



# Sowing peace: Violence and agrobiodiversity in the Colombian Amazon

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## ABSTRACT

This article investigates how violence is intertwined with agrobiodiversity and the implications for “territorial peace” in Colombia. Our investigation is situated within the context of campesinos’ defense of their territories and struggles over seeds. “Territorial peace” involves the imposition of agro-industrial development onto territories. Its implementation is intertwined with increasing violence including the killings of campesinos and defenders of their territories. This violent peace also involves the control of seeds and campesinos’ agriculture, contributing to the loss of life-giving agrobiodiversity of these territories. This ultimately threatens the possibilities of a peace. Grounding the notion of peace within the territory, the article turns to how campesinos’ cultivation of agrobiodiversity contributes to the conditions in which peace germinates. Drawing on fieldwork conducted in Putumayo, Colombia, it describes how campesinos cultivate peace in soils sedimented with violence through the reparation of campesinos’ relations with Amazonian agrobiodiversity. This is a way of grounding campesinos within the life of the *selva Amazónica*. For these campesinos, who call themselves “*selvasinos*,” Amazonian farming is a political proposal that confronts ongoing violence, including the imposition of agro-industrial development imposed onto the territory. It is a defense of their territory which translates into the defense of life and the construction of “territorial peace” grounded in the life of the selva.

## 1. Introduction

On Saturdays, *campesinos* from La Pedregosa in Puerto Caicedo, Putumayo gather at *La Amistad* for a *minga* – a community gathering and collective form of collaborative, recuperative agricultural work and sharing of Amazonian seeds and foods. On the way to a *minga* one Saturday, the *camioneta* (truck) stopped in the plaza in front of the church, Nuestra Señora del Carmen. There in the plaza was a memorial commemorating the victims of conflict in Puerto Caicedo. Below each of their names was the word ‘*asesinado*’ (assassinated) followed by a date ranging from the early 1990s through 2005. Colombia’s largest guerrilla organization, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo, FARC-EP) have been present in Putumayo since the 1980s. Paramilitaries made incursions into Puerto Caicedo in the year 2000 and installed a camp in La Pedregosa. Caught in the middle of violent confrontations between the FARC-EP, paramilitaries, and the Colombian armed forces who fought for control over the territory (and coca production for narco-trafficking), life in Puerto Caicedo descended into terror. Paramilitaries sowed violence into daily life, with forced disappearances and

the displacement of *campesinos* considered *auxiliadores de la guerrilla* (supporters of the guerrillas). The FARC-EP and paramilitaries charged *vacunas* or extortions for the cultivation of coca and controlled the comings and goings of *campesinos* through roadblocks and interrogations. “It was violent,” recalled Doña María, one of the founders of *La Amistad*. “We woke up with gunfire. The paramilitaries would take people away, and they never returned. We could not leave the house in our boots because the *paracos* (paramilitaries) would mistake us for the guerrillas and kill us.” Displaced by the conflict, Doña María and others from La Pedregosa fled to a plot of land in the Andean highlands where they would remain for years. The war brought death and terror to La Pedregosa, though for Doña María, who felt disconnected from the territory, being displaced was “another form of death.” Others remained rooted on their farms while Plan Colombia took force with Putumayo — the greatest producer of coca for narco-trafficking at that time — its primary target. The U.S.-financed counterinsurgency initiative Plan Colombia intensified fumigations of the territory with glyphosate in order to eradicate coca — along with the FARC-EP and their purported *auxiliadores*. Fumigations did not distinguish coca plantations from crops: “these times were very hard, we had no food,” decried Doña Alba,

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another founder of *La Amistad*. “The problem is that they sprayed not only the coca. When the planes passed over here, they sprayed the food, the pastures. They sprayed the yucca, the banana, the *chiro*, there was a shortage of food. The fumigations poisoned the soils, and left lots of diseases, *killing the land, killing the campesino*.” Nodding in the direction of some banana plants whose leaves were desiccated and yellowed, Doña Alba continued: “the earth here is so scorched with chemicals that it still does not produce. Ten years later, we are planting again, but it is difficult to grow food. The soils do not support life.” With the paramilitaries gone, in 2006, Doña María and others returned to Puerto Caicedo. Together they formed an organization to obtain the land of what is now *La Amistad*. “The story is that we started as a group of victims of violence who came together in friendship, and from there, we formed *La Amistad*,” told Doña María. “*La Amistad* means friendship. We don’t want violence. Most of the people here have been victims of violence. We have chosen to have a productive project to plant seeds and cultivate life. That means peace for us. From violence, we are cultivating peace.” *La Amistad* is located in the former camp of the paramilitaries in La Pedregosa where disappearances occurred: “The Prosecutor came and took all those dead from here then we got together and started reseeding. We were able to obtain this piece of land to have our own seeds, to sow community, to sow peace.” “Sowing seeds of peace,” campesinos in *La Amistad* work collectively “together in *minga*” to transform violence through Amazonian farming.

*Minga* is an Indigenous word for ‘collective work,’ though *minga* has also come to refer to a ‘collective political response’ and protest to the loss of territories, lives, and peace in Colombia (Poole, 2009; Mora García & Correa Alfonso, 2020). In 2016, the government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia- Ejército del Pueblo, FARC-EP*) signed the “General Agreement for the Termination of the Conflict and the Construction of a Stable and Lasting Peace” to end of the country’s decades-long war. Central to the implementation of peace in Colombia is the notion of “paz territorial” or “territorial peace” which recognizes the diversity of its territories and the role of communities in “the construction of a stable and lasting peace.” Peace in Colombia’s territories involves the distribution of land and titles for those displaced during the war. This is complemented with interventions for campesino farming in order to transition from illicit coca crops and the construction of roads for transporting their crops (de Colombia, 2016). Nonetheless, these interventions, implemented through the notion of territorial peace, constitute efforts to orient the *campo* towards capitalist investments and the production of commodities, including the control of land and seeds. Oriented towards capitalist development (Goetschel & Haggmann, 2009), Colombia’s territorial peace is compounding land conflicts in which the country’s decades-long war originated and increasing displacement of campesinos (Koopman, 2020). The implementation of territorial peace in Colombia is wrought with conflict over the incorporation of campesinos and the *campo* into capitalist-oriented development and the ongoing threats and violence directed towards leaders and defenders of territories, and the destruction of those territories. Denouncing the failed implementation of peace in their territories and to defend those territories from increasing violence, communities throughout Colombia have joined together in the *Minga Indígena Nacional Por la Defensa de la Vida, el Territorio, la Paz y el Cumplimiento de los Acuerdos [de paz]*” (National Indigenous *Minga* for the defense of life, territory, and compliance with the peace agreement) within the context of the country’s ongoing *paro nacional (national protest)* (Indepaz, 2019). Those communities often declare: “sin territorio” or “sin tierra” “no hay vida” (“without territory” or “without land” “there is no life”). Their “defense of territory [and] life is one and the same” (Escobar, 2015, p. 20). Grounded in their territories and the relations that constitute it, their interpretation of peace is at once a call for the defense of life and a political project that counters the capitalist-oriented territorial peace.

Intertwined with increasing violence — dispossession, displacement, and the killings of campesinos and defenders of their territories — the

implementation of territorial peace is what some scholars call “violent peace” (Indepaz, 2020; Global Witness, 2020; Salazar, Wolff & Camelo, 2019; Nilsson & Marín, 2019; Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood, 2019; Elhawary, 2008). Though “violent peace” is not only the killings of campesinos and defenders of these territories or their dispossession and displacement (Salazar, Wolff & Camelo, 2019; Nilsson & Marín, 2019). This article proposes a more capacious interpretation of violence that the literature overlooks, one that takes into consideration the ways in which territories themselves are transformed through violence. This is a violence that involves the disruption of those life-generating relations and that threatens the possibilities of “stable and lasting peace” (FARC-EP y Gobierno de Colombia, 2016). As other scholars (Lyons, 2016, 2018; Lederach, 2017) show, this includes the imposition of capitalist-oriented development onto territories and the destruction of soils, seeds, crops, and other agrobiodiversity that constitute the life of those territories. Lyons (2019) writes that war is experienced by humans and nonhumans. It involves the rupturing of the “continuums of life and death and human and non-human[s]” (Lyons, 2019, p. 222; Spanish translation is author’s own). Lyon’s (2019) and Lederach’s (2017) broad conception of violence gesture towards a pathway for reconciliation and the construction of territorial peace processes. Interpretations of “violent peace” overlook this and the ways in which violence intertwines with territories’ life-giving agrobiodiversity (Salazar, Wolff & Camelo, 2019; Nilsson & Marín, 2019; Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood, 2019). Conversely, and what needs urgent attention, is the transformative potential of the agrobiodiversity of those territories to repair territorial relations ruptured through war towards the construction of peace grounded in the territory itself. For example, as Lyon’s (2019) demonstrates, territorial relations cultivated through Amazonian farming in Putumayo constitute a response to violence directed at human and nonhuman lives and their relations that comprise the territory. Lyons (2019) calls for peace involving the “deep reconciliation” of those relations (p. 222; Spanish translation is author’s own).

In investigating the relationship of violence and agrobiodiversity and the implications for territorial peace in Colombia, this article offers a critical contribution to this gap in the literature.<sup>1</sup> In challenging the grounds on which violence is defined and recognized, this article contributes to recent work that investigates how violence is intertwined with the destruction of territories (Lederach, 2017; Ruiz Serna, 2017; Lyons, 2016, 2018; Meszaros Martin, 2018; Van Dexter, 2021). It further considers how agrobiodiversity constitutes a response to this violence and the conditions in which peace in the territory germinates. Our investigation of the relationship of violence and agrobiodiversity is grounded within the conceptual framework of territorial peace and within the territory itself (Cairo et al., 2018). This article foregrounds diverse territorialities obscured and incorporated into territorial peace seen like the state (Scott, 1998; Cairo et al., 2018). Recent research points to the potential of diverse interpretations of peace outside of the constructs of territorial peace for responding to ongoing and past violence (Diaz et al., 2021). This research looks to the diversity of peace (s) in Colombia which indicate how peace is a diverse and ongoing process which originates within the territory and constructed in the ‘everyday’ (Koopman, 2020; Diaz et al., 2021; Dietrich & Sützl, 1997; Goetschel & Haggmann, 2009; Mac Ginty, 2010; Richmond, 2009).

<sup>1</sup> Here we adopt Zimmerer et al.’s (2019) definition of agrobiodiversity as comprising food, crop, and livestock biodiversity, including semi-domesticated and wild foods; associated biodiversity of biota (e.g., wild taxonomic relatives) and interactions with organisms including pollinators, dispersal agents, soil organisms, microbes, and trees across diverse scales; human-environment interactions, including foodways, informal seed systems, campesino markets, and social and cultural relations; and institutional diversity related to agriculture, development, food and community organizations. This comprehensive definition is necessary in order to identify the sociocultural, economic, and political interactions that are integral to agrobiodiversity.

Grounding the notion of peace within the territory, this article contributes to this growing literature, describing how peace is embodied within and constructed through campesinos' 'everyday' territorial relations with seeds, soils, pollinators, and other life-giving agrobiodiversity characteristic of the territory.

In the sections that follow, we introduce the notion of violent peace. Violence — dispossession, killings of campesinos and land defenders — is integral to the incorporation of campesinos and their territories into the agrarian-capitalist development of the Colombian *campo* (countryside). Our interpretation of violence exposes how violence is also directed towards agrobiodiversity itself. This includes the destruction of agrobiodiversity implicated in Colombia's capitalist-oriented development of the *campo*. Territorial peace, seen like the state (Scott, 1998), is intertwined with the violent destruction of territories and the relations of campesinos and agrobiodiversity that constitute them through agro-industrial development imposed onto territories, including the control of seeds. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork from Putumayo, Colombia carried out from 2016 to 2018, this article turns towards the generative conditions of Amazonian agrobiodiversity for peace to germinate within the territory. As the work of Lyons (2016, 2019) also evidences, in Putumayo, campesinos cultivate peace in soils sedimented with violence through the reparation of those soils and territorial relations with seeds, pollinators, seed dispersers, and Amazonian food crops — agrobiodiversity on which the lives of campesinos and that of the territory depend. This agrobiodiversity constitutes the conditions for peace to germinate. Through Amazonian farming these campesinos transform the *campo* towards peace rooted in the agrobiodiversity of the territory. Their territorial peace is grounded in the reparation of territorial relations disrupted through violence that has transformed the territory itself. These campesinos work to recover Amazon agrobiodiversity lost to cattle, coca and the fumigations that devastated Amazonian soils and food crops, and the imposition of agro-industrial development onto the territory. This has also been documented by Lyons (2016, 2018), who shows how Amazonian farming in Putumayo involves the recuperation of degraded soils, Amazonian foods and seeds, and campesinos' relations with Amazonian agrobiodiversity and the territory itself.<sup>2</sup> These campesinos call themselves "*selvasinos*," referring to their relationality with the *selva* Amazónica and to distinguish themselves from *colonos* (colonizers of the Amazon), *cocaleros* (coca growers), and *ganaderos* (cattle ranchers) who turned to cattle ranching following fumigations, referring to their relationality with the *selva* Amazónica. For *selvasinos*, Amazonian farming is a response to violence and the cultivation of a different interpretation of peace grounded in the life-giving agrobiodiversity of the territory. With the implementation of territorial peace driving the destruction of the *selva*, this article concludes with a call for consideration of those territorial relations in the construction of peace.

## 2. Territorial peace(s)

In Colombia, campesinos' defense of their territories is a response to conflicts deeply rooted in the country's decades-long war, including

<sup>2</sup> For further reading on the Putumayo context, see the work of Lyons (2016, 2018) on Amazonian farming and the territorial and life practices it engenders. Lyons' (2016, 2018, 2019) work demonstrates how territorial relations cultivated through Amazonian farming in Putumayo constitute a response to war in Colombia that and the violent destruction of human and nonhuman lives and their territorial relations. For Lyons (2019), war is the destruction of the "continuums of life and death and human and non-human[s]" (p. 222; Spanish translation is author's own). As such, peace, involves the "deep reconciliation" of those relations (Lyons, 2019, p. 222; Spanish translation is author's own). Through work on the "environmental memory" of war, Lyons' (2019) offers a pathway for reconciliation and the construction of territorial peace processes grounded in "human and non-human life continuums" (p. 221; Spanish translation is author's own).

dispossession of their land and territories. Territorial conflicts in Colombia are at once rooted in local contexts of war while invoking global processes and political projects characteristic of trajectories of capitalist development (Escobar, 1998; Gezon & Paulson, 2005; Cash et al., 2006; Armitage, 2007; Ingalls & Stedman, 2016). In recent decades, territorial conflicts have become increasingly common within the context of the rapid growth of global commodities production linked with increasingly interconnected investment networks, particularly in Latin America (McMichael, 2005, 2006; Gudynas, 2014; North & Grinspun, 2016). In the context of what Dávalos (2011) calls 'competing territorialities', this has generated conflicts between campesinos, the state, and agro-industry (Rosset & Martínez Torres, 2016). The processes of constructing peace in Colombia dramatically foregrounds these conflicts that territorial peace obscures (Grajales, 2021).

The peace agreement introduced the notion of territorial peace which recognizes the diversity of its territories and the importance of communities in the construction of peace (FARC-EP y Gobierno de Colombia, 2016, p. 14; Jaramillo, 2014). Territorial diversity is defined and recognized in relation to Comprehensive Rural Reform (Reforma Rural Integral, RRI) which conceives of the territory in terms of its diversity and recognizes the role of communities inhabiting the *campo* "in defining the improvement of their living conditions and in defining the country's development" (FARC-EP y Gobierno de Colombia, 2016, p. 10). The RRI involves the "distribution" and "deconcentration" of land, and development including road construction. It complements Colombia's coca eradication program which includes payments to coca growers and the implementation of productive projects for their transition to 'licit' crops (Programa Nacional Integral de Sustitución de Cultivos de Uso Ilícito, PNIS). Territorial peace is implemented through Territorially Focused Development Programmes (Programas de Desarrollo con Enfoque Territorial, PDETs) in territories characterized in terms of the presence of the FARC-EP, conflict, and the cultivation of coca crops.

Territorial peace is grounded in the claim that 'conflict in Colombia constitutes the central and greatest obstacle to development' (Thomson, 2011). The conditions of peace therefore require the 'transformation of the *campo*' (countryside) through the implementation of Colombia's "development paradigm" in its territories (FARC-EP y Gobierno de Colombia, 2016, p. 3). Colombia's territorial development paradigm is outlined in Colombia's National Development Plan (Plan Nacional de Desarrollo, PND). Central to the PND is its "*campo con progreso*" ("countryside with progress") which is "to promote productive transformation" and "development of the *campo*," including through "investment" and "innovation." In order to guarantee investments in the *campo*, the PND promotes the conditions for land. "Progress" in the *campo* consolidates recent legislative initiatives like Colombia's Land Law (2018) that delivers land to large-landowners and privilege the production of commodities, indicating how Colombia's 'territorial development paradigm' consists of the transformation of the *campo* through its incorporation into capitalist-oriented production. The PND's commitment to "innovation" involves into the control and consolidation of production in the *campo* and its orientation towards commodities through the "inclusion" of campesinos in agro-industrial chains. This includes "improving the conditions of agricultural products to promote the Free Trade Agreement." Within the PND, "innovation" translates into the technical and institutional oversight of the Colombian Agricultural Institute (Instituto Colombiano Agropecuario, ICA), regarding the control and regulation of seeds. This is regulated with the country's Law of Agricultural Innovation which ratifies Resolution 3168 of 2015 that limits the commercialization of agricultural production to seeds certified and controlled with the ICA. Those involved in the implementation of the PNIS indicate that projects involving the production of 'licit' crops need to comply with the ICA's certification of seeds. The issue with this is that '*criollo*' seeds are not certified and *campesinos* want to cultivate their own seeds, those native to the territory and those that correspond to its soil conditions. Resolution 3168 indirectly reinforces

the corporate control of seeds given that only industrial seeds comply with the requirements for seed certification, including their novelty, distinctness, and homogeneity. Campesinos' native and creole seeds are characteristically diverse and correspond to campesinos' on-farm selection and crossing with different seeds and to soil and other conditions of the territory. This resolution privileges corporate control of seeds as seed companies hold patents or rights over the seeds, they develop in order to recover capital investment and expand their profits. The control over certified seeds effectively protects these corporate interests through the limitation of campesinos' rights to replant and reproduce certified seeds. This resolution is related to a decree titled Resolution 970 (2010) which prohibited the commercialization and sharing of all non-certified seeds. The introduction of Resolution 970 coincided with the signing of the Free Trade Agreement with the U.S., in which Colombia implemented legal reforms orienting the campo towards global commodities. Claiming the protection of seeds and concerns over seed quality, the Colombian Agricultural Institute (ICA) issued Resolution 970 of 2010 that regulated certified seeds and limited campesinos' rights to save and replant certain legally protected seeds to one time and only for consumption. The resolution requires that the production and saving of seeds is registered with the ICA prior to planting. It prohibits campesinos to store seeds that do not come from plots registered with the ICA. From 2010 and 2013, this Resolution permitted ICA to confiscate and destroy 4,000 tons of non-certified seeds that were considered illegal (Gutiérrez Escobar & Fitting, 2016; Hernández Vidal and Gutiérrez Escobar, 2019). Seed regulations and confiscations caused indignation among Colombian farmers who demanded the repeal of Resolution 970 following the *Paro Nacional Agrario* (National Agrarian Strike) in 2013 (Duranti, 2013). In response, ICA issued Resolution 3168 of 2015 which clarifies that certification and related restrictions on saving and commercializing certified seeds pertains to only certified seeds, exempting native and creole seeds. Though this resolution denies campesinos' rights to save and replant their own seeds (Silva Garzón & Gutiérrez Escobar, 2020). The Law of Agricultural Innovation regulates their certification.

Despite the centrality of the *campesinado* in Colombia's peace process, territorial peace only recognizes campesinos through their incorporation into agro-industrial commodity chains. Territorial peace is the country's commitment to the "transformation of the *campo*," though without campesinos. This context forces debates over the notion of the campesino with the proliferation of agro-industrial development involving the orientation of the campo towards the production of commodities (Patel, 2013). Extending definitions of campesinos as small-scale agricultural producers (see, for instance, Chayanov, [1926] 1991) scholars also emphasize the need for contextualizing the notion of the campesino within their diverse territories and relations. Regarding the Colombian context, this also includes the relationship of campesino farming and agrobiodiversity (Corrales, 2002); campesinos' participation in the production of global commodities, including the cultivation of coca for narco-trafficking (Palacios, 1979; Ramírez, 2001), and the 1996 *cocalero* movement in Putumayo which emerged in response to their demands for political recognition and rights (Ramírez, 2001); *campesino-ganaderos*, or coca growers who transitioned to cattle ranching following fumigations of their crops and in the context of the peace processes involving coca eradication (Van Dexter and Visseren-Hamakers, 2019); campesinos' conflicts over land, territories and rights (Vega Cantor, 2002; Zamosc, 1986; Fajardo, 2002); the relationship of violent conflict and Colombia's war with the country's agrarian transformations (Fajardo, 2006; Sánchez and Meertens, 1978; Fajardo, 2014; Thomson, 2011); and, recently, the notion of the campesino within the context of the implementation of territorial peace (Fajardo and Salgado, 2017). The transition of Colombia's *campo* is what Salgado Ruiz (2012) calls a "war" waged on campesinos in Colombia.

Territorial peace involves "reversing the effects of the conflict" and changing the conditions that "facilitated the persistence of violence in the territory" (FARC-EP y Gobierno de Colombia, 2016, p. 10), though it conceals the violence inherent in the capitalist development of

Colombia's *campo* (Mejer & Sachseder, 2020). Colombia's "territorial development paradigm" constitutes a "transition to capitalism" that is violent in its very nature (Cramer, 2006, 2011). Those 'violent transitions' involve the consolidation of land through the dispossession of communities, including their incorporation in capitalist-oriented production. This generates conflict, which is compounded in the context of agro-industrial interests (Cramer, 2006). This is reflected in literature on the agrarian roots of war (Cramer & Richards, 2011; Koren & Bagozzi, 2017; Brück & d'Errico, 2019; Martin-Shields & Stojetz, 2019), including the 'War on Drugs' which is a war on campesino agricultural production that drives conflict in Colombia (Thomson, 2011), and the violent conflict inherent to agrarian transformations (Bazzi & Blattmann, 2014; Arias et al., 2019; Ballvé, 2013). Colombia's counterinsurgency war involved the consolidation of FARC-EP-territories which also coincided with agro-industrial interests (Thomson, 2011). This involved a process of 'territorial conditioning' through violence in order to 'prepare' lands for capital-development (Bejarano, Salazar & Monroy, 2003). Paramilitary organizations, backed by U.S. counter-insurgent interventions in Colombia through the pretense of the 'War on Drugs', were instrumental in the violent displacement of millions of campesinos from the countryside (Hristov, 2014; Tate, 2007). The 'War on Drugs' intertwined with counterinsurgent warfare involving the fumigations of coca crops with glyphosate in order to rid the Amazon of the FARC-EP and campesinos who were considered *auxiliadores de la guerrilla* [supporters of the guerrillas] and open it for capitalist investments. The fumigations targeted campesinos' food crops causing the degradation of soils and displacement (Messina & Delamater, 2006; Mugge, 2004). This in turn permitted the consolidation of land into cattle pasture often through illicit capital investments connected to narco-trafficking, or what Ballvé, 2013) describes as 'narco-land grabbing' (see also Grajales, 2011, 2013; Richani, 2012). Elsewhere this is referred to as 'narcogranaderia' (narco-cattle ranching), which describes how land for cattle ranching is a conduit for the laundering of narco-profits (Richani, 2010; Devine, Wrathall, Currit, Tellman, & Langarica, 2018; McSweeney et al., 2018; McSweeney et al., 2017; Tellman et al., 2020). The cattle ranching industry in Colombia profited from the displacement of campesinos from their land (Gutiérrez-Sanín & Vargas (2017). Indeed, Colombia's national federation of cattle ranchers (Federación Colombiana de Ganaderos, FEDEGAN) is linked to land consolidation, dispossession and the formation and financing of paramilitary groups. The ties of paramilitaries and agro-industry— whose interests are reflected in and protected through capitalist-oriented land laws in Colombia — are also well-established (Grajales, 2021; Gutiérrez-Sanín & Vargas, 2017; Gutiérrez-Sanín, 2019). Hristov (2014) describes how the paramilitaries privilege the interests of agro-industry in Colombia in that "they are in charge of cleansing the terrain of people who represent a challenge to their interests...who disappear or are being killed" (p. 77). The role of paramilitary organizations was to protect the interests of investors in projects of agricultural development (Hristov, 2014). Peace in Colombia, write Cramer and Wood (2017), is likely to drive investment in agro-industry. Indeed, with the demobilization of the FARC-EP from their occupied territories, some scholars call peace the negotiated removal of the country's greatest political obstacle to Colombia's capitalist-oriented transformation of the campo (Hylton & Tauss, 2016). This agro-industrial project of territorial peace in Colombia is a continuation of the violence inherent to the 'transformation of the *campo*'. The implementation of territorial peace is intertwined with increasing violence — dispossession, displacement, and the killings of campesinos and defenders of their territories — in what some scholars call "violent peace" (Indepaz, 2020; Global Witness, 2020; Salazar, Wolff & Camelo, 2019; Nilsson & Marín, 2019; Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood, 2019). This article contends that "violent peace" is not only the killings of campesinos and defenders of these territories or their dispossession and displacement (Salazar, Wolff & Camelo, 2019; Nilsson & Marín, 2019), it is also the ways in which territories themselves are transformed through the imposition of agro-industrial development



implemented through “territorial peace.”

Working with a more capacious interpretation of violent peace, this article shows how territories themselves are transformed through the imposition of a violent “instrumental logic” of capitalist development (Nixon, 2011, p. 19; Thomson, 2011). In “Seeing like a State” Scott (1998) draws attention to how this “logic” of capitalist-oriented agro-industrial development constitutes a form of violent territorial control. The imposition of agro-industrial development onto territories is directly tied to declines in agrobiodiversity and the degradation of soils on which campesinos’ lives depend (Vidal & Escobar, 2019). It involves the disruption of those life-generating relations dispersed over generations, threatening “inhabitable possibility” of the territory (Nixon, 2011, p. 19; Grajales, 2021). Violence is instrumental to the incorporation of campesinos and their territories into the capitalist development of Colombia’s *campo* (countryside) (Thomson, 2011; Grajales, 2021). This is “a violence of delayed destruction...that is typically not viewed as violence at all” (Nixon, 2011, 2). Degraded soils and certified seeds threaten the agrobiodiversity – soils, seeds, pollinators, seed dispersers — that the lives of campesinos and territories themselves depend on. It also threatens the possibilities of a “stable and lasting peace” (FARC-EP y Gobierno de Colombia, 2016). Interpretations of “violent peace” disregard this (Salazar, Wolff & Camelo, 2019; Nilsson & Marín, 2019; Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood, 2019). In addition, the ways in which violence intertwines with territories’ life-giving agrobiodiversity is often overlooked in the literature on violent conflict and agrarian transitions (though see McGuire and Louise, 2013). With this, this article provides critical insight and offers an important contribution to this gap in the literature. It shows how violence intertwines with territories’ life-giving agrobiodiversity and the transformative potential of the agrobiodiversity of those territories for the construction of peace. Within the context of territorial peace in Colombia, agrobiodiversity contributes to the reparation of territorial relations ruptured through war towards the construction of peace grounded in the territory itself.

Territorial peace grounded in capitalist development is inherently violent. Therefore, the only possibility for peace is that which is constructed outside of the capitalist constitution of “territorial peace.” Grounding the notion of peace within the territory, this article turns to the diverse territorialities obscured and incorporated into the state’s conception of territory and territorial peace (Cairo et al., 2018). The notion of territorial peace is not limited to the peace agreement (Ríos and Gago, 2018; Cairo and Ríos, 2019; Cairo et al., 2018; Diaz et al., 2021). Peace is a diverse and ongoing process that originates and is grounded within the territory (Koopman, 2020; Dietrich & Sützl, 1997; Goetschel & Haggmann, 2009). The diversity of peace(s) in Colombia is increasingly of interest in the context of communities’ disillusionment and the government’s lack of commitment to a peace process rooted in their everyday lives and territories (Diaz et al., 2021; Koopman, 2011a, 2011b, 2014; Courtheyn, 2016, 2017, 2018; Rodríguez Iglesias, 2018). Recent research points to the potential of those diverse interpretations of peace outside of the constructs of territorial peace and calls further research on how peace emerges in the ‘everyday’ (Diaz et al., 2021; Courtheyn, 2017; Lederach, 2017; Mac Ginty, 2010; Richmond, 2009).

This article describes how peace is embodied within and constructed in the ‘everyday’ through campesinos’ Amazonian farming in Putumayo. Amazonian farming is a proposal for peace grounded in the cultivation of Amazonian agrobiodiversity to transform the living conditions of the territory. Those conditions are linked to processes of territorialization that also intertwine with distinct notions of the *campesino* — *colonos* (colonizers), *cocaleros* (coca growers), *ganaderos* (cattle ranchers, those connected to land grabbing and narco-trafficking, and others for whom cattle is the only ‘licit’ option to coca). Colombia’s context reveals how the notion of the *campesino* is diverse and constructed in relation to the territories in which territorial peace is implemented. Likewise, diverse interpretations of territorial peace occur within ‘overlapping territorialities’ (Agnew & Oslender, 2013) in which different processes of territorialization occur within the territory

(Courtheyn, 2017). These diverse and overlapping territorialities carry important implications for agrobiodiversity (Agnew & Oslender, 2013). Over the last century, diverse forms of indigenous Amazonian agriculture were replaced with cattle ranching, coca, and the imposition of agro-industrial development that does not consider the living conditions of the territory’s agrobiodiversity. This has caused the loss or risk of disappearance of Amazonian seeds and food crops. As Lyons (2016, 2018) also shows, Amazonian farming involves the reparation of campesinos’ relations with Amazonian agrobiodiversity. This is a way of grounding campesinos within the life of the selva Amazónica (Lyons, 2016). These campesinos call themselves “*selvasinos*,” a term that describes campesinos’ relationality with the *selva*. *Selva*, a term that the first author learned during fieldwork in Putumayo, refers to the territorial relations of soils, seeds, plants, pollinators, and other agrobiodiversity. This living territory invokes a different notion of “territorial peace” which we explore in this article. This relational notion of territorial peace grounds campesinos’ conflicts over that which constitutes the territory and peace itself. Agrobiodiversity is integral to those territorial relations and their reparation in the construction of peace for those communities. Looking at the potential of agrobiodiversity for constructing territorial peace in Putumayo, this article calls for the consideration of how peace is constructed through campesinos’ relations with Amazonian agrobiodiversity in a relational conception of territorial peace grounded a reparative relationality of their living territories.

### 3. Methods

This article draws on 18 months of ethnographic research carried out from 2016 and 2018 in Putumayo, Colombia. During this time, the first author lived in Putumayo and conducted fieldwork involving participant observation on farms (in the municipalities of Puerto Leguizamo, Puerto Caicedo, Puerto Asís, Puerto Guzmán, Valle del Guamez, and Mocoa), community meetings, *mingas*, seed ceremonies, campesino markets, and protests, while conducting conversations and interviews focused on campesinos’ farming practices embedded within their territorial relations with the *selva*. This included over 146 interviews (90 with campesinos and community leaders (including coca producers, cattle ranchers, and Amazonian farmers); 27 with agricultural associations in Putumayo and at the national level, and community organizations (including *La Amistad*, the *Asociación Sabor Campesino*, *La Asociación de Campesinos de Desarrollo del Sur del Putumayo*, *ACADISP*; the *Asociación Nacional de Usuarios Campesinos*, *ANUC*; *La Perla Amazónica*, a campesino territory in Putumayo; the *Red de Semillas Libres de Colombia*; *Federación Nacional Sindical Unitaria Agropecuaria*, *FEN-SUAGRO*; and local agricultural producers associations, coca grower associations and cattle ranching committees); 20 with government officials in Putumayo; 6 with nongovernmental organizations; and 4 with the FARC-EP), over 60 were carried out as “walking interviews” with campesinos on their farms to investigate everyday farming relations (Ingold, 2011; Ingold & Vergunst, 2008; Matthews, 2017). All the quotes in this article correspond to these conversations and interviews carried out by the first author in Putumayo. The increasing violence in Putumayo during this time caused challenges with fieldwork and the first author had to leave the *campo* on a few occasions.

### 4. Territorial peace: The “*otra guerra*” in Putumayo

Putumayo is one of the territories prioritized for the implementation of “territorial peace.” Coca cultivation in Putumayo extends three generations to when *campesinos* were displaced during land conflicts with large landowners in the country’s interior during the twentieth century (Serje, 2005; Dávalos, Sanchez, & Armenteras, 2016). Through government-sponsored colonization of the Amazon, these *campesino colonos* were given land conditioned on its ‘productivity’ which was demonstrated through its conversion to pasture (Dávalos et al., 2016;

Zamosc, 1986). Once government entitlements ceased, campesinos turned to coca. Their dependency on this crop was contingent on the living conditions of the frontier, including the lack of roads to transport their products. Coca also provided financing for the operations of the FARC-EP whose presence in Putumayo from the late 1970s filled the role of the state in carrying out projects like the construction of roads. The FARC-EP regulated coca and other crop production, insisting that communities also cultivated food crops (Interview, FARC-EP, 2017; Ramírez, 2001). In 1995, in response to pressure from the U.S., the Colombian government carried out coca eradication operations in Putumayo through fumigations. This instigated the 1996 *cocalero* marches during which thousands of coca growers demanded the end of glyphosate fumigations and expressed their willingness to gradually transition from coca crops in exchange for effective guarantees for 'licit' crop production and commercialization within the territory. The failure of the government to deliver and without guarantees for other productive projects, *campesino cocaleros* returned to the cultivation of coca. Towards the end of the century, Colombia was the leader producer of coca in the world, 40 percent of which came from Putumayo (UNODC, 2005). In 2000, with the implementation of the U.S. Plan Colombia, fumigations of coca in Putumayo were intensified. The indiscriminate fumigations caused the destruction of food crops, the degradation of tenuous soils, and displacement. With food crops destroyed, campesinos returned to growing coca to compensate for their loss (Messina & Delamater, 2006; Mugge, 2004). Following fumigations that destroyed food crops, campesinos turned to cattle. The consolidation and conversion of coca plantations to pasture for cattle is also connected to the forcible displacement of campesinos during the time of paramilitary occupation of the territory.

The transition from coca to cattle is increasingly common in Putumayo with the implementation of "territorial peace." With the payments received for coca eradication some campesinos invested in cattle. Roads constructed with the implementation of the RRI were considered important developments for improving the cattle industry in the territory. Though territorial peace is generally poorly implemented in Putumayo with late payments and the failure of the government to deliver on productive projects that correspond to the living conditions of campesinos in the territory. With this, and pressure from groups who have taken over narco-trafficking in the territory following the demobilization of the FARC-EP, campesinos continue to cultivate coca. In Putumayo, coca production has increased since the signing of the peace agreement (UNODC, 2018). So to have the killings of campesinos participating in programs for the eradication of coca crops due to the influence of dissident FARC-EP and narco-trafficking groups that came to occupy the territory following the demobilization of the FARC-EP (Gutiérrez et al., 2020). Campesinos from Putumayo who eradicated their crops joined the *paro* to demand that the government deliver on their promises for territorial peace with productive projects and protection for campesinos. Their demands are a response to the increasing violence in their territories related to the implementation of territorial peace, including confrontations of Colombia's armed forces and

campesinos over the forced eradication of coca crops, and the presence of dissident FARC-EP and other groups involved in narco-trafficking in the Amazon.<sup>3</sup> Campesinos and community leaders throughout the territory have received death threats or been killed for their involvement in coca eradication programs in the territory. This is only exacerbated with the government's decision (and pressure from the U.S.) to resume fumigations of coca with glyphosate in 2021. The testimony of this *cocalero* who participated in the protests indicates how the government's territorial peace constitutes a war on the territory: "I was born into the culture of coca. We are going to suffer for the eradication. The government says "peace" but it is a lie. They have another idea of the territory and in this problem comes *otra guerra [another war]*" (Interview, *cocalero*, Putumayo, 2017).

##### 5. "Sin semillas, no hay vida": Sowing territorial peace with the selva

On one Saturday, *La Amistad* was nearly empty. Those who regularly participate in the *minga* were in town registering for payments with the government through its PNIS program. In the plaza in front of Nuestra Señora del Carmen church in Puerto Caicedo, Alba told about the requirement that productive projects needed to comply with ICA's certified seeds: "we do not want more violence," objected Alba, "we want to have our own seeds, to sow peace. We want peace, to sow and cultivate for the community, for nature, without chemicals and with seeds from the Amazon."

These seeds of peace were sown by Padre Alcides Jiménez of Nuestra Señora del Carmen in Puerto Caicedo whose "prophetic commitment in defense of the Amazon" and as a "sower of peace...in the midst of violence" was grounded in campesino farming and Amazonian agrobiodiversity (SIGNIS ALC, 2018). Padre Alcides confronted violence in the territory linked to coca crops and narco-trafficking and that of the destruction of Amazonian soils with an insurgence of campesinos armed with seeds. In mass at Nuestra Señora del Carmen Padre Alcides distributed Amazonian seeds and preached of their importance for peace. In 1995, Padre Alcides, initiated a community project to train women involved in coca production in the preparation of Amazonian foods. One of the women who later participated in the founding of *La Amistad* professed this was the only path towards peace: "I plant this seed, and as a woman, I commit myself to take the task of peace."

In 1998, Padre Alcides was murdered in the middle of mass. His death was emblematic of violence against campesinos and leaders and the processes through which they defend their territory. Though the seeds Padre Alcides sowed grew into a project for territorial peace carried forth through the tenacious efforts of his followers who continue to carry Amazonian seeds from farm to farm and cultivate those seeds so that the Amazon conserves its agrobiodiversity. Padre Jaime Perdomo, Alcides' successor, continues to disseminate the story that peace will only be realized together with the Amazon throughout the territory. "There is no other path for peace," insists Jaime, who contends that the capitalist-agricultural development of the government's territorial

<sup>3</sup> This violence is connected to groups like "Comandos de Frontera," which is comprised of dissident FARC-EP (of 48th Front) who did not demobilize with the peace process or rearmed, former paramilitaries of the Putumayo Bloc, and narco-trafficking groups like "La Constru" who were involved in the negotiation of the intermediary purchase of coca paste with the FARC-EP. Formerly called "La Mafia," Comandos de Frontera is connected to Mexican cartels who control coca production for narco-trafficking in the territory. "Comandos de Frontera" is one of groups that took over coca production for narco-trafficking in the territory following the demobilization of the FARC-EP. This has led to confrontations with the dissident FARC-EP Front "Carolina Ramírez" which is also present. Dissident factions of the FARC-EP, who were disillusioned with the ongoing killings of their comrades and the government's disregard for their reincorporation, left their demobilization campo in La Carmelita in Putumayo (Interview, ex-commander, FARC-EP, 2017).

peace fails to consider “the Amazon and the lives of the campesinos here.” Campesinos from La Amistad and other indigenous and campesino communities throughout the territory carry forth the proposal of Padre Alcides to recover and defend Amazonian seeds on their farms. They organize seed fairs to ensure the circulation of Amazonian seeds and the commitment of communities to live in peace with the Amazon. Amazonian seeds are defended through campesino and indigenous communities’ seed saving and sharing, including the preparation of Amazonian foods. On Sundays in Puerto Caicedo there is a market in front of the Nuestra Señora del Carmen church for the Amazonian seeds and foods that campesinos’ cultivate on their farms. These markets “are about relations. They are for sharing recipes, seeds, Amazonian foods, and ideas,” told a campesino at the market one. In the center of the market, Amazonian seeds and *tomate de árbol* had been placed in a ritual circle in commemoration of Amazonian seeds for peace. In the center of the circle was a photo of Padre Alcides. These seeds, exchanged in markets and carried farm to farm, have grown into a front of defenders of Amazonian agrobiodiversity throughout the territory who cultivate peace through Amazonian farming.

From the “seeds of peace” sown by Padre Alcides has sprouted a front of campesinos cultivating Amazonian seeds in response to capitalist-oriented agricultural development and seed laws that criminalize and control seeds. One campesino proclaimed: “*sin semillas, no hay vida*” (“without seeds there is no life”). The defense of seeds is the defense of life. These “defenders and guardians of the seeds” pronounced a declaration in the defense and celebration of Amazonian seeds and in 2018 designated October 31 a day dedicated to their commemoration. The declaration germinated within the context of a conference on campesino agriculture organized by the Ministry of Agriculture in 2014:

“There was an event on campesino culture by the Ministry of Agriculture. I intervened and turned the discussion back to them. I told them well there are state policies that destroy campesino agriculture and I told them that what they wanted was to find out what was left of it in order to finish it off. So I told them that we came to defend our culture and the logic of the event turned around. On the last day [of the event] there was a working group on the seeds, so we went together with a compañera who works with seeds and then we said from here let’s get a declaration in favor of the seeds. So we started to intervene with our proposal and one of the government officials realized he had lost control of the event and said that he had to call the ICA....and so I told him not to call the ICA that what we were going to do is come out of this with a declaration for a day of the seeds here in Colombia. From there we denounced the issue of manipulation of the seeds and patents, and said that we were not going to continue with those seeds and that you have to respect that idea and also invited people to become allies, people who do not have a farm so that they become allies of the seeds. And so what we campesinos have to do is take initiative in saving the seeds. We are the guardians of the seeds and we are working to defend the seeds and what we are proposing is that the communities or groups that work with agriculture every year on October 31 celebrate the day of the seed in their own way” (Interview, campesino, Putumayo, 2018).

These campesinos took this proposal “for the defense of the seeds from the Amazon” and intervened in dialogues throughout the territory on peace and campesino farming. Though they distinguish themselves from other gatherings of seed guardians, contending that those declarations are wholly “political.” One of the campesinos involved in the drafting of the declaration insisted:

“What is needed is to position the issue that our seeds are recognized, to celebrate them and from there have a discussion with seeds all around where the campesinos take their seeds and tell of the experiences of those seeds, how to prepare them, how to cultivate them, how they are grown and how to reproduce them. That has to be replicated to empower campesinos so that others join in and from

there the declaration is incorporated” (Interview, campesino, Putumayo, 2018).

This campesino proposed declaring Putumayo a “*territorio libre de transgénicos*” (a territory free of transgenic seeds) though leaders were not interested:

“These leaders for the Putumayense agriculture issue and production on our farms are worthless, and there are key leaders, campesinos, they are leaders of a political struggle, though the fact is that they are not conscious of the potential that there is here. To talk of food production or agriculture here you don’t have to talk to the leaders, rather with those who practice agriculture: the indigenous, mestizos, afros... the campesinos. It is with them you have to talk, with no one else because if we call on a leader and say look at these transgenic seeds, well the leader is in a different story and is not with those who cultivate the land” (Interview, campesino, Putumayo, 2018).

This campesino told how during a protest in Putumayo leaders came out demanding “national government we want seeds...”

... I said if this process is against the seeds they impose, then it is necessary to change that demand in that the national government respect our seeds. Following the march, one leader came out demanding ‘that the national government come to deliver agricultural productive farms.’ This came from the proposal of organizations of Putumayo for the substitution of coca in the territory. The farm is not delivered by the government, it is cultivated by the campesino. With the concept of the *agro-productive farms*, I told them that ‘agricultural productive farms’ could be anything. I can produce a farm with only cows or I can produce for the transnational companies there with transgenic seeds. So I told them that what they should talk about are comprehensive Amazonian production systems with Amazonian seeds and agrobiodiversity” (Interview, campesino, Putumayo, 2018).

There is a conflict, this campesino observed, is “over knowledge and how it is cultivated...”

...for me, to defend, I have to know. Many of the leaders do not know. Now with the post-conflict, agro-technicians come to talk of competitiveness and improved seeds. Leaders go to these trainings and workshops. The conflict is that the state imposes its knowledge through the leaders and there is a conflict there between the campesinos who have knowledge of the campo and the agro-technicians who only have knowledge of improved seeds” (Interview, campesino, Putumayo, 2018).

Those who call themselves the seed guardians of Putumayo contend that:

“the only possibility to defend the territory is to return to that knowledge. To recognize the knowledge of those who work with the land. Here we are a political force. And there are others. We have to articulate with them so that there is a worldwide movement of the seeds in order to prevent losing them. That is the proposal of [the government], to extinguish species [of seeds] so that we depend on those they have. Those transgenic seeds are a form of enslavement and dependency. That is what we are fighting against” (Interview, campesino, Putumayo, 2018).

The issues of seeds and campesino agriculture in Putumayo, particularly within the context of “territorial peace,” is entangled with political discussions on agricultural development and is incorporated, institutionalized, colonized and dispossessed of its political content and territorial origins. With this the issue of campesino farming is a ‘territory in dispute’ involving campesinos, organizations and leaders, institutions, agro-industries and agro-technicians within the conjuncture of territorial peace (Giraldo & Rosset, 2017). This conjuncture offers

opportunities for campesinos, it poses a risk that campesino farming is oriented towards agro-industrial production for the ‘transformation of the *campo*’ as opposed to peace grounded in Amazonian agrobiodiversity of the territory. With the implementation of territorial peace in Putumayo, one campesino proposed that the process call on those campesinos “*con las manos en la tierra*” (with their hands in the soil)” and not leaders to discuss food production and campesino agriculture.

“These campesinos are devoted to their land and to the cultivation of agriculture with Amazonian seeds. They are dedicated to working on their farms and so they do not participate in ICA trainings and other workshops. For example, in Puerto Caicedo there are campesinos who are dedicated to their Amazonian farms and to the cultivation and production of Amazonian foods.” (Interview, campesino, Putumayo, 2018).

This proposal included the development of Amazonian farm schools for campesinos. Grounded in campesinos’ cultivation of Amazonian agrobiodiversity for an “agri-culture thought from the selva”:

“there we are going to work on a topic that is of the reproduction of the Amazon itself. There are the bees that polonize the flowers, and also the birds that distribute seeds. The idea is that campesinos get to know them and protect them since they are the ones who ensure Amazonian species are not lost, and also the animals and the wind itself. The campesino who cultivates knows their own farm. Campesinos have lost knowledge of our ancestors, of the moon, of the forests, of the rain, to sow. So with the school is the idea is to cultivate of agro-food culture is to share knowledge of the land. It is practical too in that the campesino who goes to school ends up practicing on their farm. It is to recover something ancestral from them. This is an agri-food culture thought from the Amazon, from the indigenous here in Putumayo and from other campesinos” (Interview, campesino, Putumayo, 2018).

With Amazonian farming, agrobiodiversity like seeds, soils, pollinators, and seed dispersers, knowledge, and the territory are relational and co-constitutive. The proposal for Amazonian farm schools responds to the fact that “campesinos here come from other departments with their knowledge that is not of Amazonian culture...so with the school campesinos will get to know our territory.” With this the proposal also counters the imposition of agro-industrial projects onto the territory that do not consider the conditions of Amazonian soils or seeds, nor campesinos’ knowledge. The proposed school is called “Alcides.”

“We name it that as our intention is that those who worked with Padre Alcides in the 80s and 90s to come to this school and tell of their experiences. For Padre Alcides, if the issue concerned sowing, then it should include campesinos directly and not those from outside [the territory]. It is a political position to demonstrate how this is cultivated in Puerto Caicedo and other parts of the territory. It is to propose a different path [for peace] and so that those involved in this share knowledge and seeds. The idea is to reach the communities with our proposal because others come with other proposals and money and then they deceive the campesinos here” (Interview, campesino, Putumayo, 2018).

Those proposals include productive projects implemented for campesinos to transition from coca production to ‘licit’ crops with the imposition of certified seeds.

“In Caicedo, campesinos together with the parish continue working on the issue of seeds. There they did a seed collection and fair and ICA came with an agronomist who tried to limit the knowledge of the campesinos. A different time, they came to a seed fair in Puerto Caicedo to propose transgenic cacao. There was a project cacao for peace. [ICA] came to give out transgenic cacao treated in the

laboratory to campesinos. I told them look, in fact, those seeds do not work for you, you are deceiving the campesinos. I challenged them to first do research, take a farm and develop a practice there to see what the behavior of cocoa is, and when they already have the results, well we evaluate together but do not tell campesinos that this project will give them many millions or anything like that” (Interview, campesino, Putumayo, 2018).

Productive projects like this continue to be pushed onto campesinos and the territory. The ICA recently reported the registration of certified cacao plantations in Putumayo implemented through productive alliances. One campesino offered this perspective:

“What is the problem of alliances? Well, first that they promote monoculture crops and regulated seeds, and second that the campesinos are not partners of the project, the partner is the one who buys, that is the owner. If you go to Puerto Guzmán or more than the entire Guamuez Valley or there are cacao crops planted as monocultures through these alliances. Then the campesinos have to produce the raw material but the partner buys it at the price they have agreed with the government, which leaves the campesino with nothing; the campesino is *amarrado* [tied]. The government supports the farmer with that alliance while sowing the crop, but what the government has not realized that this is the Amazon and that here, this crop requires agro-chemicals to produce and the farmer does not have enough to pay to fertilize the crop and stops fertilizing, the crop begins to get sick. Here in Putumayo there are farms with abandoned cacao. There are many varieties of wild cacao here, here on my farm I have collected species from all over the territory. We are thinking about proposing a cooperative of campesinos who are planting cacao on their own, we would process native cacao planted here in the forest, and activate the market for it. It would be like a resistance to monocultures and agrochemicals and control of the seeds and with that what we intend to do is to rescue the knowledge of the campesino” (Interview, Putumayo, 2017).

On one Saturday *minga* at La Amistad, Álvaro was sowing yucca (cassava, *Manihot esculenta*). While digging the tip of a machete into the soil, Álvaro told that the roots of yucca “loosen and open the earth.” The fumigations and cattle grazing have rendered these soils “*sin vida*” (without life) and “*apretados*” (compacted):

“The problem is that people have gotten into their heads that farms in the Amazon needs to be *limpia* [cleared] to produce, and most crops in the Amazon cannot do that. The other problem here in the Amazon is that there is a poor organic layer of topsoil, and so clearing exposes it to the rays of the sun, destroying microorganisms so that soil becomes infertile. The majority of people here come from the Andean region and their agriculture is incompatible with the Amazon. It’s the same with the agronomists. They look at these soils and think they can implement the same agriculture as they do elsewhere, but it fails here. The Amazon is not for monocultures. Outside, in the Andean region, it can be done, but not here. Whenever a monoculture has been introduced it has had problems, most of all the degradation of the land.”

Campesinos depend on these soils which in turn depend on the agrobiodiversity of the Amazon. With *abono*, or fertilizer made of charcoal, decomposing leaf litter and fruit pulps, and soils collected from the Amazon, Álvaro is working to recuperate the diversity of these degraded soils — rather than purchasing agro-chemicals “that poison the earth and give it away to multinational companies.” Álvaro was referring to the agro-industrial development imposed onto the territory with the implementation of territorial peace in Putumayo:

“This agribusiness development is another form of dispossession. [It] will leave us without land. [It] is *another war* against us campesinos and against nature. When we put poison on the ground, in our food,



we are killing ourselves. One grows their pocket here, so they're dying for their own food. If you put agro-chemicals in the soils the soils die. The soil is part of us, it feeds us, so why do we not take care of it? That is the story we share. Not herbicides or fungicides, but to take care of the soil and for that we do not need agro-chemicals."

Álvaro, who worked with Padre Alcides to coordinate Amazonian farming projects throughout the territory, said that "with Amazonian agriculture, the soils, plants, pollinators, the sun, work together to generate life." Amazonian farming offers a differential interpretation of territorial peace. It is a political project in response to the capitalist-oriented agricultural development imposed onto the territory with its certified seeds and agro-chemicals for 'licit' agricultural development to transition from coca cultivation. This is what one campesino called "*agricultura de muerte*" (death agriculture), referring to how it interrupts the generative relations of the territory: the germination, life, death and decomposition of the Amazon. This campesino told how "agro-technicians show up to talk to campesinos about competitiveness, agribusiness, as part of alternative agricultural initiatives under the peace agreement...."

...the Colombian Agricultural Institute [ICA] is giving seeds to campesinos developed in a laboratory. The problem is that the majority of people here come from the Andes, and it's the same with the agronomists, for them certified laboratory seeds are a sign of progress. They do now know the soils, and for them the land has to be *limpia* [clean/deforested] to receive a title. So, we go sharing seeds and the story that the selva does not need a laboratory, you give it seeds and it gives back. From the seeds we sow, sprouts monte [forest], then we go back to eat monte, and there is a lot of monte to eat here."

"*Comiendo el monte*" (eating the forest), is a way of repairing relations between campesinos and the territory. It is a way "to recover an 'agri-food culture from the selva' towards the construction of 'peace through food.'" As one campesino put it: "the issue here is that many *campesinos* came here from other regions and for them these seeds are just another plant in the *selva*, they do not know the plants from the Amazon. '*Comiendo el monte*' brings them into contact with the *selva*. It is to become *selva*'" (Interview, Putumayo, 2017). In this way, *campesinos* become "*selvasinos*" through the generative relations of life, (de) composition, and death embodied in Amazonian farming. The notion of the *selvasino* is a response to the violent transformation of the territory, including through capitalist-oriented agricultural production in which campesinos, land, seeds, seed dispersers, soils, food crops, and pollinators are "subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of living dead" (Mbembe, 2003, p. 40). The violent conflicts over land in Colombia are intertwined with the destruction of Amazonian agrobiodiversity — agrobiodiversity that is constitutive of the lives of campesinos and that of their living territories. The violent rending of these territorial relations contributes to the conditions of campesinos in this territory: *colonos* (colonizers) who were displaced through land conflicts in the country's Andean region to the frontier; *cocaleros* (coca growers) who found opportunities in the cultivation of coca and were criminalized; campesinos who turned to cattle ranching following fumigations of their crops, and those presently transitioning from coca to cattle ranching — the only 'licit' option in the context of the failed implementation of productive projects to transition from coca. Through the cultivation of Amazonian agrobiodiversity, the *selvasino* confronts the imposition of agro-industrial development imposed onto the territory which threatens the agrobiodiversity — soils, seeds, pollinators, seed dispersers — that the lives of campesinos depend on. The *selvasino* embodies a reparative relationality that recognizes the generative relations of campesinos and Amazonian agrobiodiversity for peace in the territory.

On one Amazonian farm in Puerto Caicedo Ángela, a founder of *La Amistad*, was preparing cakes of *copoazú*. Through the cultivation of

Amazonian foods and seeds, Ángela works to repair degraded soils and communities' relations with the territory. "This land was covered in cattle pasture. We are surrounded with cattle ranches. We are surrounded by campesinos who are not conscious. We went to recover seeds from the *monte* that are no longer here. We cultivate *monte* here because the sun's rays scorch the soils. With cattle or monocultures, soils no longer absorb the rains. Here the soil absorbs more. We do not spray chemicals and if we need a fertilizer, we go to the *monte* to collect the microorganisms from there and add them to the soils here and the *abono* for what we sow because there is a lot of fungus that is beneficial. In monocultures one must always spray for diseases. Here we sow plants that contribute to the soil." To do this, "one does not need the title agronomist. The life of the selva teaches one." Ángela, who collaborated with Padre Alcides, is involved in different community organizations, and goes from farm to farm working to ensure this knowledge is not lost. "One is called *Sabor Campesino*. We cultivate and prepare Amazonian foods to share with others so that they know the different species from the Amazon." Ángela, recalled how with the *cocalero* marches in 1996, "people did not have food to eat. They had no knowledge of how to sow in the Amazon as many came from outside the territory." During that time, Ángela, produced Amazonian foods, giving them away along with seeds.

In 2000, Ángela was displaced following a violent confrontation with paramilitaries. Displaced from Puerto Caicedo from the very violence that Amazonian farming works to confront, Ángela and others continue to work to cultivate the conditions for a peace grounded in the Amazonian soils of the territory. Among them are Nelson, who collaborated with Padre Alcides to coordinate Amazonian farming and seed projects, and, Elva, who also participated in Padre Alcides' initiative for training women in the production of Amazonian seeds and foods. Displaced from Caicedo during its paramilitary occupation, they continue the work of sowing Amazonian seeds and peace on their farm. "Here we continue to work with [Padre Alcides]. I feel his presence here on the farm, he talks to me," told Elva, while peeling seeds of *pan del norte*. "For that reason we continue walking with him, in the defense of the Amazon, the territory, in the defense of life." On the ground in front of their raised wooden house there were seeds of *copoazú* drying in the Amazonian sun. There they cultivate and save Amazonian seeds, and work to recuperate the soils on their farm and their connection with the territory — a response to their violent displacement and that of the ongoing destruction of Amazonian agrobiodiversity. On their selva farm, once occupied with cattle, they plant *cacao del monte*, *camu camu*, *copoazú*, *maraca*, and *arazá*. Amazonian farming involves "learning from the selva" and is embedded within its diverse temporalities and relations of decay and decomposition — the productive relations of fungi and soils, dead plants and leaf litter, and fermenting Amazonian fruits like *arazá*, *cacao del monte*, *copoazú*, and *maraca*, the germination of seeds, of lunar rhythms and the patterns of rain, the flowering of trees, and the comings and goings of birds and insects. The sonorous vibrations of hummingbirds and bees pollinating the flowering fruit trees were occasionally interrupted with the dissonant tone of Nelson's machete clearing remnants of cattle grass — traces of the violence that has gradually transformed the territory. On the ground, fermenting half-eaten *arazá* fruits give off the earthy redolence of decay and decomposition. Here the dead nourish the living. The possibilities for life and peace emerge through the relations of germinating seeds, soils, fungi, dead plants, leaf litter, the comings and goings of pollinators and seed dispersers.

"This is *maicillo*, this is a legume, a tree that will have flowers for bees, hummingbirds, bumblebees and provides nutrients... look at these flowers and then the hummingbirds come and when it is in flower they come to feed here. Here we have food, yes, for the plants themselves and the more variation of species there is, the better the soil. There is food for us, for the animals. This can be multiplied by giving the seed, this is a seed then one throws it away and then it is done. Here there are plenty of hummingbirds. The hummingbird is a

pollinator, so you must have flowering plants for that. There are birds that eat insects that plants have.”

“This is *el tomate de árbol*,” indicated Nelson. “It is a native tree tomato from La Hormiga, from the Valle de Guamuez.” Amazonian seeds are carried from farm to farm throughout the territory.

On farms down river in the municipalities of Puerto Guzman, Puerto Asís, and Puerto Leguizamo, campesinos ‘*con las manos en la tierra*’ sow territorial peace with the Amazon through the defense and cultivation of its agrobiodiversity. In Puerto Guzman, “campesinos purchase food up the river, the soils do not produce due to the fumigations,” told Arturo. “You go around here and find farms where you cannot find anything to eat, only milk. Campesinos lived from coca, and now they live from cattle. The coca gave them everything, now the cattle give them everything. The campesinos here do not know how to sow the land. The people say that here the land does not provide, but as they do not sow, then how is the land going to give?” Arturo told how he has been going farm to farm, working with campesinos “who left the coca to cultivate life together with the selva...”

...here we collect soil and seeds from the forest to recuperate the soils. We planted trees and the birds and other creatures returned, those who left when the coca and cattle came. They collect and disperse seeds, working with us to return life to these soils once again, and we take care of them too, planting food for them and for us. For example, there are various types of monkeys here — the *churuco*, the *maicero*, the *ardita* — who collect and disperse seeds. Here it is not only the campesinos who work in the *minga*, the bees, the birds and other creatures join the *minga* too.”

These Amazonian farms constitute “life plans” grounded in the notion of “*convivir*” — of campesinos “living together” with the selva and the reparation of campesinos’ relations with Amazonian agrobiodiversity. Arturo put it like this:

“When we sow, cultivating the land, it gives us life again. We campesinos are from the campo. We are part of the land. Without land, without territory, there is no life. With these practices, we are sowing territory, we are sowing peace with nature” (Interview, campesino, Putumayo, 2017).

## 6. Discussion and conclusion

The implementation of territorial peace is intertwined with increasing violence in some call “violent peace” (Salazar, Wolff & Camelo, 2019; Nilsson & Marín, 2019). Violent peace refers to threats and killings of campesinos and defenders of territories and their displacement (Salazar, Wolff & Camelo, 2019; Nilsson & Marín, 2019). In 2020, Colombia was the deadliest country for territorial defenders (Global Witness, 2020). This violence is connected to ongoing conflict and related to land consolidation linked to cattle ranching, narco-trafficking and Colombia’s agro-industrial transformation of its campo (Global Witness, 2020). This article shows that “violent peace” is also the way in which territories themselves are transformed through the imposition of agro-industrial development onto territories that insists on consolidating and controlling campesinos through “innovative” agrotechnologies and certified seeds. The transformation of the campo agricultural development oriented towards global commodities and capital investments is directly linked to declines in seed diversity and the degradation of soils on which campesinos’ lives depend, threatening the “inhabitable possibility” of their territories (Nixon, 2011, p. 19). Degraded soils cannot sustain the promises of “stable and lasting peace” (FARC-EP y Gobierno de Colombia, 2016), though interpretations of “violent peace” disregard this (Salazar, Wolff & Camelo, 2019; Nilsson & Marín, 2019; (Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood, 2019). In addition, the ways in which violence intertwines with territories’ life-giving agrobiodiversity is often overlooked in the literature on violent conflict and

agrarian transitions (though see (McGuire and Louise, 2013). Agrobiodiversity, specifically seed saving, is considered important for campesinos within the context of conflict (McGuire & Sperling, 2013) and as a form of resistance to their incorporation into agro-industry ((Silva Garzón and Gutiérrez Escobar, 2019). Within the context of territorial peace in Colombia, this article shows how agrobiodiversity contributes to the reparation of territorial relations towards the construction of peace grounded in the territory itself.

This article shows that the state’s project of territorial peace in Colombia is a continuation of the violent ‘transformation of the *campo*’ (Thomson, 2011; (Ballvé, 2013). Rooted in the context of Putumayo, violent conflicts reflect the wider dynamics of the ways in which conflict interacts with capitalist-oriented agrarian transitions (Cramer & Richards, 2011; de Colombia, 2016; Koren & Bagozzi, 2017; Brück & d’Errico, 2019; Martin-Shields & Stojetz, 2019; Bazzi & Blattmann, 2014; Arias et al., 2019). Given that territorial peace, grounded in capitalist development, is inherently violent, the only possibility for peace is that which is constructed outside of the capitalist constitution of “territorial peace.” Turning to the diverse territorialities obscured within the state’s conception of territory and territorial peace, this article shows how peace, rooted within the territory, is germinating in degraded soils through campesinos’ cultivation of the territory’s life-giving agrobiodiversity. Our research contributes to a growing body of research focused on how peace is constructed through everyday territorial relations (Koopman, 2020; Diaz et al., 2021; Dietrich & Sützl, 1997; Goetschel & Hagmann, 2009; Mac Ginty, 2010; Richmond, 2009), grounded in the reparation of what Lyons (2019) calls the “continuums of life and death and human and non-human[s]” (p. 222; Spanish translation is author’s own). Contributing to work focused on the everyday human and nonhuman relations of territorial peace (Lederach, 2017), including within the context of Putumayo (Lyons, 2016, 2019), this article describes how in Putumayo, selva farming is a proposal for peace grounded in the cultivation of Amazonian agrobiodiversity towards the transformation the living conditions of the territory. This interpretation of peace — seen from the territory, rather than the state (Scott, 1998) — involves the reparation of campesinos’ relations with Amazonian agrobiodiversity on which their lives depend. These *selvasinos* – who distinguish themselves from the campesinos who grow crops from certified seeds, cattle ranchers, and coca growers – work to repair territorial relations through seed saving and the cultivation of Amazonian foods. Agrobiodiversity is integral to those territorial relations and their reparation as part of the construction of a territorial peace grounded in the selva Amazónica. Following on the work of Lyons (2016, 2018, 2019), this article indicates the transformative potential of agrobiodiversity for constructing territorial peace in Putumayo. It calls for the consideration of how peace is constructed through *selvasinos*’ relations with Amazonian agrobiodiversity in a relational conception of territorial peace grounded a reparative relationality of their living territories.

## CRedit authorship contribution statement

**Kristina Van Dexter:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Micah Ingalls:** Conceptualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

## Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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