on universalisms as it implies the elimination of sociocultures that do not share the same premises. Briefly, in accordance with the notion of interculturality, an ecology of practices strives for the active and horizontal interaction between pluralities of sociocultures. In this scenario, every collectivity participates "through the creation of connections with a specificity related to what commits them: the question of what, how, and under which conditions we can 'learn from' what we address" (Stengers, 2018, 90).

Consistent with the notion of plurality and with the importance of an ecological existence of multiple collectivities, de Sousa Santos (2013, 2015) proposes a series of ecologies that critique western abyssal thinking in order to build what the author calls a "radical co-presence." As mentioned above, the author identifies five types of ecologies: those of knowledges, temporalities, recognitions, trans-scales and productivities.

Beginning with the "ecology of knowledges," in line with other concepts analysed along the chapter, this form of ecology does not conceive of a universal understanding of the world, but it strives for a materialised production of knowledge according to practices and experiences. An ecology of knowledge prioritises those epistemologies that recognise their context as the fundament of their emergence and relevance. In the end, an ecology of knowledges does not necessarily entail the discrediting of scientific knowledge but its counterhegemonic use. It seeks to appropriate scientific practices and promote the interdependence between scientific knowledges produced in fields of modernity and non-scientific knowledges (De Sousa Santos, 2015). The main purpose of an ecology of knowledges is not to attribute the same validation to every knowledge, "but allowing a pragmatic discussion between alternative validity criteria, a discussion that does not start disqualifying everything that those not fit into the epistemological cannon of modern science" (De Sousa Santos, 2015, 116).

As for the "ecology of temporalities," moving towards a radical co-presence requires "conceiving simultaneity with contemporaneity, which can only be realised if the linear conception of time is abandoned" (De Sousa Santos, 2013, 52). Instead of thinking within

the limitations imposed by a teleological perspective of history and considering the western mode of living as the end of history (see Section 1.2), it is necessary to take non-western epistemologies not as "backwards" or "non-modern" but as marginalised in the geopolitics of knowledge. As stated above, considering that there is no radical exteriority of modernity, every collectivity is modern and therefore contemporary to the extent that each played and continues to play a role in the constitution of modernity. Inasmuch as coloniality is constitutive of modernity, marginalised collectivities in the modern world-system, rather than existing outside of modernity, play a fundamental role in its constitution and reproduction. The marginalisation of epistemologies from the Global South does not relate to time but to geopolitics, for they are contemporary with the epistemology of the Global North. Additionally, De Sousa Santos (2013, 2015) argues that it is not enough to abandon the teleological perspective of history, but the fact that different social ontologies have a wide variety of experiences and definitions of temporality must also be included in the conversation. An ecology of temporalities moves forward to what the author calls "multi-temporality."

Third, the "ecology of recognitions" refers to social classification. As analysed in Chapter 2, since the expansion of western modernity, the coloniality of power classifies collectivities according to categories such as race, religion and economic, social and cultural practices, among others. From this perspective, according to the distance collectivities have from the western ideal, they are labelled "poor" or "backwards." This system of classification associates phenotypical, social, economic and cultural difference with inequality. In this sense, an ecology of recognitions advocates the reciprocal acknowledgment of difference between equals. From this perspective, differences remain, but not under an almighty criterion that hierarchises them according to its own experience. To the extent that the struggle of collectivities located in the zone of non-being of modernity or its partial exteriority takes place in the local, the national and the international, an ecology of recognitions becomes more and more relevant in that it incorporates different geopolitical scales. Moreover, it struggles for the recognition of economic, cultural and social practices that emerge from and sustain particular social ontologies. In the end, an ecology of recognitions seeks to overcome the (neo-)liberal perspective of multiculturalism and strives for a plural citizenship that does not separate the economy from the rest of the social and cultural spheres (De Sousa Santos, 2015).

The "ecology of trans-scales" refers to the appropriation of hegemonic conceptions of universal and global scales in order to fill them with the aspirations and alternatives of collectivities in the Global South. Abstract universalisms such "free market," "democracy," "primacy of law," "individualism," "freedom," "development" and "human rights" become the global measurements used to define the well-being and prosperity of any collectivity (see Chapter 3). Different from the idea of transmodernity, an ecology of trans-scales refers to new universal aspirations that include what collectivities in the periphery might consider

relevant to their localised experiences as opposed to the appropriation and transfiguration of western universalisms. Notions such as "social justice," "dignity," "mutual respect," "solidarity," "community," "cosmic harmony of nature and society," "spirituality," etc., become the universal vindications of what collectivities consider primordial. Furthermore, an ecology of trans-scales implies the localisation of new aspirations and their relations with the global scale. As De Sousa Santos (2015) puts it, this form of ecology visibilises and gives credit to localised conflicts between universal aspirations and global alternatives. Contrary to western universalism, which takes its own localism and forcedly makes it global, this type of ecology verifies "that there is no globalization without location and that, just as there are alternative globalizations, there are also alternative locations" (De Sousa Santos, 2015, 122).

Last, the "ecology of productivities" consists of claiming and validating alternative systems of production and distribution from indigenous, peasant and black collectivities in the defence of their territories, urban organisations working for the right to housing, movements against the privatisation of social welfare services and other efforts that the historical capitalist productivity has discredited and continues to discredit. According to De Sousa Santos (2015), the difficulty of building this ecology resides in the fact that it calls into question the paradigms of developmentalism and infinite economic growth that prioritise accumulation rather than distribution or sustainability. This type of ecology aspires to operate at different scales. It spans from micro-initiatives organised by marginalised collectivities in both the Global South and North that seek to gain control over their lives and goods to economic and legal coordination at the international level that seeks to guarantee decent working conditions, regional economic cooperation and new forms of controlling global financial capital.

Finally, as mentioned above, the combination of the already mentioned ecologies – of practices, knowledges, temporalities, recognitions, trans-scales and productivities – represents an "ecology of sociocultures" in that it seeks the ecological interaction between historical social structures that reflect both particular social ontologies and their materialisation through sets of practices, institutions and *habitus.* Calling the non-hierarchical interactions among collectivities an "ecology of sociocultures" helps stress the dialectical link between social ontologies, sociocultures and practices.

To the extent that an ecology of sociocultures includes the notion of social ontology, it not only aims for the recognition of multiple realities (see Section 5.2), but it seeks social transformation by including non-western social ontologies, sociocultures, practices and narratives in the global conversation. In addition, due to its transformative nature, it does not foster or fall into any form of relativism: "on the contrary, under a perspective of social emancipation, relativism, in the absence of a hierarchy criteria between knowledges, is an unsustainable position because it disables any relationship between knowledge and any sense of social transformation" (De Sousa Santos, 2015, 116).

Cosmopolitics and subaltern cosmopolitanism

Although Stengers (2005b) only refers to cosmopolitics in terms of an ecology of practices, the concept also enriches the discussion of an ecology of sociocultures. What is more, the notion of sociocultures, in its dialectical relationship with social ontologies and practices, fits best with the notion of cosmopolitics given that what is at stake in any cosmopolitical scenario is the interaction between realities. The materialisation and final purpose of an ecology of sociocultures is what Stengers (2005b) calls "cosmopolitics."

In her text *The Cosmopolitical Proposal*, distancing herself from any form of (neo-)liberal multiculturalism, Stengers (2005b) argues that the cosmopolitical proposal refers to the unknown cosmos created by the multiple articulations of divergent worlds and the interactions of which they are capable (Stengers, 2005b). In line with this research's analysis of ontological pluralism (see Chapter 5), the cosmopolitical proposal argues that it is impossible to separate *ethos* from *oikos*: any individual or collectivity is the result of the historical interactions it has had with the inhabited space. Accepting the inseparability of *ethos* and *oikos* forces every participating entity in an intercultural dialogue (but particularly Eurocentric policy makers, developmentalists and cooperation agencies) to promote and strengthen different worlds rather than homogenise them. For agents of developmentalism, moving towards the cosmopolitical proposal implies, "for instance, a transformation of the State's role, which means disentangling the public servant's ethos from any already formulated definition of the 'general interest' and associating it with the active refusal of anything transcending the issue in its concrete environment" (Stengers, 2005b, 1001).

The materialisation of multiple interactions among partially connected yet divergent social ontologies and sociocultures, "must be celebrated as a 'cosmic event,' a mutation which does not depend on humans only, but on humans as belonging, which means they are obliged and exposed by their obligations. Such an event is not something that can be produced at will" (Stengers, 2005a, 192). Considering that interactions between partially connected divergences take place in historically and geographically located scenarios, the analysis of each of these "cosmic events" depends on the nature of each set of interactions between sociocultures and assemblages. However, in line with the notion of ecology, it is important to clarify that a cosmic event does not emerge after any sort of interaction: it only emerges when an intercultural horizontal interaction takes place. In other words, in line with ecological thinking and as in the notions of transmodernity and interculturality, the cosmopolitics proposal first requires a critique of the hegemonic narrative of Eurocentrism and its notion of one world with multiple interpretations. Working towards a cosmopolitical reality implies, while controlling equivocations, questioning all forms of abstract universalism, eliminating any epistemology that requires the elimination of the "other" and articulating sociocultures and social ontologies in a counter-hegemonic manner.

However, creating the conditions for the constitution of a cosmopolitical horizon implies moving through "subaltern cosmopolitanism" (De Sousa Santos, 2013). This form of cosmopolitanism shares the same horizon as the cosmopolitical proposal, but it is also a mechanism used by collectivities in the zone of non-being to dispute Eurocentric epistemic hegemony. Before reaching a cosmopolitical scenario of an ecologic co-presence of sociocultures, it is necessary to create and/or strengthen the ties between and articulations of enacted realities in the Global South. In other words, subaltern cosmopolitanism refers to the efforts deployed by collectivities historically located in the zone of non-being in order to constitute a counter-hegemonic globalisation (De Sousa Santos, 2013).

The counter-hegemonic character of subaltern cosmopolitanism also refers to the transmodern appropriation of the abstract notion of cosmopolitanism. As in the other examples of transmodern appropriations of western universalisms presented below, subaltern cosmopolitanism appropriates the universal aspect of cosmopolitanism in which collectivities in the Global South do not participate, shaping it according to their current circumstances and using it in their particular struggle. Currently, subaltern cosmopolitanism concretises through all the "networks, initiatives, organizations and movements that fight against the economic, social, political and cultural exclusion generated by the most recent incarnation of global capitalism, known as neoliberal globalization" (De Sousa Santos, 2013, 50).

Since the Eurocentric perspective of cosmopolitanism refers only to one particular group, the appropriation of cosmopolitanism implies that the peripheral collectivities of the modern world-system base their interactions in the recognition of difference. In other words, fostering a dialogue between the notions of cosmopolitics (Stengers, 2005b) and subaltern cosmopolitanism (De Sousa Santos, 2013), in order to reach the cosmic event in which the ecology of sociocultures takes place and becomes "common sense," it is necessary to concretise the notion of cosmopolitanism among those collectivities historically excluded from it. Only after subalternising cosmopolitanism will it be possible to reach an ecology on a global scale. Among other strategies, it is only after voiding the Eurocentric content of any cosmopolitical effort through subalternising the idea of cosmopolitanism that the utopian horizon of the pluriverse might start to take shape and direction.

Although the present research grounds its primary interest in both the cosmopolitical proposal and subaltern cosmopolitism, it is worth it mentioning a third proposal of cosmopolitism. Targeting its analysis on the macro level of power, the proposal of "minimalist cosmopolitanism" (Pelfini, 2013) argues that, in order to overcome the current hegemonic version of cosmopolitanism (what the author calls "Atlantic cosmopolitanism"), it is necessary to recognise and identify common elements among diversity. Considering that Atlantic cosmopolitanism relates to the North Atlantic world and experience, it inherits the homogenising pretension of colonial and imperial forces currently associated with liberal

democracy (as its political organisation), neoliberalism (as its economy) and secularism (as its form of integrating communities and individuals).

In this sense, minimalist cosmopolitanism argues for a type of cosmopolitanism that is more pragmatic and plural, "focused on some key questions for the future of humanity and for reproduction of life on this earth" (Pelfini, 2013, 16).[146] Similar to the discussion of transmodernity and intercultural philosophy, this form of cosmopolitanism claims on the urgency of a global agenda (what Dussel (2016) calls universal problems nuclei) regarding topics such as the common good and the concrete mechanisms to respect different collectivities and individuals. In the end, the minimalist version of cosmopolitanism strives to create regulations and strategies that would allow and foster diversity among the common.

Contrary to subaltern cosmopolitanism, the minimalist proposal does not focus on the social movements, networks and initiatives to which De Sousa Santos (2013) refers, but to the importance of states and nation-states. In this sense, using the example of South America, Pelfini (2013) states that the foreign policy of emerging countries in the region has turned towards a kind of minimalist cosmopolitanism that "focuses mainly on multilateralism, the establishment of universal norms and the recognition of one's own voice" (Pelfini, 2013, 30).

With this in mind, the minimalist proposal strives for a new form of interaction among and between states – one that overcomes imperial and colonial relations and focuses on the differences of every country. The main objective of this type of cosmopolitanism is not to isolate states due to their differences but to create fair and horizontal conditions among and between states in the constitution of the global agenda. As in the multiple ecologies already analysed, highlighting difference does not mean negating any form of interaction, but recreating the types of interactions that can exist between collectivities, states and participants of any kind. Following the notion of "relational autonomy," Pelfini (2013) argues that minimalist cosmopolitanism focuses on the "possibility of taking decisions beyond the wishes, interests and pressures of other states without losing the ability to effectively influence world affairs" (Pelfini, 2013, 31).

To a certain extent, and echoing notions of an ecology of sociocultures, cosmopolitics and subaltern cosmopolitanism, the minimalist proposal also resonates with that of the pluriverse. All these forms of conceptualising pluriversal horizons share the steps identified in the transmodern and intercultural discussion: i) critiquing western modernity, its Eurocentrism, its pretension to universality and its colonial condition (see Sections 1.2, 2.1 and 2.2); ii) critiquing the western scientific tradition and its idea of one single reality, as well as the liberal and neoliberal approach to multiculturalism (see Chapter 5); iii) understanding the

[146] Henceforth, my own translation from: Pelfini, A. (2013). Del cosmopolitismo "atlántico" al cosmopolitismo minimalista. La subjetivación de América Latina en una modernidad plural. *Devenires*, *28*, 13–38.

notion of multiple realities as enactments (see Section 5.2), which opens the discussion to conceive the pluriverse in all its complexity; iv) fostering transmodern and intercultural spaces in which different collectivities, after questioning their own sociocultures, would dialogue, co-exist and create the conditions for a world with many worlds or an ecological co-existence between sociocultures.

The pluriverse as the ecological co-existence of multiple sociocultures resonates with the *ch'ixi,* in which interacting sociocultures neither merge nor confront each other as billiard balls, but interweave. However, current power conditions reproduced on both the macro and the micro levels determine the conditions in which the *ch'ixi* materialises: sociocultures interact with each other, hegemonic or not, under historically constituted unequal power structures.

Besides transfiguring modern abstract universalisms, the pluriverse requires changing the "ethic of life" (Escobar, 2018b) – it requires questioning the power that modern certainties have concerning what is real and possible in order to shape individual and collective lives. Ultimately, the "pluriversal policy aims at creating the favourable conditions for the strengthening of the pluriverse, other ways of making the world" (Escobar, 2018b, 45).[147] In contrast to the current hegemonic notion of a single world established by western modernity, a pluriversal policy fosters multiple interweaving paths that move towards a world that contains multiple worlds.

8.3. A transmodern understanding of development and well-being: a proposal from the Gulf of Tribugá

Considering the ontological nature of socio-territorial conflicts, the idea of reality as enacted practice and the transmodern intercultural horizon towards which multiple worlds can co-exist implies questioning the intertwined ideas of poverty and well-being. Moreover, moving towards a transmodern scenario in which multiple forms of conceiving, performing and reaching well-being and prosperity co-exist entails the appropriation of abstract universalisms today related to the idea of development and progress. As analysed in Chapter 3, the idea of developmentalism emerged as a shift in core-periphery interactions that took place after the Second World War.

Succinctly, the transformation of the interactions within the modern world-system consisted of a transition from classifying non-western collectivities according to their territorial, cultural and racial characteristics to situating them according to their levels of industrialisation, productivity and income (see Chapter 3). From that moment on, the

[147] Henceforth, my own translation from: Escobar, A. (2018b). *Otro posible es posible: Caminando hacia las transiciones desde Abya Yala/Afro/Latino-América*. Ediciones desde Abajo.

different levels of development became the new metaphor used to describe the teleological understanding of history in which Europe (and, since then, also the United States) represents the end to which every collective should aim. Developmentalism reconfigured and renovated the discourse of western political, social and cultural practices as the end of history.

As an abstract universalism, the concept of "development" does not question the colonial nature of the interactions between the core and the periphery of the modern world-system, nor does it conceives the possibility of other living standards outside those that it has set for itself. Furthermore, to the extent that developmentalism only conceives of its own socio-ontological and sociocultural framework, it materialises through a series of policies, assessment, investments and other forms of interventions in non-western territories and collectivities in order to supposedly improve the living conditions of those spaces through the expansion of capitalism. By limiting poverty and well-being to the capitalist understandings of income, consumption and productivity, developmentalism manages to problematise every collectivity that does not share European living standards and makes them the new objects of disciplinary strategies. In the end, the enactment of developmentalism implies the invisibilisation of socio-ontological difference and the problematisation of non-western sociocultures.

Due to its Eurocentric nature, developmentalism considers non-western sociocultures not only as "wrong" approaches to reality but also as a "flawed" or "imperfect" socio-economic and cultural practices in order to justify their intervention to match them with those of the western tradition. The task of any intercultural and transmodern approximation of poverty should, besides considering local aspirations and living standards according to particular social ontologies, focus on appropriating the abstract universalisms currently confiscated by hegemonic discursive practice.

Transfiguring the notion of well-being implies critically revisiting notions like "growth," "prosperity," "market," "progress," "development" and "productivity" (all of which are currently loaded with Eurocentrism) and appropriating and redefining them according to multiple forms of enacting reality. In this sense, discussion, Rivera Cusicanqui (2018) argues for what she calls a "*ch'ixi* theory of value." In every region of the Global South, multiple forms of exchange that consist of complex semiotic games of discovery of "other" languages, values and things took and continues to take place. In many cases, this exchange consists of non-material elements, of things not measurable in terms of abstract, universalist notion of "work" (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2018).

The *ch'ixi* theory of value questions both the abstract universalisms of "work" and "market" in that they do not reflect the complex nature of the interactions between collectivities both before the expansion of Europe and in the peripheries of the modern world-system today. As for the notion of work, Rivera Cusicanqui (2018) states that, before the colonial invasion,

there was no equivalent for this abstract notion. The Jesuits invented the abstract concept of "work" as *irnaqaña*, an Aymara variation of manually handling something. However, older people with less linguistic influence from Spanish, rather than using the generic term *irnaqaña,* prefer to refer to the specificity of each activity – sowing, harvesting, weaving, etc. This means that "all the unimaginable forms of work have a specific word to name them, but I do not think that before the colonial invasion the abstract notion of work existed" (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2018, 45).

Questioning the notion of work and the idea of exchanging what is measurable in terms of work leads to questioning of the currently hegemonic abstract universalism of "market." This orientalist argument suggests that non-western collectivities before the expansion of Europe (and to some extent still today) live in a "natural" state with "natural" economies. This argumentation leads to the idea that the western understanding of the market is the initial stage of a linear history, advancing in pursuit of accumulation and progress. On the contrary, Rivera Cusicanqui (2018) argues that the naturalisation of any form of exchange as "market" is rather recent and under constant dispute:

> Exchange as a market (that is, as systems of equivalences normalized by capital and internalized as habitus), became the hegemonic form only a couple of centuries ago and in the peripheries of the world system it developed in a discontinuous way, with systoles and diastoles; moments of articulation and moments of fragmentation (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2018, 45).

The fact that the market has developed in the peripheral areas of the modern world-system with moments of fragmentation and articulation echoes the analysis presented in Section 5.3 and Chapter 6 concerning the fact that different assemblages take place simultaneously. That the hegemonic presence of the market has moments of fragmentation and articulation implies that non-western collectivities interact with it only in particular circumstances. The simultaneous performances enacted in the idea of "exchange" as "market," those exchanges based on reciprocity and solidarity, exchanges of ceremonial, non-material elements and other forms of exchange not measurable in terms of the abstract notion of "work" reflect the multiplicity of assemblages in which peripheral collectivities participate. Moreover, participation in multiple forms of exchange (including the market) depends on when, how and to what extent each form of exchange contributes to the concrete idea of well-being in localised circumstances.

Rather than demonising the market in the search of the European notion of the "noble savage," Rivera Cusicanqui (2018) argues that it is necessary to dispute the hegemony of the market with multiple means, assemblages and worlds. In terms of this research, disputing the hegemony of the market means appropriating its abstract notion and transfiguring it according to local struggles. As analysed in Chapter 6, the performances deployed through

specific socio-economic practices in the communitarianism/non-capitalism assemblage represent a type of capitalist market disobedience in everyday life, which is articulated alongside the other assemblages. The articulation of non-capitalist practices by those inserted in the capitalist market does not represent a concession or a defeat in terms of ongoing ontological struggles, but it represents a pluralisation and diversification of strategies to move towards the autonomy and self-determination of black collectivities in the region. Within what Rivera Cusicanqui (2018) calls "popular languages and practices" there is a margin of manoeuvre that allows multiple assemblages to be managed, moved within and between by means of multiple strategies without losing sight of the horizon of well-being:

> These logics teach us 'the weapons of the weak' (Scott, 1985)[148] and the daily cunning that allows us to resist the devastating force of capital and the state, from the molecular interstices of their own figures (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2018, 72).

A transmodern understanding of well-being requires recognising and fostering the non-hierarchical participation of non-western collectivities in multiple assemblages and sociocultures rather than claiming a bucolic past closer to the orientalist, Eurocentric imagination. However, to the extent that the transmodern notion of well-being has to correspond to the symbolic values and systems of classifications of each collectivity, it has to contemplate not only the human sphere, but it must also include those non-human beings that belong to the collectivity. As any other transmodern transfiguration, constituting a transmodern approach to poverty and well-being consists of two main steps: first, questioning the colonial and limited Eurocentric definition of poverty proposed and enacted by western capitalism through developmentalism, a task widely analysed in Chapter 3 of this research; second, appropriating the abstract universalisms that characterise the discursive practices of developmentalism by concretising them in line with the particular ontological struggle of each non-western collectivity. In other words, a transmodern notion of well-being should include landforms, animals and other non-human entities, contemplate the diversity of ontologies and social ontologies present in a territory, and redefine and concretise the notions of "progress" and "prosperity." Against liberalism, a transmodern transfiguration of well-being should reconcile the economic realm from the social and cultural and foster local practices based on reciprocity and solidarity. Ultimately, based on the principle of a world with multiple worlds, a transmodern notion of well-being should identify historically and culturally localised definitions of poverty and the mechanisms to create the conditions for well-being according to each collectivity.

The appropriation of the Eurocentric and capital-centric character of the idea of development represents a transfiguration enacted by collectivities in order to reproduce their own worlds. In the transmodern configuration of the idea of well-being, in addition to revising the abstract

[148] Cited in (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2018) as: Scott, James. *Weapons of the weak. Everyday forms of peasant resistance.* New Haven y Londres, Yale University Press, 1985.

universalism of development, collectivities also critically consider their own sociocultures in order to identify practices that go against either their own welfare or that of other collectivities. In this sense, to the extent that collectivities partially connect with others, a transmodern approach to well-being entails intercultural dialogue. In order to move towards well-being, every partially connected collectivity should participate in an intercultural conversation, define the mechanisms and purposes of well-being and identify similitudes, contradictions and complementarities towards the creation of an ecology of sociocultures around the horizon of well-being.

With the purpose of analysing the transmodern transfiguration of the abstract universalism of development, approaching the idea of well-being according the black collectivities in the Gulf of Tribugá sheds some light on the horizon towards which locals put their efforts. Although far from accomplished, the local conception of well-being (in line with the black social ontology and its sociocultures) is the final aim of the transmodern appropriation of the abstract universalism of development. Among others, concrete transfigurations of the notion of development materialise through two particular mechanisms: the EDP 2007-2020 and the DRMI. These two strategies clearly and concisely illustrate how collectivities in the area, with their own forms of organisation and contradictions, have taken notions, instruments and discourses of Eurocentric character and transfigured and adjust them according to their agenda of strengthening their autonomy, reproducing their sociocultures and reaching what they consider a good, prosperous life.

Well-being and prosperity according to black collectivities in the Gulf of Tribugá

> *It is necessary, then, to advance programs from the peoples and communities that cohabit the Pacific based on the environmental, cultural, spiritual and social potentialities for the promotion of a sustainable economy placed at the service and care of human life, the territory and its biodiversity* (Márquez Mina, 2020).[149]

In a general sense, before identifying concrete elements of the notion of well-being according to black collectivities in the Gulf of Tribugá, the EDP 2007-2020 provides the general goals towards which the Community Council of Los Riscales focuses its efforts:

> Let sustainability be the guide for the territory to continue with its natural resources. That economically the territory produces so, that it guarantees food autonomy and surpluses to raise the living standard of the inhabitants of the area. That planning with

[149] Henceforth, my own translation from: Márquez Mina, F. (2020). Plan de buen vivir o alternativas al desarrollo para el Pacífico. *Diáspora*. https://diaspora.com.co/plan-de-buen-vivir-o-alternativas-al-desarrollo-para-el-pacifico/.

> community participation is the basis for sustainable existence in the territory in terms of population, culture and society. That education be contextualized and pertinent to form new leaders in the region with identity, commitment and political awareness. That family and community networks be strengthened as the pillars of our own organization for the vindication of our rights (Los Riscales, 2007, 321).

With this in mind, the notion of well-being according to the coastal-dwellers of the gulf may cluster in five intertwined elements: ecosystemic balance, food sovereignty, social capital, income and the access to a type of education and health that promotes the local social ontology and the defence of the rightfully collective territory. Due to the relational ontology of black collectivities in the area (see Section 6.3), the analytical cluster of ecosystemic balance, rather than acting as an independent element, is a transversal aspect that crosses all other clusters. For that reason, the cluster of ecosystemic balance, instead of having a single analysis, accompanies and permeates the other clusters.

That said, as analysed in Chapter 6, the non-capitalist economic practices performed by local collectivities in the assemblage of communitarianism/non-capitalism, along with interactions with the other two assemblages, implies that adequate interaction with regional biodiversity may provide abundant and quality food necessary for securing proper and balanced nutrition for the collectivity. Moreover, in its interaction with both the sustainability/multiculturalism and developmentalism/capitalism assemblages, a balanced use of the gulf's natural resources may also provide surpluses and income. In this sense, focusing on the relationship between well-being and food autonomy relates to what La Vía Campesina defines as "food sovereignty." According to the organisation, food sovereignty implies the following:

1. "Prioritizing local agricultural production in order to feed the people, access of peasants and landless people to land, water, seeds, and credit. Hence the need for land reforms, for fighting against GMOs (Genetically Modified Organisms), for free access to seeds, and for safeguarding water as a public good to be sustainably distributed.
2. The right of farmers, peasants to produce food and the right of consumers to be able to decide what they consume, and how and by whom it is produced.
3. The right of Countries to protect themselves from too low priced agricultural and food imports.
4. Agricultural prices linked to production costs: they can be achieved if the Countries or Unions of States are entitled to impose taxes on excessively cheap imports, if they commit themselves in favour of a sustainable farm production, and if they control production on the inner market so as to avoid structural surpluses.
5. The populations taking part in the agricultural policy choices.
6. The recognition of women farmers' rights, who play a major role in agricultural production and in food" (La Via Campesina, 2003).

Accordingly, the President of Los Riscales argues that moving towards a scenario of well-being implies considering the capacity of collectivities to produce food for local consumption in accordance with the ecosystemic balance of the area:

> As there is an abundance of natural resources, there is obviously easy access to food. The one issue is that when there is a strong pressure on natural resources, they will decrease and they will be scarce. […] The issue of well-being has to be thought in that sense. Food sovereignty is family support and food security. The domestic use of the territory is essential for that (Interview President Los Riscales - Nuquí April 2019).

In this sense, in response to the diversity of the area and the relational ontology characteristic of the coastal-dwellers of the gulf, food sovereignty implies accessing food through multiple methods. As analysed in Section 6.3, the socio-economic practices in the communitarianism/non-capitalism assemblage do not focus on one single performance but diversify activities in order to reproduce the ecosystemic balance and provide sufficient nutrients for the collectivity. Due to their relational social ontology, the socio-economic practices enacted in the region by local collectivities prioritise the environment, for they know its reproduction is the only mechanism to secure their food autonomy:

> So when I hear that blacks are lazy, it makes me angry. It makes me very angry because people have not understood that caring for nature is so important to us. We have everything. You go to the beach, you get clam, you go to the mangrove, you get *piangua*[150], you get crab, you get banana. We cut small pieces of forest to do only what we need. Because the black does not conceive that money is the solution of the world, the priority of life (Interview Fausto Moreno – Nuquí April 2019).

The abundance of the territory and the diversification of food sources complement the previously discussed reciprocal and solidarity practices such as the *minga* (see Section 6.3). At this point, food sovereignty (as one of the components of well-being) also depends on the strength of the networks inside a given collectivity. The social capital of the collectivity contributes to the constitution of well-being not only in defence of the territory and in reproducing local sociocultures, but to the extent that securing food sovereignty also includes solidarity and reciprocal practices:

> Because if you do not want to go fishing, you go to the neighbour and, come on, give me a pound [referring a pound of any agricultural or fishery product]. And they say, take what you want and, hey why do not you give me plantain, go and get coconut,

[150] *Anadara tuberculosa* is a bivalve mollusk of the Arcidae family.

> there is rice. Here, the one who does not eat is because is lazy. That is true (Interview Fausto Moreno – Coquí April 2019).

Concerning income as a source of well-being, coastal-dwellers of the Gulf of Tribugá argue that working for money also plays a major role in the constitution of a quality life. However, generation of income has to go hand-in-hand with balanced interaction with the ecosystem and with securing food sovereignty. Contrary to the developmentalism/capitalism assemblage, the importance of income according to the local horizon of well-being does not compete with the black social ontology and its relational nature. Accordingly, income is not an end in itself nor the major source of prosperity, but just one of many multiple sources of well-being:

> If I see that my territory is productive, I do not change it for anything. In any way. Also thinking that the territory is generating money for me, or the resources of the territories. That money does not only come from living from a job, but using a resource well, generates my income, my profit, let us say the conditions (Interview Oscar Saya – Nuquí April 2019).

In this complex understanding of well-being, income is not the central aim of socio-economic practices but shares its importance with and complements other determinants of well-being. Besides ecosystemic balance, which is transversal to every other element of well-being, income has the same relevance in terms of providing a "good life" as food sovereignty and social capital.

The constitution of well-being or a "good life" also depends on education and health as fundamental pillars. These two elements of well-being reflect the transmodern nature of the demands of black collectivities and the urgent need for intercultural dialogue. The right to education goes beyond generality, for it focuses on a localised type of education that responds to the sociocultures of black collectivities in the region. As a transmodern transfiguration of the fundamental right to education, the collectivity demands that the content of curricula question the Eurocentric biases of current content, that it aligns with the black sociocultures and social ontology and that it provides the elements necessary for strengthening and expanding the autonomy of the coastal-dwellers. Besides the importance of a contextualised education, it is necessary to stress that, although there have been efforts towards what the collectivity calls "ethno-education," there is still a long way before concretising the fundamental right to education:

> Education is a subject to review as well. A subject to revise because education is not conditioned [to the contexts], so they give it the same treatment here, despite the fact that there is an ethno-education chapter. The truth is that it almost does not materializes and national standards govern education and it has to be this way,

> because if it is not, then it does not work for them. Then the teachers and the educational institution have to try to respond to what the boss says. That is the ministry. There are the norms and guidelines of the ministry (Interview Oscar Saya – Nuquí April 2019).

Similarly, the case of health as a determinant factor in well-being is also relevant in terms of concretising the right to education according to the current co-existence of different assemblages in the territory. Demanding the expansion of health services in the gulf, the collectivity argues that it should vary according to local sociocultures and their conceptions of the body (see Section 6.3). Among other transmodern transfigurations related to the right to health, the collectivity refers to the connection between health and food – not as an obvious truism but as a concrete claim. The importance of food autonomy mentioned above also corresponds to the uses of food products in medicine and care practices (see Section 6.3). This does not mean that the rightful demands of the collectivity for quality health service reduces their own medicine as a means to preventing and curing diseases but that they demand an intercultural dialogue between the two medical traditions in order to the improve the quality and coverage of the health services provided by the state.

Due to these particular characteristics, access to local medical practices not only implies education in this regard, but it also implies access to the plants, foods and animal parts used in many procedures. For this reason, intercultural dialogue between local and clinical medicinal practices would positively influence multiple aspects of well-being. Besides improving of the health of coastal-dwellers, the effects of an intercultural approach to health would span from the strengthening of local autonomy to the reproduction of the local social ontology and the ecosystemic balance of the territory:

> There is the urgent need to optimize the food and ethno-medical processes in these Afro-Colombian communities, as a strategy to improve their nutritional and health conditions autonomously, conserve and spread the wide biological and cultural diversity, as well as support their political process of territorial appropriation and self-governance (Los Riscales, 2007, 223).

Summing up the notion of well-being and quality of life, a long quote may help illustrate the local perspective:

> The quality of life here is to be able to go out, to be able to have good health, a good education, services and some income. People are quiet. I believe that if a person earns a 1,000,000 or 1,200,000 pesos [approximately €240], they live perfectly well here. They live like rich. They have fish, they have rice, and they do not have to spend much on food. […] I am rich, you know why, because you do not have what I have. I have tranquillity, I have time, outdoors, I have nature, I have a house by the sea, and

> I can eat shrimp, fresh fish. What you want all the time, go to the beach, walk the beach shirtless, barefoot. Let the water fall on you, you can do that here. Because there is nowhere in Bogotá to do it and that is what you pay to do it, instead I do not pay to do that. That is being rich, being able to enjoy life and nature. That is to have all the wealth of the world and have the principles of being a human (Interview Fausto Moreno – Coquí April 2019).

Although the description of the notion of well-being according to black collectivities in the Gulf of Tribugá evidence some of its transmodern character, it is necessary to highlight some of its most important transfigurations, which can be found in the above quote. To the extent that the collectivity concretises abstract notions usually associated with developmentalism and adapts these concepts to the local social ontology and sociocultures, it makes the local horizon of well-being a transmodern product of the interaction between the assemblages currently operating in the territory (see Chapter 6). In particular, due to the characteristics of each assemblage, the practices enacting and fostering well-being present a tendency towards the sustainability/multiculturalism and communitarianism/non-capitalism assemblages.

The practices that enact and foster well-being in the territory perform a transmodern transfiguration of the discourse of developmentalism through three main mechanisms. First, the abstractions of developmentalism as prosperity, progress, productivity and development itself become the object of criticisms and questioning due to their Eurocentric and capital-centric nature. Moreover, after critically reviewing developmentalism and the mechanisms through which it has excluded (and continues to exclude) and marginalised (and continues to marginalise) the region, local collectivities appropriate, transform and claim it according to their own perspectives and aspirations. From this appropriation emerges demands and efforts towards prosperity, productivity and progress on their own concrete terms.

Second, the transformation of abstract notions associated with sustainable developmentalism and neoliberal multiculturalism become concrete practices through which the collectivity strengthens its autonomy and self-determination. Appropriating environmental concern, the discourse of sustainability and the idea of multiculturalism translate into the performance of practices that, echoing the sustainability/multiculturalism assemblage, move towards the reproduction of the local social ontology.

Third, as transmodern transfiguration implies, local collectivities carry out a process of self-criticism in order to identify the limitations of their own practices in the process of constituting their well-being. In particular, the recognition of sociocultures and specific practices that may belong to different assemblages but move towards the well-being of the collectivity become the spaces of transformation of local practices. Intercultural health and education systems, tourism, the technification of artisanal fishing and many other examples

evidence both the self-criticism of local practices and the value coastal-dwellers see in the intercultural dialogue.

In the end, the transmodern transfiguration that takes place in the Gulf of Tribugá consists of the appropriation of abstract universalisms and the transformation of local discourses and practices that may undermine the pursuit of the local conception of well-being. As analysed in the first pages of the current chapter (see Section 8.1), this double consideration – critiquing both western abstract universalisms and one's own sociocultures – becomes the path through which transmodernity and interculturality emerge in particular spaces.

8.4. Two transmodern and intercultural efforts towards the autonomy and self-determination of black collectivities in the Gulf of Tribugá

To a certain extent, the accomplishments of the Constitution of 1991 and Law 70 of 1993 also represent a transfiguration of modern republicanism enacted by non-western collectivities in Colombia. Although lacking the scopes of the constitutions of Bolivia and Ecuador, the Constitution of 1991 and Law 70 of 1993 provide very important elements towards the autonomy and self-determination of indigenous and black collectivities. However, as the ecological co-existence of multiple sociocultures is a long-term struggle, the following lines describe two particular transmodern and intercultural manifestations that, far from reaching the horizon of self-determination, may show the concrete efforts that local collectivities are performing in order to move towards that horizon.

Moreover, although acknowledging the progressive elements of Law 70 of 1993, the transmodern transfigurations black collectivities have done towards their well-being and the constitution of ecological co-existence in their territory have not yet permeated the interactions between the collectivities and the hegemonic discourse of the state, NGOs and international cooperation. Such important advances in the fulfilment of rights have not yet changed the tropicalist and colonial interactions that these collectivities have with the core of the modern world-system. Furthermore, the interaction between hegemonic discourse and black cultural diversity echoes neoliberal multiculturalism in which, under hegemonic eyes, black practices that enact complex socio-ontological systems become folkloric manifestations and assets of consumption.

Finally, the examples presented below narrate the formation, perspective and scope of the Community Council of Los Riscales and the constitution of the DRMI as mechanisms to deal with the presence of multiple assemblages in the territory while reproducing local black sociocultures and social ontology. Both examples shed some light on the transmodern and intercultural processes that are currently taking place in the Gulf of Tribugá. However, the hegemony of the developmentalism/capitalism assemblage in the territory, plus the Eurocentrism of policy makers, NGOs and international cooperation, limits the margin of

action of these transmodern efforts and pushes them towards a superficial understanding of cultural diversity summed up in the idea of neoliberal multiculturalism. Namely i) the unbalanced power relations that characterise the colonial background of the relationship between core and periphery; ii) Eurocentric notions of development and well-being that have historically translated into deterritorialisation and armed conflict; iii) limited resources that may lead up to "projectitis" and the diminishment of autonomy.

Community Council of Los Riscales and its plan: a vision of life among the black communities of the Gulf of Tribugá (2007-2020)

The creation of Los Riscales in 2002 took place within the framework of Law 70 of 1993, which provided that black collectivities could claim and protect the collective property of the territory, reproduce their particular ways of inhabiting the space, conserve the environment and protect their cultural identity through community councils (see Section 4.2). According to their ethno-development plan, which is a transmodern transfiguration in itself, the mission of Los Riscales is to strengthen the autonomic organisational dynamics of black collectivities in the region (Los Riscales, 2007).

The administrative scope of Los Riscales encompasses nine local community councils. Each of these councils represents one community in the municipality. The local community councils are those of Arusí, Partadó, Termales, Joví, Coquí, Paguí, Nuquí, Tribugá and Jurubirá. In total, Los Riscales has around five thousand associates in the gulf. Although each of these local community councils and their communities have the autonomy to define their own projects for and perspectives on the future, there is a general assembly with nine representatives of every local community council to define matters of general concern:

> We hold delegate assemblies where each community meets and sends its delegates. Each community sends nine because the communities are nine. That is, we are nine communities, and by community, we pick nine delegates. The number is nine because we want representation for every sector. In other words, women have one, on behalf of the youth go another, on behalf of the farmers go another, the fishermen have another, the tourism has another, the conservation sector and so on. All sectors are represented, the guide sector, the education sector (Interview President Community Council Los Riscales – Nuquí April 2019).

This assembly of eighty-one individuals elects a board of directors of nine persons, one from each community. The general board of directors has five holders and four alternates. The board is responsible for carrying out "the administrative issues of the community council, bookkeeping, managing, making projects, etc. Then, there is the general assembly, the board of directors, the board of directors has a legal representative or a president and there is the

prosecutor who controls the board of directors" (Interview President Community Council Los Riscales – Nuquí April 2019).

The participatory mechanisms enacted by Los Riscales, its local councils and its members materialise in the EDP 2007-2020, in which the collectivity seeks to understand its present and envision its future. The document comprises the history of the region and reviews some socio-economic and cultural practices, the role of the community council, the biogeographic characteristics of the gulf, the type of interactions Los Riscales has with state institutions and NGOs and, most importantly, the future prospects of the collectivity. Along this vein, the document states that the EDP 2007-2020 "is first and foremost a legal instrument of orientation, management, control and administration of the territory for the autonomy, governability and integral ethnic development of the communities settled in the Gulf of Tribugá" (Los Riscales, 2007, 306).

Moreover, the EDP 2007-2020 argues that its collective, long-term commitment and challenge is introducing "real changes in the planning process, community participation, the integral, global and strategic vision of the territory as a space to be and exercise the right as a collectivity to develop according to their own culture and dreams" (Los Riscales, 2007, 308). In other words, the EDP 2007-2020 strives for the rightful autonomy of black collectivities in the area so that they can reproduce their own social ontology and the concrete practices that enact it. This means having the rightful autonomy to construct, adapt, use and relate to their inhabited space in a manner that secures the reproduction of their social ontology, their food sovereignty and their well-being. In this sense, the EDP 2007-2020 appropriates positive elements of modernity and constructs a mechanism through which the collectivity, through the modern state, moves towards the strengthening of their autonomy and self-determination. In particular, the purposes of the plan are the following:

1. "Develop our life in a way that guarantees the sustainability of resources.
2. Lead, manage and direct the actions of our collective territory and determine how other entities should work in it.
3. Promote the construction and implementation of a model that reflects the way we want to live in this territory.
4. Promote an education that strengthens local identity and governance.
5. Understand economic and social planning as part of territorial and cultural integrity
6. Establish community and institutional alliances to expand the solidarity and support network.
7. Guide and manage the use, distribution and development of the collective territory to achieve the proper implementation of the plan" (Los Riscales, 2007, 315-316).

For the purpose of this research, the objectives of the EDP 2007-2020 can be divided in two: those that are strictly transmodern and those that are intercultural. To the first group belong

those objectives that concretise abstract elements of developmentalism and sustainable development. The objectives that belong to this cluster are: (1) in terms of its appropriation of the notion of sustainability, adapting it to what they call "our life;" (3) in that it takes the idea of development and seeks to concretise it through a model of development in line with their own sociocultures and social ontology; (4) in that it appropriates the fundamental right to education and its abstract importance, later concretising it into educational strategies towards the strengthening and reinforcement of the reproduction of the black social ontology and sociocultures; and (5) and (7) because they take the notion of planning (extensive in Latin-American developmentalism) and make it their own. Moreover, in these last two objectives, following a relational logic, Los Riscales takes the inaccurate separation made by liberalism that separates the economic realm from the cultural, historical and societal realms and corrects it by entangling the social, economic, cultural and territorial realms together.

The second cluster of objectives includes those that foster interculturality, which, although it might be transmodern in itself as it questions Eurocentrism and abstract universalisms, focuses on the dialogue between co-existing sociocultures present in the territory. These objectives include: (2) in that it seeks to establish a set of rules for the interactions between the collectivity and external entities – by leading and setting the rules of the conversation, Los Riscales tries to take the baton from those entities in or from the core of the modern world-system and create a horizontal intercultural dialogue; and (6) in that it proposes solidaristic interactions between other collectivities and Los Riscales in order to begin intercultural conversations.

In a general sense, the objectives of the EDP 2007-2020 expose the interest of Los Riscales to construct an intercultural territory that overcomes the superficiality of neoliberal multiculturalism. This implies struggling for positioning the historically marginalised collectivities of the Gulf – black and indigenous – in a place where their social ontologies and sociocultures horizontally interact with those that are currently hegemonic:

> The formulation of this Plan breaks with paradigms traditionally used in planning processes where technique was imposed as an enemy of the knowledge and ancestral wisdom of peoples. The present Plan values ancestral knowledge and establishes a dialogue between those knowledges (ancestral and scientific) as a way to enrich its formulation and define lines of action that allow directing and prioritizing the work of our organization in the next 10 years. It departs from ethnohistory where the memory of the elders is an ally and one of the important sources, the stories lived by the people are full of gestures, emotion and nostalgia that although it is not possible to capture them through writing, they do print a particular sense (Los Riscales, 2007, 309).

In the same vein, the guiding principles of the EDP 2007-2020 make a transmodern transfiguration of governance planning in Latin America and attune it to the specific purpose of fostering local sociocultures. These guiding principles are:

1. Comprehensive and integral vision of the region in which the EDP 2007-2020 becomes the mechanism for the development of black collectivities according to their ancestral practices and technologies that stimulate the economy in the area under the focus of environmental sustainability, respect and compromise with the laws of nature and keeping the pact with nature. All of these with the commitment to seek opportunities to raise the quality of life of the collectivities using the resources or the territory.
2. The EDP 2007-2020 as an instrument to strengthen the governance and autonomy of community councils as the authorities in terms of territorial planning and management. This guiding principle argues that Los Riscales is the rightful interlocutor in any process of concretising and negotiating public policies that any private or public entity seeks to implement in the area.
3. The EDP 2007-2020 is an instrument to strengthen the social fabric of the communities in the Gulf of Tribugá. The accomplishment of these principles would take place through two main mechanisms: i) structuring and implementing an afro-centric education focused on culture and identity; ii) strengthening inter-ethnic and intercultural relationships as a strategy for preserving the harmonious cohabitation of the collectivities living in the area (Los Riscales, 2007).

Some of the elements identified in the EDP 2007-2020 are vital when it comes to planning for and with black collectivities. These aspects represent what Los Riscales identifies as the most important and challenging elements in the constitution of an autonomous territory. These challenges imply revisiting history, identifying the colonial practices and performances in and of the modern state, occupying and transforming the state by progressive forces, defying the notion of property, introducing legitimate non-state authorities and proposing a radical transmodern interculturality. Each of these cases represents a transmodern transfiguration of some of the characteristic pillars of modernity, such as the modern state, private property and Eurocentrism. In concrete, these challenges are:

1. The reconstruction of history uniting the stories of before and after slavery.
2. The definition and articulation of an integral vision of the territory using the territory and its people as its guide.
3. The communities as protagonists of any participatory process.
4. The transformation of the current relationship between external trustees and the community such that the experts truly serve the people.
5. The identification of the state as the main entity responsible for the socio-economic situation of black collectivities in the region due to the fact that its interventions in

the area come with racism, exclusion and the looting of gold, platinum and timber. However, the state should be the mediator in the implementation of the EDP 2007-2020.

6. The introduction of new legal figures such as collective land titling.
7. The authorisation of black collectivities, through community councils, as the authorities in exercising local governance and territorial management.
8. The reconciliation of actors in the Gulf of Tribugá, such as private, public and communitarian entities, in order to create a collective pact (Los Riscales, 2007).

To close, considering the co-existence of non-black collectivities in the territory (such as indigenous communities and *paisas*[151]), the EDP 2007-2020 proposes an understanding of the territory through an intercultural lens. It proposes creating complex and polylogical mechanisms through which different collectivities can interact with and learn from each other in a constructive manner (see Section 8.1). This is why the EDP 2007-2020 emphasises the need to establishing a bridge between black, indigenous and scientific knowledges as a way to enrich the discussion and "formulat[ing] and defin[ing] some lines of action that specifically direct and prioritize the work of our organization for the next 10 years" (Los Riscales, 2007, 309).

Regional District of Integrated Management

> "[We want] the well-being of people, tranquillity and peace. That is why we do not conceive the DRMI as in an environmental realm only, but it has to be an issue of social, political, economic and integral development. The preservation of culture" (Interview Oscar Saya – Nuquí April 2019).

The second example of transmodern and intercultural performance in the gulf refers to the *Regional District of Integrated Management* (DRMI). This mechanism, arranged by the state, the fishing industry and the community council seeks to protect the marine area of the gulf and secure the economic practices in line with the social ontology of the coastal-dwellers. According to one of the leaders in the process of the constitution of the DRMI, since the 1990s, the increase of industrial fishing trawlers has affected artisanal fishing and the capacity of the collectivity to catch fish for their subsistence. To some extent, the DRMI is the result of the struggle between the three assemblages in the Gulf of Tribugá (see Chapter 6). First, the assemblage of developmentalism/capitalism, represented by the fishing industry, claimed the importance of the marine resource and its current under-exploitation by local fishing practices. Second, the sustainability/multiculturalism assemblage, represented by the collectivity, certain NGOs and other entities, focus on the importance of sustaining these resources for their environmental relevance. Third, within the non-

[151] See foot note 109

capitalist/communitarianism assemblage, local collectivities, certain NGOs and some state entities claim the importance of artisanal fishing as a source of income for coastal-dwellers and as a constitutive element in the enactment of the black social ontology.

With this in mind, the collectivity, environmental entities of the state and NGOs pursued a research in order to characterise the marine ecosystems of the area, monitoring fish in terms of their patterns of movement, species, seasonality, size and all other relevant aspects regarding fish(ing) dynamics of the gulf. Once the characterisation of the area concluded, the collectivity, in hand with their collaborators, began the process of constituting the DRMI. As illustrated in the quote that opened this section, it is necessary to highlight that the collection of data did not exclusively resort to external experts, but involved the empirical expertise of the coastal-dwellers. To put it in the terms of this research, the constitution of the DRMI was an intercultural effort:

> That [the characterization] gave us very important information, information that was collected with trained personnel from the communities, processed by professional staff. All that information complemented with the empirical knowledge of the people, served us to have a more accurate knowledge of the reality of the territory and its resources. When we looked at that, it made us understand that the territory is not only for fishing, but also for other activities where other actors can fit and we are already starting to give it a more comprehensive, more holistic look and we opted, through a great agreement, for the declaration of the DRMI (Interview Oscar Saya – Nuquí April 2019).

With this in mind, the main purpose of the DRMI is prioritising the local social ontology and the non-capitalist fishing practices performed by the local collectivity in order to secure both ecosystemic balance and the food sovereignty of costal-dwellers. The collective effort consisted of taking back the use of the sea from industrial fishing and claiming the right to autonomously make the decisions regarding their living space:

> We notified the existence of a protected area that was no longer for free use as it previously was and that henceforth, justifying and arguing the priority of local communities and the use of resources. Justifying the survival means of these communities and asking that the authority guarantee the well-being of the communities and not only the capital (Interview Oscar Saya – Nuquí April 2019).

Concretely, the declaration of the DRMI by CODECHOCÓ includes four main objectives:

1. Preserve the natural conditions and restore the marine and coastal ecosystems present in the Gulf of Tribugá with the purpose of conserving the mating and breeding of humpback whales and other emblematic, endemic and at risk species.

2. Conserve the structural and functional attributes of the marine and coastal ecosystems present in the area in order to guarantee the biological and ecological connectivity of the region.
3. Contribute to the strengthening of the cultural dynamic of the black collectivity of Los Riscales and other local collectivities that depend on the ecosystemic goods and services of the Gulf of Tribugá. These collectivities have, through ancestral knowledge and their practices of sustainable use of the territory, contributed to the protection of natural heritage, the conservation of biodiversity and the management of the territory.
4. Contribute to the sustainability of hydro-biological resources and other ecosystemic goods and services that support fishing and the extractive uses of hydro-biological resources associated with the coastal-marine ecosystem, tourism and the well-being of local collectivities (CODECHOCÓ, 2018).

Moreover, in order to illustrate the scope of the DRMI, in conversation with the fishing industry, the collectivity established spaces and periods of time in which the developmentalism/capitalism assemblage could perform its practices:

> They [the fishing industry] enter in the season that has the most shrimp, which is from March or April. They enter and we limit that maximum to five months of the year. Five continuous months. To some limited space also and totally forbidding in some places. They continue with the dragging, but implementing the turtle excluder device, the TED avoids catching turtles. […] Those agreements forbid nocturnal trawling; only allowing directed fishery, which is industrial fishing, and that they do not do another type of fishery as they were doing at the time. They were anchoring and fishing with hooks and all that. They cannot do that any longer (Interview Oscar Saya – Nuquí April 2019).

The intercultural and transmodern character of the DRMI not only resides in the leadership taken by the coastal-dwellers in securing their own artisanal fishing practices threatened by the exploitation of resources by the fishing industry, but also in critically revisiting the effort of certain fishing practices performed by the collectivity. As analysed above (see Section 8.1), both transmodernity and interculturality imply not only a critique of Eurocentrism and capitalist practices that endanger the creation and re-creation of plural worlds, but also a self-critique from inside the collectivities themselves. In this sense, the DRMI demands a type of fishing practice that, while incorporating new technologies and techniques, does not menace the ecosystemic balance of the gulf:

> The plan defines the details because we also understand that it is not only a plan for the fishing industry. It is a plan for everyone, because we know that artisanal fishers can also do activities that are not very friendly to the resource. So it [the DRMI]

> defines how, when and remain on track to liability criteria (Interview Oscar Saya – Nuquí April 2019).

> […] we are promoting that people do not continue throwing dynamite, but that they make artisanal fishing. Fishing with dynamite or poison does no longer exists. It is 100% finished (Interview Fausto Moreno – Nuquí April 2019).

In the end, in line with the discussion of a world with many worlds, the DRMI represents an intercultural effort towards the constitution of a socio-ontological plurality in the Gulf of Tribugá. Although far from overcoming Eurocentrism, racism, capital-centrism and constituting an ecology of sociocultures (see Section 8.2), efforts such as the EDP 2007-2020 and the DRMI represent a decisive step towards the transmodern intercultural horizon in which a cosmopolitical logic operates.

8.5. Summing up

Having considered the complex interaction between the disputing assemblages in the Gulf of Tribugá, the present chapter analysed the particular characteristics of the diverse efforts that the coastal-dwellers of the gulf perform in pursuit of their well-being according to their own sociocultures and social ontology. Before delving into the particular mechanisms performed by the local collectivities towards their well-being, autonomy and self-determination, the section provided some theoretical elements to help understand the scope and philosophical nature of such efforts. With this in mind, the chapter analysed the notions of transmodernity and intercultural philosophy in terms of their similarities and differences. Moreover, acknowledging the ontological nature of the socio-territorial conflict taking place in the area under study, the section discussed the challenges that an ontologically plural region or a pluriversal gulf may present.

The notion of transmodernity refers to a horizon in which multiple social ontologies and philosophies interact in horizontal dialogues that traverse modernity. The collectivities located in the periphery of the modern world-system transfigure the abstract universalisms of modernity, appropriate them and concretise them according to their own struggles and particularities. In this sense, transmodernity does not take modernity as singular unit, nor does it opposes modernity in general, but it claims some of its abstract universalisms as potentially emancipatory. By claiming some of the abstract universalisms of modernity and concretising them according to particular cases, transmodernity proposes the creation of non-hierarchical dialogues in which every participant, while questioning the expansive nature of modernity, also questions specific elements of its own sociocultures and social ontologies that may stand against their well-being. In short, transmodernity argues for a future in which every collectivity, while struggling against the expansive nature of the abstract universalisms of modernity, affirms its own culture and critically revisits itself. In the end, the project of

transmodernity argues for a pluriversal horizon in which multiple worlds co-exist and enter into a constant intercultural dialogue.

Similarly, the project of intercultural philosophy or interculturality also aim for a pluriversal world. Leaving aside the discussion as to the socio-ontological and sociocultural partial connections between the core and the periphery of the modern world-system, the intercultural effort focuses on creating the conditions and strategies necessary to foster an interactive dialogue between multiple cultures based on the full acknowledgment of and respect for every epistemology. In this sense, intercultural projects consists of three main moments: first, questioning the epistemic violence that took place alongside the expansion of modernity and its abstract universalisms; second, identifying universally valid arguments, ethics and concepts; third, acknowledging, doing justice and strengthening localised philosophical and epistemological traditions. After completing these three steps, the intercultural project proposes a type of dialogue called a "polylogue." To the extent that this form of interaction consists of an ideal type of communicative horizon, the polylogue aims to avoid both epistemic parochialism and cultural relativism.

As evidenced throughout the chapter, both projects of transmodernity and interculturality are far from complete. However, the chapter presented a series of strategies and mechanisms that help overcome the challenges intrinsic to any pluralist project. In particular, notions of controlled equivocations, multiple ecologies and cosmopolitics provide some analytical and practical elements that help understanding the challenges of both transmodernity and interculturality while functioning as specific mechanisms towards that horizon and the possible outcomes of these efforts. In the end, all of these conceptualisations aim at a pluriversal future in which, by avoiding both abstract universalisms and cultural relativisms, a radical interculturality can take place in a world with multiple worlds.

After presenting the theoretical framework to understand the constitution of a pluriversal Gulf of Tribugá, the chapter analysed the conception of well-being for the coastal-dwellers. The main argument of this section was that the local conception of well-being and the particular efforts performed by black collectivities of the region towards the constitution of that reality are transmodern. Accordingly, this section stated that the local practices that occasionally enact and occasionally foster well-being perform transmodern transfigurations of the abstract universalisms of development and prosperity. In this sense, besides questioning the Eurocentric and capital-centric notion of development, the local enactment of well-being implies appropriating and transforming it according to a given collectivity's concrete aspirations and needs. Moreover, this section presented the self-critical moments in which the collectivity moves towards the constitution of their well-being. This process implies not only borrowing practices and performances that may belong to other partially connected assemblages but also the importance the collectivity sees in questioning some of the practices that belong to its own sociocultures and social ontology.

The conception of well-being according to the black collectivity of the Gulf of Tribugá implies three simultaneous motifs: i) critiquing abstract universalisms related to the notion of development and its appropriation; ii) recognising and incorporating of specific practices of other sociocultures in order to move towards well-being; iii) exercising self-criticism in which the collectivity questions its own practices that might hinder or sabotage their well-being and the reproduction of their social ontology.

To close, the chapter presented two concrete transmodern and intercultural efforts performed by the black collectivity of the Gulf of Tribugá in order to enact their well-being: the *Ethno-development Plan: Vision of life of the black communities of the Gulf of Tribugá (2007-2020)* and the *Regional District of Integrated Management.* To the extent that both efforts appropriate and transfigure some modern abstract universalisms, question some local practices and actively foster intercultural interactions among multiple actors in the territory, they represents transmodern and intercultural experiences towards the constitution of a pluriversal territory.

Conclusions: towards transmodern and intercultural public policy

The ultimate aim of the research – understanding the complexity of a transmodern and intercultural horizon for the Gulf of Tribugá – not only implies questioning the social ontology of western modernity and its materialisation through colonialism, racisms, capitalism, developmentalism or a combination of some elements of each, but it also implies identifying the social ontology of the coastal-dwellers and the mechanisms that these collectivities, while appropriating some abstract universalisms of modernity, perform to re-create their own forms practices, institutions and *habitus.* Moreover, thinking a transmodern and intercultural horizon requires thinking black collectivities of the region not as external to modernity or lacking it, but as partial exteriorities of modernity that actively interact with, negotiate and dispute the conditions of existence of their living space.

In this sense, building a transmodern and intercultural horizon implies overcoming most of notions associated with European epistemology and the social ontology of modernity since European expansion in the sixteenth century. Overcoming the specific materialisation of modern social ontology deployed by hegemonic power since its expansion means struggling for the appropriation and transformation of some western institutions and conceptualisations and building a transmodern and intercultural horizon.

The constitution of a transmodern and intercultural horizon requires two main moments or movements. First, it requires the affirmation of the non-hegemonic social ontology performed by local collectivities. The recognition of localised forms of being and interacting with space implies the negation of the historical misacknowledgement of the full human condition of "other" collectivities. In the particular case of the Gulf of Tribugá, the negation of the full human condition of its coastal-dwellers has taken place since they were brought to the region as enslaved workers by Spanish colonial power. Second, it implies questioning certain features of localised social ontologies, with its practices, institutions and *habitus,* that might be hindering the well-being of the collectivity or some of its members. This double movement requires innovative approaches to both types of social ontologies – western and localised – in order to grasp their emancipatory, inclusive, progressive and popular elements and discard those aspects that are exclusive, violent, universalist or monologist.

Part of the effort in the constitution of a transmodern and intercultural horizon relates to approaching socio-territorial conflicts not only as disputes over resources or the environment but as mainly ontological struggles. Thinking socio-territorial conflict as a struggle over the conditions of existence and existence itself implies understanding reality as enacting practice. From this perspective, each disputing forms of enacting reality seeks to reproduce its social ontology and its own forms of materialising it through specific practices, institutions and *habitus* performed by individuals and collectivities. Moreover, thinking socio-territorial

conflict requires understanding the partial connections between each form of enacting reality, their possible points of convergence and their separating element.

In the particular case of the Gulf of Tribugá, the partially connected and disputing assemblages are the developmentalism/capitalism, the sustainability/multiculturalism and the communitarianism/non-capitalism assemblages. Each of these seek to reproduce themselves and the social ontology that fundaments them. Although the assemblages of developmentalism/capitalism and sustainability/multiculturalism share their dialectical belonging to the social ontology of western modernity, they enact reality differently. Both reproduce and seek to implant in the territory the multiple dualisms of western modernity, its teleological understanding of history and the European experience as the ultimate human goal. Moreover, both promote a type of interaction with the territory in which every human and non-human entity becomes an asset of capitalism, economic growth and an exchangeable commodity to buy and sell in the pursuit of a type of development based on income.

Notwithstanding their belonging to the social ontology of western modernity, these two assemblages differ in the practices they perform in pursuit of development. The assemblage of developmentalism/capitalism resorts to an interaction with the territory based on extractivist practices, industrial fishing, coca leaf production, cocaine trafficking, monoculture and mega-infrastructure projects, among others. In turn, the assemblage of sustainability/multiculturalism interacts with the space through sustainable fishing, seeing cultural practices as folkloric assets of consumption and sustainable tourism.

On the other hand, the assemblage of communitarianism/non-capitalism fundaments itself on the black social ontology. This particular system of classification, set of meanings and symbolic values subconsciously shared by coastal-dwellers consists of a radical interconnectedness of every entity in the territory. Black collectivities in the gulf perform a type of social ontology that concedes certain levels of agency and activity to specific animals, landforms, ancestors and plants. The relational nature of the black social ontology surfaces through concrete reciprocal economic practices and medical and care practices, among others.

Notwithstanding the differences between these social ontologies and their practices, institutions and *habitus*, each assemblage is partially connected with the others. Every actor present in the territory (individual or collective) may participate in each assemblage. A coastal-dweller could participate in capitalist enterprises, developmental agents could foster the reproduction of reciprocal economic practices or capitalist initiatives might invest in conservation projects. The assemblages present in the territory are partially connected, open-ended and fluid forms of disputing the enactment of reality.

With this in mind, to the extent that the dispute over the territory is about how individuals and collectivities enact reality, the dispute is ontological and the horizon of the struggle of the coastal-dwellers is the constitution of a transmodern and intercultural region. As stated above, this horizon requires two main moments: i) affirming the non-hegemonic social ontology performed by local collectivities and ii) questioning the local social ontology and any problematic features it may have. A type of questioning performed by coastal-dwellers that reflects the border thinking characteristic of non-western collectivities emerges as a result of this double critique. It is a critique located between modernity, their own culture and other partially connected cultures. From this triple questioning of one's own practices, institutions and *habitus*, and of those enacting the social ontology of modernity, emerges the type of transmodern and intercultural projects and efforts the collectivities design and, to some extent, perform. Such are the examples of the EDP 2007-2020 and the DRMI presented above in Section 8.4.

Far from the only examples, both efforts are only two of multiple transmodern and intercultural mechanisms coastal-dwellers of the gulf perform in the dispute on (and of) the macro and micro levels of power. Besides these two cases of dispute that clearly reflect the entwinement between both spheres of power, there is a huge diversity of events, practices, gatherings, interpersonal relationships, artistic productions, forms of production and forms of commercialisation that constantly negotiate and dispute the type of interactions that every actor should have with the territory. The socio-territorial conflict aims for the constitution and incorporation of a transmodern and intercultural gulf in which black collectivities, indigenous collectivities, *paisas*, the state, NGOs, international cooperation and tourists interact with the space in the way rightfully established by black collectivities since the provision of Law 70 of 1993.

To arrive at a transmodern and intercultural Gulf of Tribugá, besides the important efforts collectivities are performing such as the EDP 2007-2020, the DRMI and the defence and reproduction of everyday practices, institutions and *habitus*, it is necessary to design innovative public policies that question the so-far hegemonic notions of developmentalism, progress and well-being. Due to the monologue established by western modernity,, such intercultural and transmodern efforts have come from those marginalised collectivities on the edge of modernity. However, the full achievement of a region with multiple worlds that overcomes the neoliberal version of multiculturalism, it is necessary to reach and occupy those spaces of power historically monopolised by national and international developmental agencies.

Although it might start from social movements, communities in resistance and historically marginalised peoples, the design of public policies towards a non-totalitarian, relational and radically interconnected understanding of reality must occupy spaces of power related to the state, international cooperation and developmental agencies as the institutions that determine

the hegemonic understandings of poverty, well-being and prosperity. In this sense, although breaking the monologue of developmentalism begins with localised counter movements such as those described in Section 8.1, it is important to broaden the dialogue and bring the discussion to the national level to dispute the sphere of power historically hegemonised by those actors performing capitalism, colonialism and developmentalism.

In line with the discussion of transmodern republicanism (Castro-Gómez, 2019), the struggle is to strengthen "autonomic thinking," as Escobar (2018) calls the epistemologies that emerge from the struggle from "below," and dispute the state as the hegemonic form of organisation. As stated in Chapter 8, the main ambition of transmodernity and interculturality to reach a global scale and, to do so, it is necessary to go through the state, occupy and transform it and make its performances and institutions transmodern and intercultural.

In this sense, the autonomic efforts currently taking place in both the Global South and the Global North, besides strengthening their own localised autonomic and transformative processes, should also aim to dispute the state as one of the most important agents in the reproduction of the modern world-system. However, as Brand (2012) argues, the transformation of the state should go far beyond greenwashing capitalism or limiting cultural diversity to folkloric manifestations of consumption. State transformation implies a transition from the imperial mode of living that is mainly present in the Global North but also, and increasingly, in the Global South. The imperial mode of living refers not only to the material practices performed in the core of the modern world-system but also to the structural conditions that make possible such capitalist discursive practices. As Brand & Wissen (2019) put it, "the standards of 'good' and 'true' life, which often consist of the imperial way of life, are established in everyday life, even though they form part of broad social relations and, especially, of material and social infrastructures" (Brand & Wissen, 2019, 29).[152]

Although states in the Global South have been one of most important instruments in the expansion and reproduction of global capitalism, they constitute the space, in conjunction with localised social movements, where radical transformations and the instauration of a transmodern and intercultural "common sense" might reach the global scale. As Lander (2012) puts it, Latin American states have been, and remain, monocultural states that operate in heterogeneous and plural societies under a colonial logic (this could be extrapolated to all states in the Global South). To the historical colonial praxis performed by the state with its multiple institutions is added the developmentalist and neoliberal logics that made the state an instrument of capital accumulation and the main guarantor of capitalism as the economic configuration of the modern world-system.

[152] Henceforth, my own translation from: Brand, U., & Wissen, M. (2019). Nuestro bonito modo de vida imperial: Cómo el modelo de consumo occidental arruina el planeta. *Nueva Sociedad*, *279*, 25–32.

To the extent that such states prioritised the demands of accumulation over democratic and popular demands, they were privatised and reduced to instruments of capitalism. These states have been inefficient, clientelistic, corrupt and, in the best of cases, have had weak representative democracies that are strongly exclusive and marginalising.

One of the most transformative challenges in the constitution of the horizon of transmodernity and interculturality is the appropriation of the state in its multi-scaled complexity in order to eliminate its homogenising, capital-centric and colonial nature. Appropriating the state and making it a transformative agent in the constitution of the pluriverse requires including into the discussion notions such as plurinationality, multiple endogenous and localised forms of development, cultural and territorial autonomy, multiple democracies, post-extractivism, post-capitalism and post-liberalism. These discussions, incorporated in and led by an in-construction transmodern and intercultural state, would seek to overcome the historical struggle between popular, democratic, ethnic and identitarian processes and the processes led by privileged national and transnational sectors in their drive towards accumulation. In the end, these efforts focus on the decolonisation of the liberal and monocultural state and the constitution of a transmodern and intercultural state.

Described in Section 8.1, two of the most ambitious efforts to decolonise the liberal state and establish a plurinational, transmodern and intercultural one are the cases of Bolivia and Ecuador. As stated in said chapter, these cases were not insurrections of indigenous collectivities against the modern state but were rather a particular effort of these collectivities, and other historically marginalised social groups, that managed to insert their political ambitions in the state apparatus. However, these efforts and important achievements have partially turned into the reproduction of some of the same neoliberal, authoritative and colonial practices they originally sought to overcome. Despite the transformative accomplishment of the new constitutions in both countries, such as the provision of rights for nature or the acknowledgment of these countries' cultural plurality, due to their dependence on extractivist economies, both countries fell into what is now known as "neo-extractivism."

The notion of neo-extractivism is an analytical category that tries to account for the uses that the so-called "progressive wave" in Latin America gave to the resources of extractivism during the commodities boom in the early twentieth century. As analysed in Section 6.1, extractivism does not limit itself to the extraction of fossil resources or minerals, but it also materialises through the agroindustries (of soybeans, sugar cane, banana or palm), coca leaf production, industrial fishing, the construction of large-scale dams and other mega-infrastructure projects.

Now, the difference between extractivism and neo-extractivism cannot be reduced to the products and resources exploited; its main distinction is in terms of the destination and use of the capital generated by the economic practice. According to Burchard (2016; 2006), the

main difference between the old and the new versions of extractivism is the role of the state in the extraction of the resources, the appropriation of commodity exports rents and the expansion of social policies. During the progressive governments in Latin America, the old type of extractivist effects remained, such as environmental damage, the exploitation of nature, the deterritorialisation of collectivities, dependence on the global market, dependence on exports and the lack of diversity in the productive matrix of these countries. However, unlike in the past, "there is a greater state presence, in some cases taxes and royalties have been increased, and better regulation is being sought" (Gudynas, 2010, 66).[153]

While, in the past, progressive left-wing parties in Latin America understood extractivism as one of the sources of poverty and marginalisation, once in power, they thought of this economic practice as the engine of development and the main way to finance social programs. Copying developmentalist logic, neo-extractivism resorts blackmailing strategies in order to continue the extraction of raw materials. As Gudynas (2010) puts it, although these governments play an active role in and advocates the distribution of the national income product of extraction, they all reproduce a type of development that does not differ much from that of developmentalism and capitalism in that it pursues economic growth through steady increases in exports, inward foreign investment and the commodification of nature.

In this sense, the discussion and critique of extractivism that evolved into neo-extractivism limited the role of the state in the management of rents and in their distribution. Although advocates of neo-extractivism question the previous neoliberal-inspired governments and argue for the importance of the state in capturing much larger shares of natural resources rents, they do not question extractivism, nor do they discuss the possibility of going beyond these forms of socially compensated capitalism (Gudynas, 2010). In the end, under this form of "benevolent capitalism," the basic conditions of the economic configuration of the modern world-system are accepted, but it is understood that there may be reforms and adjustments that could reduce or cushion some of its clearer negative effects, such as poverty and inequality.

Notwithstanding the global impact of some of these governments during the early twentieth century and their achievements in terms of health and education, the fixation of these government on extractivism and their limited transformation of the productive matrices of each country are undeniable. Despite their relevance and their provision of innovative elements in pursuit of transmodernity and interculturality, it is necessary to identify and question the prolongation of certain colonial, racist, developmentalist and capitalist practices. Discussing the rights of nature and the plurinationality of these states while displacing

[153] Henceforth, my own translation from: Gudynas, E. (2010). Si eres tan progresista ¿Por qué destruyes la naturaleza? Neoextractivismo, izquierda y alternativas. *Ecuador Debate*, *79*, 61–80.

historically marginalised collectivities for purposes of extracting and exporting nature is, at the very least, contradictory.

Moving towards a transmodern and intercultural horizon implies an economic transition that gradually brakes with extractivist and other capitalist practices (even in their "neo-" or "green" versions). Although it is difficult to imagine abruptly closing the oil or mining field operations, efforts should focus on reducing state dependence on the export of raw materials and diversifying the productive matrix of these countries to strengthen their local markets rather than broadening the strategies of extraction and the materials extracted – even if the state plays an important role or if the rents of exports are well distributed.

According to Acosta (2011), this transition should summon all the capacities for critical thinking, as well as the inventiveness and creativity of societies and social organisations. Efforts towards post-extractivism in the Global South should come hand-in-hand with notions like economic degrowth or, at least, stationary growth in the Global North – an issue of growing concern in many industrialised countries. In the same vein, in his book *Tiempos de cambio: Repensar América Latina*, written during the commodities boom, Burchardt (2006) provides a series of elements to take into consideration for the transition to a post-extractivist and post-capitalist society.

Among others, Burchardt (2006) argues for the importance of breaking the monopoly of decision-making that currently holds the market. This does not mean that the state would start controlling every single element of the economy (as in some socialist experiences of the twentieth century), but that it would try to break the universalist and authoritative planning and decision-making by technocrats who believe in the free market and its self-regulation:

> It is an indirect regulation and promotion to achieve comprehensive goals valid in all spheres of society. The planning component is not fixed, it must be flexible. Above all, all social interests must be integrated interests through democratic opinion-forming processes (Burchardt, 2006, 232).

Moreover, argues the same author, to the extent that one of the main challenges of a post-capitalist society is that of democratically controlling the market (not the other way around), one of the ultimate goals of democracy is to end capitalism. In this sense, the market can only unfold within socially and politically controlled conditions. The institutionalisation of such conditions represents immense challenges and requires a deeply democratic state that helps constitute a profoundly anti-capitalist type of interaction between democracy and the market.

Along the same vein, to innovate in post-capitalist strategies in the interaction between democracy and the market, it is necessary to rethink and diversify the notion of property. According to Burchardt (2006), one of the main characteristics of a post-capitalist society is

that producers as so-far alienated subjects enter into a relationship with their work that is no longer dominated from outside and that, as a consequence, allows for the social appropriation of production. Furthermore, the author argues that the best option to accomplish or at least move towards a post-capitalist social appropriation of production is through cooperative ownership. Cooperative ownership, in its multiple forms, implies acknowledging and/or innovating incorporating or developing a plurality of types of property – innovative and non-capitalistic types of property such as those performed by black, indigenous and peasant collectivities in Colombia and those characteristic of multiple historically marginalised collectivities across the world.

These multiple forms of individual, collective and national property mean a process of decentralisation in which collectivities establish their own conditions for interacting with their inhabited spaces and with each other according to their own social ontologies. Having multiple forms of owning inhabited the space is not only a mechanism deployed on the macro level of power, but it is also a strategy to set conditions for the reproduction and re-creation of multiple realities. In the end, among others, one concrete mechanisms of moving towards the constitution of a world with many worlds is diversifying the notion of property.

At large, the call made by Burchardt (2006) is for an innovative democratisation of the state, not by condemning it as a whole but by questioning its capitalist features, appropriating it and concretising its terminology through multiple forms of property, economy, social organisation, interaction with space and so on. Burchardt's (2006) call is similar to those of transmodernity and interculturality, which, adding the critique of the colonial, racial and universalising pretensions of western modernity, foresee a horizon in which multiple social ontologies co-exist, are partially connected and interact with each other in a polylogue.

The constitution of transmodernity and interculturality with interconnected polyloguing worlds requires the constitution of a truly plurinational state. Notwithstanding the critique of the scope of the transmodern efforts that Bolivia has deployed, the former member of the Bolivian Constituent Assembly of 2006-2007 and vice minister of strategic planning in the Ministry of Economy and Finance in 2010, Prada Alcoreza (2011), argues that there are six main characteristics and challenges as to the creation of a plurinational state. First, broadly discussed in different sections of this research, is the overcoming of the neoliberal version of multiculturalism. A plurinational state means transforming institutions and creating a new institutional map that incorporates indigenous, afro-descendant, peasant and popular institutions into the state. In its transmodern and intercultural nature, a plurinational state implies an institutional, normative and administrative pluralism that creates the conditions for emptying the state of its colonial, racist and capitalist historical practices such that it helps manage and organise the transition towards the pluriverse.

Second, Prada Alcoreza (2011) argues that a plurinational state must be communitarian and autonomic. That means rethinking liberal democracy as the main sphere of participation and including participative and communitarian democracies as binding strategies of decision making. This horizon of transmodern and intercultural decision-making implies transforming current institutions of participation and strengthening communitarian and autonomic institutions, their networks, scopes and territorial alliances. This new scenario of participation starts with the recognition of every social ontology present in the territory, including all of their symbolic structures, values, communitarian ethics, collective knowledges, relationalities, memories and so on. In the end, the appropriation of currently hegemonic decision-making mechanisms needs communitarian institutions and values to innovate the configuration of a transmodern state.

In line with the above, the third characteristic of a plurinational state, according to Prada Alcoreza (2011), is participation and social control. Social participation establishes a different relationship between individuals, collectivities and the state, makes the state an instrument of society, makes participation more effective and builds up the necessary infrastructure for collective decision-making, the collective design of public policies and collective public management. Radical social participation becomes the backbone of a transmodern type of governance in that it allows for intercultural and polylogical public policy and public management.

The fourth feature of a plurinational state, argues the same author, is autonomic pluralism. Autonomic pluralism refers to the multiplicity of economic, social, political, legal and cultural configurations present in a territory that require innovative forms of organising the administration of the state. An innovative and horizontal administrative division of state territory requires conceding the same conditions and hierarchies to different levels of territorialisation and autonomic organisations. Bearing radical decentralisation in mind, autonomies of regional, municipal, indigenous, peasants of afro-descendant, neighbourhood and other natures should have their own competencies, jurisdictions and spaces for dialogue. A transmodern and intercultural state implies a complex trust of autonomic competencies that unfold multiple and communitarian governmentalities.

Prada Alcoreza (2011) argues that the fifth characteristic of a plurinational state is equity and gender alternation. According to the author, the aim of this characteristic is not only providing equal opportunities to men and women but also moving towards the abolition of male domination. Although the emancipation of women is inherent to indigenous, afro-descendent, peasant and popular social movements, they may differ in terms of their conceptions of feminisms and their critiques of the liberal understanding of feminism. A transmodern state should incorporate in its public policies strategies for the discussion and participation of these multiple feminisms in creating the conditions for overcoming the patriarchal nature of the state and the participation of women in it. The constitution of a

transmodern feminist state also requires ongoing discussions 339round feminism and the role of women within historically marginalised collectivities in order to question and overcome those practices that hinder and threaten the well-being of all members of a given community. These processes are mainly lead by women of the collectivities that are currently challenging the historical roles that their particular social ontologies and sociocultures have given to them.

In this sense, women of historically marginalised collectivities perform a double struggle. On the one hand, women are part of the struggle against colonialism, racism, capitalism and the enactment of western modernity that have deterritorialised, violated, marginalised and excluded both their collectivities and them as individuals. On the other hand, women are struggling against machoistic and patriarchal practices, institutions and *habitus* within their own collectivities. For this reason, as manifested in the short documentary *Defensoras de la vida y el territorio* by the Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca (CRIC),[154] women are the resistance within the resistance (Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca - CRIC, 2020).

The final characteristic of a plurinational state refers to its economic model, which should focus on a plural, communitarian and social economy. In line with Burchardt (2006), Prada Alcoreza (2011) states that the state should have a defining role in the organisation and articulation of multiple economies and the strengthening of the communitarian economies. Although the author does not mention it, any transformation in terms of a given state's economic model also implies challenging the modern world-system by strengthening the local market and, as far as possible, reducing dependency on exports.

According to Escobar (2018), the transition towards a post-developmentalist and post-capitalist state requires three main, interrelated elements: first, challenging hegemonic representations of Africa, Asia and Latin America as "underdeveloped" and "backwards;" second, acknowledging the limits of developmentalism, the multiple damages it has caused and focusing on strategies constitutive of post-developmentalism; third, transforming the dominant knowledge of experts currently grounded on structures of power that reproduce western modernity as the socio-ontological framework of colonialism, capitalism and racism.

Challenging the social ontology of western modernity through global social movements necessarily entails a civilisational transition. As a response to the failure of the project of developmentalism as the latest manifestation of western modernity, the notion of "civilizational transition(s) designates the complex movements from dominance of a single, allegedly globalized, model of life – often designated as 'capitalist hetero patriarchal modernity' – to a peaceful, though tense, co-existence of a multiplicity of models, 'a world where many worlds fit,' a pluriverse" (Escobar, 2019). The book *Pluriverse: A Post-*

[154] The CRIC is an association of indigenous authorities of the Department of Cauca, Colombia.

Development Dictionary (Kothari et al., 2019) identifies and defines some of the initiatives currently working on such a transition in both the Global North and the Global South.

As Beling (2019) puts it, the most ambitious and transformative element of the multiple initiatives currently taking place is that, unlike utopian projects, they take the form of localised experiments with alternative forms of social and collective organisation: civilisational transition projects aspire to correct the trajectories of developmentalism. In this sense, to the extent that they all challenge and strive to correct the trajectories of developmentalism on the global scale, they are transmodern. Contrasting with utopian projects that base their perspectives on Edenic, non-conflictual, abstract scenarios, these counter-hegemonic projects that work on a civilisational transition entail appropriating abstract universalisms of a utopian-like modernising project. Instead of emerging and building their future in the abstract, transitional initiatives emerge in the concrete conditions of marginalisation of the partial exteriorities of western modernity. They do not believe in development as a utopian abstraction so they question its materialisation through developmentalism, appropriate some of its elements and concretise them according to their own struggles.

Notwithstanding the hegemonic and transformative ambitions of these initiatives, some of them, particularly those inclined towards decolonial perspectives, have a type of non-critical negation of modernity as a singular unit. Although as analysed in Chapters 1 and 8, there are no radical exteriorities of modernity, some initiatives condemn every element of modernity rather than appropriate its positive elements. In words of Castro-Gómez (2019), the political scope of these initiatives are very limited and leave a very narrow choice between two forms of neutralising politics: "either the *right-wing scoundrel* (neoliberal or fascist) who in the name of democracy intends to cancel it, or the *left-wing fool* who seek to combat this movement but from scenarios that also deny politics" (Castro-Gómez, 2019, 154).

Even one of the most symbolic autonomist movements, the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN), is sometimes criticised for its limited transformative scope, as was seen in their presentation of María de Jesús Patricio Martínez as their pre-candidate for the 2018 presidential election in México. The EZLN's decision to participate in the corrupt Mexican liberal democratic process was not incoherent or incongruous, but an acknowledgment of the transformative scope of the movement beyond its territorial basis. Without denying the relevance of Zapatism for almost every social movement in the world and their role as an inspiration for historically marginalised collectivities, with their pre-candidacy to the presidential elections the organisation showed the importance they concede to broadening the scope of the movement and aiming to transform hegemony.

Another example of great relevance is that of Francia Márquez Mina, the current candidate for the presidency of Colombia in the 2022 election. Winner of the 2018 Goldman

Environmental Prize – the so-called "environmental Nobel Prize" – Francia Márquez Mina spent her life struggling against illegal and large-scale mining in her territory in southern part of Colombia. Part of the Community Council of La Toma and an advocate of the rights of afro-descendant collectivities, like María de Jesús Patricio Martínez, Francia Márquez Mina represents an important step in the constitution of a transmodern and intercultural state. Understanding the transformative scope of social movements, Francia Márquez Mina is seeking to occupy a space of power and "change that history, to transgress that history where only the privileged white man can rule us" (Márquez Mina, 2021).

The constitution of a world in which many worlds fit, as the Zapatist premise advocates, implies disputing hegemonic power on both its macro and micro levels. Not only does it imply defending a particular social ontology and a particular enactment of reality, it also implies struggling to occupy spaces historically monopolised by capitalism, colonialism and racism as concrete performances of the social ontology of western modernity. It implies appropriating multiple institutions of the state and filling them with transmodern, intercultural and popular content.

Aiming for occupying different spaces of power within the state represents the most ambitious and simultaneously realistic strategy to overcome the multiple crisis currently faced by the hegemonic civilisational model of western modernity. In addition to the problems of inequality, poverty, food access and production and the foreseeable destruction of life on the planet, the urgency of such a transition took on a new dimension with the COVID-19 crisis. One of the main variables that generated the current pandemic corresponds to the effects that some human activities have on the environment. Although zoonotic jumps (those diseases that pass from animals to humans) are not strange, the reduction of biodiversity and the destruction of ecosystems generate perfect breeding grounds for the emergence of new viruses that can have lethal effects on humanity.

Among many others, in the twentieth century, humanity has faced mad cow disease and HIV-AIDS. In the twenty first century, the world has already faced different zoonoses: SARS, acute respiratory syndrome, from 2002 to 2003; avian flu (H5N1) in 2005, the variants of which led to H7N9 in 2016-2017; swine flu (H1N1) in 2009; and, more recently, COVID-19 (Cragnolini, 2020). The destruction of ecosystems, deforestation, the trafficking of wild animals, the uncontrolled expansion of cities, industrialised animal husbandry and the increase in agricultural areas destined for monocultures represent the real factors that need to be faced in order to prevent future outbreaks of viruses like COVID-19. As natural habitats are reduced or eliminated, interactions between different animals that did not previously share territory increase, as do interactions between animals and humans. The destruction of diverse ecosystems, which leads to increased interactions between certain animals and between animals and humans, allows viruses to move beyond their natural hosts (bats,

pangolins, chimpanzees and mice, among many others) and search for new bodies in which to reproduce – sometimes those new hosts are humans.

Along with other reasons associated with the protection of the environment, such as climate change, this new global emergency reaffirms the importance of intercultural and transmodern dialogues between multiple epistemological traditions. To overcome capitalism as the economic configuration of western modernity and as the main cause of the current health public crisis, it is necessary to occupy mainstream spheres of power and design transmodern and intercultural public policies that, while fostering, promoting and strengthening localised social ontologies and sociocultures, innovate in new, diverse and plural economic lattices.

The constitution of a transmodern and intercultural state requires occupying the institutions that currently reproduce the micro and macro levels of power. Not only does this mean devising a diversified and plural economy or mechanisms of participation, but it also demands that schools and universities incorporate non-western epistemological traditions in their curricula. This type of education would create horizontal dialogues or polylogues in fields such as medicine, philosophy, law, environmental studies and social sciences. In the Colombian case, these types of curricula would include the western tradition, the afro-descendent tradition from the Pacific, the afro-descendent tradition from the Caribbean, peasants' epistemological traditions and Kuna, Kogi, Embera, Wayuu and other indigenous epistemological traditions. These transmodern and intercultural scenarios might help society advance towards a more comprehensive and organic kind of science – a science more focused on localised needs and conceptions of well-being rather than on the needs of capital. Along with many more efforts on both the macro and the micro levels of power, the transmodern transfiguration of institutional education is decisive, for it is one of the most important reproductive elements of "common sense."

To close, it remains to say that, although the constitution of a world with multiple worlds seems to be a distant horizon, as presented along this research, there are multiple efforts and initiatives that are already moving towards it. The civilisational transition is being enacted not only in the experiences of the coastal-dwellers of the Gulf of Tribugá, but in a myriad of experiences in both the Global North and the Global South. The struggle is long, but every day more and more spaces question the colonial and racist nature of capitalism and developmentalism, more and more individuals and collectivities understand the limits and effects of capitalism and more and more spheres of power and decision-making lean towards intercultural and transmodern configurations. One last example: the Universidad del Rosario in Colombia, founded in 1653, is probably one of the most prestigious, traditional and conservative universities in the country – it recently included a Chair of the Wayuu Normative System within its Faculty of Jurisprudence.

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Appendix

Abstract

Although socio-territorial conflicts might materialise through multiple struggles over resources, space and environmental conditions, the main argument of this research is that, rather than being limited to such resources or environmental conditions, socio-territorial disputes have an ontological dimension. With this in mind, what is at stake in the Gulf of Tribugá are the conditions of existence and the interactions between existing entities according to their ontology, as well as the role each entity plays in the constitution of the territory as an emerging and constantly changing category. To understand this ontological dispute, this research contrasts the differences and partial connections between developmentalism – the most recent manifestation of the project of western modernity – and local forms of inhabiting, interacting with and enacting the Gulf of Tribugá. On top of that, the research highlights some strategies through which local collectivities, by appropriating specific abstract universalisms of modernity and concretising them through the lenses of their own experiences, propose and enact a transmodern and intercultural territory. Transmodernity and interculturality as an economic, social and political horizon implies breaking up with most of the notions mainly associated with European epistemology, which are currently hegemonic all over the globe. Struggling towards a transmodern and intercultural horizon entails questioning some of the epistemological and ontological fundaments of what is commonly defined as “modernity”.

Zusammenfassung

Obwohl sozio-territoriale Konflikte sich in vielfältigen Kämpfen um Ressourcen, Raum und Umweltbedingungen manifestieren können, vertritt diese Forschung die These, dass sozio-territoriale Konflikte nicht auf diese Aspekte beschränkt sind, sondern eine ontologische Dimension beinhalten. In diesem Sinne geht es im Golf von Tribugá um die Existenzbedingungen und die Interaktionen zwischen den bestehenden Entitäten entsprechend ihrer Ontologie sowie um die Rolle, die jede Entität bei der Konstituierung des Territoriums als eine entstehende und sich ständig verändernde Kategorie spielt. Um diesen ontologischen Disput zu verstehen, kontrastiert diese Arbeit die Unterschiede und Überschneidungen zwischen Developmentalismus - der jüngsten Manifestation des Projekts der westlichen Moderne -, nachhaltigem Developmentalismus und lokalen Lebensweisen, Interaktionen und Praktiken am Golf von Tribugá. Darüber hinaus zeigt die Untersuchung einige Strategien auf, mit denen lokale Kollektive sich bestimmte abstrakte Universalismen der Moderne aneignen, sie durch die Brille ihrer eigenen Erfahrungen transformieren und so ein transmodernes und interkulturelles Territorium gestalten und verwirklichen. Transmodernität und Interkulturalität als wirtschaftlicher, sozialer und politischer Horizont impliziert die Überwindung einer Vielzahl von Konzepten, die mit der europäischen Erkenntnistheorie in Verbindung gebracht werden und die derzeit weltweit eine hegemoniale Position einnehmen. Somit beinhaltet der Kampf für einen transmodernen und interkulturellen Horizont die Infragestellung einiger der erkenntnistheoretischen und ontologischen Grundlagen dessen, was gemeinhin als "Modernität" definiert wird.

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Statement of authorship

Ich erkläre ausdrücklich, dass es sich bei der von mir eingereichten Arbeit um eine vonmir selbstständig und ohne fremde Hilfe verfasste Arbeit handelt.
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19.08.2021

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