# Enfoques

*Affective Ecologies: Ghostly Presences and Memories in Territories of War in Colombia*

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It was seven in the morning on a day in August 2019. I was getting ready to visit some social leaders in the Serranía de la Macarena, a rainforest in the north-west region of the Colombian Amazon that was afflicted by the armed conflict. I was waiting for Carlos, who was going to take me to different villages by motorcycle. Carlos is a peasant who had to escape from his farm about ten years ago because he had sold his coca crops to non-guerrilla buyers. It was considered an act of treason by FARC, an armed group that controlled the territory at that time. As punishment, they ordered his execution. After somewhat 15 minutes of traveling, while we were crossing bridges, rivers, and open fields with abandoned houses, Carlos started telling me a story about what it had been like to live the peak of the war in Colombia: "These bridges could not be crossed before. If you lived on

the guerrillas' side and crossed over, you became a military objective for the paramilitaries. If you did it the other way around, you became a military objective for the guerrillas. Crossing these bridges was very scary because one side was dominated by the FARC and the other by the paramilitaries". Carlos was rarely silent during those eight hours that we traveled together. Each time we passed a place where massacres had occurred or landmines had exploded, he recounted a story.

This is just one example among several where I began perceiving that many spontaneous conversations about violence and war began when my interlocutors interacted with spaces, places, and materialities of violence. These ethnographic moments opened my curiosity to explore the relations and practices among peasants, war materialities, and territories charged with violence. Through my ongoing work, I explore how the materiality of war continues to shape the lives taking place in territories afflicted by violence, even though the peace agreement was signed in 2016. This question has incited me to think alongside the recent turn towards materiality and affect in critical theory, and to consider the idea that entities and things are not inert matter, passively yielding to human agency, but that they have their own forms of existence and agency (e.g., Gordillo; Bennett; Latour).

In this article, I offer an approach to what I am calling affective ecology, an analytical tool which helps understand how ruptured relations and materialities left behind by violence and war may linger and haunt people's daily lives in the present. I will first conceptualize affective ecology by addressing how authors understand both affect and ecology, as well as materiality and memory. A central insight of this first section will be that affect cannot arise unless entities come together in relation. That is, neither the materialities, spaces, objects nor the people who live around them are affective in their own; instead, they produce and transmit affect *relationally.* Second, I will follow a set of scholarly works that (in)directly address the concept of affective ecology in environments of war,

ruination, violence, and destruction. I do so to reflect on how materialities of violence and ruptured relations from the past are part of the material and affective configuration of the social in the present (e.g., Navaro, *The make-believe space*; Gordillo; Stoler, *Imperial debris*; Tsing et al.). Inspired by these authors, I will thirdly bring some insights from my fieldwork to consider the haunting effect of violent materialities over peasants' daily lives without denying how peasants feel, remember, and historize them. I will focus on ruptured, fraught, and violent materialities that shape current relations in territories that used to be under relations of war in Colombia and that make ecologies of what local people expressed as *zozobra:* a form of permanent fear and uncertainty that cancels the possibility of the absence of violence. I will use these textures to think through what some authors call ghostly presences (e.g., Gordon; Navaro, *Affective spaces*; Barad; Gordillo). I will finalize the article with a brief reflection on how affective ecology, as an analytical tool, may challenge the kind of socioecological occupation that current corporate extractive ventures and development seek to implement in territories of war.

## Affective ecologies

I want to think along with nonrepresentational scholars who share with the turn toward materiality in critical theory that nonhuman entities, objects, and things have their own forms of agency, (vital) force, and existence (e.g., Bennet, *Vibrant matter*; Latour). These authors analyze things as quasi-agents with capacities not only to impede the will and designs of humans, but also to act as forces with trajectories and tendencies of their own (Bennet, 2010a). Nonrepresentational theory in social sciences (e.g., Thrift; Gordillo; Navaro, *Affective Spaces*) addresses this force via Deleuze's work through the rubric of affect. Deleuzian theory on affect was greatly influenced by Spinoza's philosophy, who conceived affect as the capacity of any body for activity and responsiveness. A body itself never defines this capacity; instead, the capacity is conceptualized as a force and

intensity that may move through the body, but it may not be known by it. Authors in this analytical framework argue that affect should not be confused with emotions or feelings, yet they can be related. While feelings are personal and biographical, and emotions are social, affect goes beyond human subjectivity. It refers to a pre-extra-linguistic and non-discursive intensity that moves through bodies but does not necessarily emerge from them (e.g., Deleuze; Leys; Thrift). As Sahara Ahmed (2004) argues, affect does not reside in a body; it emerges when it circulates among bodies.

In constant circulation and movement, affect refers to a force that emerges relationally. Following Spinoza via Deleuze, Bennet puts it this way: "we know nothing about a body until we know what it can do, […] what its affects are, how they can or cannot enter into composition with other affects" (*Vibrant matter*: xii). Affect cannot arise unless bodies come together, and bodies cannot be until they relate to one another. Affect is in many ways synonymous with forces of encounter: forces that cannot be and exist without the relation between bodies and entities. One might argue that affect *accumulates* across both the encounters and the interruption of the encounters, becoming an ever-gathering accretion of force-relations that passes between entities (Seigworth & Gregg). Bennett shares with Spinoza's idea according to which the more entities another entity can affiliate with, the more affective it becomes (Bennett). The idea that I want to highlight here is that entities are affective depending on the encounters and relations that take place, and the outcome of the encounter depends on what kind of composition they can enter into.

Spinoza's encounter-prone body arises in the context of his proposal according to which all things are modes of a common substance in which each body has the capacities to affect and to be affected by other bodies. Sharing this view, scholars like Jane Bennet and Ben Anderson examine how diverse forms of life and non-life exhibit tendencies and transmit intensities as each one acts and reacts when they relate to one another. They claim that affect is not specific to

human bodies but a force and intensity distributed through organic and inorganic entities, natural and cultural objects, other-than-humans, spaces, and materialities (e.g., Bennet, *Vibrant matter*; Anderson & Harrison). In so doing, these authors expand the definition of the social as a weaving of material entities in which humans are one part of it (Anderson & Harrison). In their words:

> "Humans, their desires and plans, are clearly not the only things active in the world, in fact often we may be very small players in much bigger trans- and nonhuman systems and complexes. […] following on from a concern with practices, *nonrepresentational theories work with a relational-material or 'associative' account of 'the social'*. Whilst this definition may not sound very precise this is, in many respects, the point; the social is a weaving of material bodies that can never be cleanly or clearly cleaved into a set of named, known and represented identities. More specifically, nonrepresentational theories are concerned with the distribution of 'the human' across some form of assemblage that includes all manner of materialities" (Anderson & Harrison 12-13).

Here, the reference point for affect is expanded, making it possible to think of objects, other-than-humans, space, and materialities as affective entities. As they relate to one another by continuously affecting and being affected, they *become*. A key argument of nonrepresentational theories is that all forms of life, non-life, and materialities do not preexist their relations: they are brought into being as relations weave them into one another (Thrift; Rutherford; Barry). Entities constitute themselves as practices *take place,* a phrase that refers to their simultaneous happening in time and space (e.g., Anderson & Harrison; see also Haraway; De la Cadena; Law; Escobar). As Anderson & Harrison say:

> "everything takes-part and in taking-part, takes-place: everything happens, everything acts… Hence a relational-materialist approach departs from understandings of the social as ordered *a priori* (be it symbolically, ontologically, or otherwise) in a manner that would, for

example, set the conditions for how objects appear, or as an ostensive structure that stands behind and determines practical action. In the taking-place of practices, things and events there is no room for hidden forces, no room for universal transcendentals or first principles" (Anderson & Harrison: 14).

Similarly, Karen Barad expresses this as follows: "There are no self-contained individual entities running in the void. Matter is not some givenness that preexists its interactions. Matter is always already caught up with nothingness. Bodies, space, time, and the void are not ontologically separate matters (Barad 110). The key idea I want to put to work here is that humans, other-than-humans, and materialities emerge being-in and being-of relations, enhancing their power to affect and be affected *in an ecology of relations*. In so doing, I am blurring the distinction between affect with materiality since I am not positing a separate force that can enter and animate materiality, but rather, they (affect and materialities) come into being as relations take place. As Bennet claims, if affect is not a spiritual supplement added to the matter said to inhabit it, then affect and materiality must be equated with each other.

These reflections on affect, materialities, and relations lead me to work with the concept of affective ecologies: heterogeneous forms of life, non-life, and materialities that affect and are affected by one another. But how do I understand ecology when I say affective ecologies? Following Stengers, I understand ecology not as a stable harmony or a peaceful coexistence but as a web of interdependent partial connections among heterogeneous entities. Resonating with the term assemblage, ecology is not governed by any central head with a transcendent common interest: no one materiality determines the arrangement's trajectory consistently (Stengers; Bennet, *Vibrant matter*). Instead, by diverging[1] in the

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[1] Following Isabelle Stengers, divergence can be understood as what occurs when heterogeneous things, practices or worlds encounter and connect one another while maintaining ties with what produces them. That is to say, divergence refers to encounters between practices that through those encounters become other than what they used to be, while they continue to be the same.

encounters and relations that constitute the ecology, materialities of all sorts, humans and other-than humans, are continually emerging as self-different (Stengers). Ecology is an emergent arrangement, more fractal than linear, and never fully accomplished but always open-ended (Bennet, *Vibrant matter*; Bailey & Digangi)[2]. Being so, the entities and materialities cannot be affective *a priori*, but they can *be* as relations and practices take place.

I began this article with Carlos' story about bridges and rivers that marked a geo-human border between the guerrillas and their enemies (the army and paramilitaries). As Carlos did, many other peasants with whom I talked and walked through what had been territories of war told stories and shared their memories about the violence and destruction they dealt with. The reader may then ask: what is the place of memories in the analyses of affective ecologies? In her work *The Make-Believe Space: Affective Geography in a Postwar Polity*, Yael Navaro explores in Northern Cyprus how Turkish-Cypriots feel to live with the ruins and objects left behind by the displaced Greek-Cypriots. She analyzes these ruins and objects as materialities that have retained the force of those who are no longer in those territories, and that composes what she calls a *phantomic* landscape: the ghostly presence of things that affects humans and territories even after the disappearance of those associated with the objects (Navaro, *The make-believe space*). Navaro's work is in conversation with the use of the concept of affect as offered through nonrepresentational theories; however, based on her ethnographic encounters in Cyprus, she argues that the affect embodied in materialities has a subjective quality too (Navaro, *The make-believe space*). She explains that neither the materialities, things, the ruins made present through her

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[2] Similarly, Bailey & Digangi argue that ecology does not refer to an organic whole that is greater than the sum of its parts; rather, it aims to approach the symbiotic practices that characterized the mesh of mutually interrelated animate and inanimate entities. Following Timothy Morton, Bailey & Digangi say that ecology as a mesh is "a nontotalizable, open-ended concatenation of interrelations that blur and confound boundaries at practically any level: between species, between the living and the non-living, between organism and environment" (Bailey & Digangi: 9).

ethnography nor the people who live around them are affective in their own; instead, they produce and transmit affect *relationally*. An environment of ruins discharges affects and intensities, but, at the same time, those who inhabit this space of ruins feel it, remember it, historicize it, and interpret it, transforming, adjusting, and re-purposing such environment of ruins. In so doing, the Navaro considers affect and human imaginations, materialities and memories in tandem, rather than opposing them (e.g., Mazzarella)[3].

In this analytical framework, the memories and stories that people tell are not merely static subjective representations of what used to be. Thus, and also inspired by Kathleen Stewart, I propose memories as performative events and practices that compose and are composed by the affective ecologies with which people *are* and *become* in their here-and-now through the stories that tell those memories. Stories are memories composing and being composed of the affective ecologies through which people become. As Stewart suggests, "the world can emerge in the form of local ways of thinking and ways of doing people. […] The question of narrative […] is not so much the question of the meaning of any particular story or narrative structure but the question of the meaning of the narrative itself—of narrativizing the world" (Stewart, *A Space* 29-30). She continues: "Imagine how the insertion of fabulation into action and mythic into the real is not just an isolated experience but an already-texted relation told and re-told in the myriad stories of the places" (Stewart, *A Space* 31). In those lines, the stories and memories are productive; they are acts of *poiesis* and thus creation as they have the capacities to affect and be affected. In other words, memories also transmit affect. By re-membering and re-visiting past events through the

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[3] According to Navaro, the turn to affect has been understood as an attack on the approaches centered on studies of representation through texts, semiotics, and discourse. In so doing, she argues that many authors working with the concept of affect in Deleuzian terms seem to be diametrically opposed to any theory of subjectivity. In her words: "Paradigm setting has cast subjectivity against affect, as though one cancels out the other and as if one has to choose between camps of theoretical approach: a subject-centered *or* an object-oriented one" (Navaro 171-172). Her work is an endeavor to think with both theoretical approaches at the same time: "I propose to ruin neither of them" (Navaro 172).

here-and-now of the places that encourage the re-telling of those events, people's lives are enacted in a present that does not want to be and cannot be without the past. The act of re-membering and telling stories is not merely a fleeting flash of a past event showing up in an individual's brain, but rather a constitutive part of what makes people's lives (Barad; Haraway)[4]. Considering stories, Anderson & Harrison argue: "they are *enactments*; if there is elaboration it is conducted and composed by and in the ongoing practical movements and actions, of which the symbolic is a part, but only a part" (2016: 9). Thus, if I previously blurred the distinction between affect and materiality, I am now connecting affect and memory. In so doing, I propose that affective ecologies are populated by forms of life and non-life and materialities that inhabit memories and memories that inhabit materialities, all of them having the capacities to affect and to be affected as relations among entities take place, that is, become in place and time.

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[4] Memory studies have been primarily focused on trauma, witnessing, and so forth, within the human realm (e.g., Olick, et al; Butler). For these authors, memory is a contemporary phenomenon that, while concerned with the past, occurs in the present. For example, Rothberg's concept of multidirectional memories might be useful for examining the ongoing negotiations, tensions, and interactions between memories of distinct subjects within the Colombian struggle. The multidirectional side of it allows for the ongoing, cross-referencing, and productive negotiations between memories; that is, it might allow for the emergence of new memories that could have not yet been accounted for (Rothberg). Multidirectional memory encourages us to think that different subjects do not simply articulate already established memories but actually come into being through their interactions with one another; that is, memories are in continual reconfiguration and are co-constituted. Furthermore, by approaching memories as an ongoing process that is in a continual reconstruction, multidirectional memories might also reveal that which has been suppressed or forgotten (Rothberg; Richard). However, memory studies of this kind have some limitations. I would argue that it is necessary to challenge the idea that memories only belong to humans: we need to implode and recompose this concept by thinking it relationally along with the affective ecologies I have mentioned. As I am trying to address in this article, memories and re-memberings emerge from/within heterogeneous relations between humans, other-than humans, and diverse sorts of materialities; they are not human exclusive. In so doing, re-thinking this approach as suggested might not only reveal that which has been forgotten, but rather to explore relations that have never been thought before as they might have never been recognized in the historical process. This may enrich the recent debate in Colombia that argues that forests, soils, rivers, mountains, rainforests, seeds, flora and fauna are also victims of the war, and that they should be recognized and repaired in the "postconflict" (e.g., Ruiz; Pardo Ibarra; Puentes Ramos).

## Affective ecologies, destruction, and violence

Scholars have argued that the modern capitalist system creates vast amounts of objects and wealth through processes of ruination[5] and destruction that lay waste to certain peoples, relations, and things (Stoler *Imperial debris*; Gordillo; Moore; Lefebvre). Scholars working within the framework of Marxist political economy have analyzed in depth capitalism's destructiveness. In *The Production of Space*, for example, Henri Lefebvre argued that production is not restricted to the making of objects (commodities), but that it is a force that transforms space—the materially created conditions of all forms of sociality, struggle and emancipation. To produce space as a quantifiable condition and make it available as abstraction, capitalism requires to remove obstacles in the form of non-productive practices. For Lefebvre, the production of space is inherently violent, a disruptive and tension-ridden process: "lethal space that destroys the historical conditions that give rise to it" (Lefebvre 370)[6]. Similarly, David Harvey offers key insights about the destructive nature of capitalist production, especially as this production has entered a neoliberal phase through what he calls "accumulation by dispossession."[7] Harvey argues that the disruption of spatial forms operates in

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[5] Ruination is an act of ruining, a condition of being ruined, and a cause of it in which each of these senses has its own temporality. As Stoler indicates: "Each identifies different durations and moments of exposure to a range of violences and degradations that may be immediate or delayed, subcutaneous or visible, prolonged or instant, diffuse or direct" (Stoler, *Imperial debris: On ruins* 11).

[6] Though Henri Lefebvre's work does not examine the destruction of the space as a concept in its own terms, he seems to imply that the creative side of spatial production is also accompanied by an intrinsic force of violence and destruction (Gordillo).

[7] Harvey (*A Companion*) argues that the process of accumulation of capital has been accompanied by continuous rounds of what Marx (*Capital*) called primitive accumulation. Harvey claims that Marx was wrong when he confined primitive accumulation to the prehistory of capitalism, when in fact processes of expropriation, dispossession and eviction supported by the state have been latent in the history of capitalism. Capitalism would have not been able to sustain itself over time if it had not engaged in new processes of primitive accumulation. In other words, there has been a continuity of primitive accumulation throughout the historical geography of capitalism. Harvey (*The new imperialism* ) then proposes to talk about accumulation by dispossession: a process through which capitalism has mobilized particular geographical configurations around the world to sustain the accumulation process by dispossessing people from their means of production.

disjointed and uneven ways by destroying some regions more than others; that is, neoliberalism creates sacrifice zones by uneven geographic development (Harvey, *A Companion*).

Along the lines of Harvey, a recent body of thought claims that the destructive and ruinous nature of modern capitalism is the most devastating ever created not only because by opening new rounds of accumulation of capital it has generated violent processes of dispossession, (e.g., Harvey, The new imperialism) but also because it has profoundly altered the relations of humans and the earth as never before. Jason Moore names this the Capitalocene, the current age in which we live since its birth after 1450. The Capitalocene is a capitalist world-ecology premised in specific extractive and exploitative configurations of humanity-in-nature (Moore). For Moore, this age does not stand for capitalism as a social or economic system as some Marxists do; instead, it is a way of organizing nature. Within the logic of the Capitalocene, the market, political, production, and cultural relations are reduced to social relations. Simultaneously, nature is segmented off and conceptualized as "natural"—as an object independent of and separate from humans (Clark & Haraway). This way of organizing nature has legitimized its appropriation and exploitation, resulting in the destruction and ruination of people's and more-than-humans' lives. Overlapping with this, the notion of the Plantationocene has recently gained traction in the environmental humanities as a way of thinking about the ecological crisis. Coined by Donna Haraway and Anna Tsing, the concept suggests that the ecological crisis is rooted in the logic of modernization, control, and homogenization of socioecological relations by developing historical plantations in colonial eras. In the words of Haraway: "[the Plantationocene signals more clearly] the earth-changing patterns of forced life, forced death and mass transportation of peoples (usually slaves), plants, and animals in radical

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This process is characterised by four main features: 1) Privatization and commodification; 2) Financialization; 3) The management and manipulation of crises; and 4) State redistributions.

and destructive simplifications of extant eco-worlds" (Haraway 12). Following these authors, one might understand that the current manifestation of capitalism and colonialism through extractivist ventures is a form of socioecological occupation that destroys and dispossesses[8] forms of life and creates grounds for the transformation of 'nature' into resources, and thus the conversion of heterogeneous forms of existence into sameness. Therefore, destruction is not only an obliteration of certain places' physicality but rather the disruptive force of long-evolving coordinations and interdependencies among diverse entities that compose what I have called affective ecologies.

Recent anthropological works attempt to track the uneven remains and sedimentations in which colonialism and capitalism alongside war and violence leave their marks (Stoler, *Imperial debris: On ruins*; Tsing; Navaro *The make-believe space*; Gordillo). Ann Stoler's work on Imperial Debris explores how colonial ruination contours and carves through the material space in which people live and how the compounded layers of such debris do to them. Her interest is on what people are *left with* through processes of ruination: "what remains blocking livelihoods and health, […] the aftershocks of imperial assault, […] the social afterlife of structures, sensibilities, and things. Such effects reside in corroded hollows of landscapes, in the gutted infrastructures of segregated cityscapes and in the microecologies of matter and mind" (Stoler, *Imperial debris: On ruins* 9). Stoler is not interested in inert remains but in their vital refiguration, arguing that imperial formations persist in their material debris, in ruined landscapes, and through the social ruination of peoples' lives. Gaston Gordillo shares a similar approach to material debris by showing how space cannot be separated from the material, historical and affective ruptures embedded in the rubble. The concept of rubble is central to understand the ruptured multiplicities that

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[8] Dispossession is not simply a process of divorcing the producer from their means of production (e.g., Harvey, *A Companion*; Marx, *Capital*), but rather it is a displacement of relations generated by the occupation of a form of relation that divides the subject from the object (Montenegro-Perini).

constitute ecologies as they are produced, destroyed, and remade over time, from the past to the present. For Gordillo, rubble enables us to examine space negatively; that is, by way of the places denied to create the ecologies of the present (Gordillo 11).

Rather than framing the remains of capitalism and colonialism as mere dead matter, these authors argue that ruptured relations and materialities that are left behind by violence and destruction linger, haunt and shape people's daily lives in the present. Anna Tsing explains it as follows:

"We call this return to multiple pasts, human and not human, "ghosts." Every landscape is haunted by past ways of life. We see this clearly in the presence of plants whose animal seed-dispersers are no longer with us. Some plants have seeds so big that only big animals can carry them to new places to germinate. When these animals became extinct, their plants could continue without them, but they could not disperse their seeds very well. Their distribution is curtailed; their population dwindles. This is an example of what we are calling haunting. […] As life-enhancing entanglements disappear from our landscapes, ghosts take their place" (Tsing et al. 2-4).

The social and material ruptured relations embedded in rubble (Gordillo), ruination (Stoler), and phantomic landscapes (Navaro, *The make-believe space*) have a force that continuously shapes the relationships between people and territories. Though destruction, violence, and devastation disrupt long-evolving coordinations among diverse entities, they do not leave emptiness. As certain relations disappear, others simultaneously emerge. Following the philosopher Catherine Malabou, we might argue that destruction has plasticity understood as the power of giving form. The dissolution of certain relations is always accompanied by processes of reconfiguration. According to these authors, then, what remains after destruction and violence is never a "void"; instead, violence lingers in the form of affective materialities and memories that reside in places

contaminated by toxic chemicals, blasted by bombs, sowed with landmines, haunted by those who had a bad death, and many things abandoned due to violence, destruction or war. However, what lingers is not simply a figure of negativity. Capitalist and colonial forms of occupation are not total; they find recalcitrance —the refusal of people and their relations with territories to be occupied even as they are. Scholars suggest that the plasticity of destruction can be understood as people cultivate new relations to survive within those dynamics and imagine other possible ways of living (Tsing ). Blasted and disturbed ecologies may offer liberatory alternatives, a possibility of destroying what has generated destructive forces: "the destruction of machineries of destruction" (Gordillo 83). Thus, I propose to read these remains as affective ecologies becoming through ruptures: peoples' lives, memories, and materialities saturated by negativity have the power to affect, change and transform relations.

**Zozobra and war residuals**

The Colombian armed conflict deployed various forms of violence, such as massacres, displacements, extortions, and kidnappings undertaken by guerillas, paramilitary groups, and the Colombian army[9]. For the last three decades, the armed conflict has unfolded alongside neoliberal projects that has enabled the expansion of large agribusiness, mining, and oil extraction. While territories under the FARC control were mainly immersed in coca cultivation, illegal mining, and peasant economies, those under the control of paramilitaries fostered large-scale agribusiness, mining, and oil exploitation. During the government of Álvaro Uribe Vélez (2002-2010), the state deployed what was called Política de Seguridad Democrática (Democratic Security policy): a national strategy aimed to disarticulate FARC's structures in rural areas and to encourage

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[9] The Center of Historical Memory has recently delivered terrifying statistics: between 1958 and 2018 there were 262,197 direct deaths, 80,514 *desaparecidos*, 37,094 kidnapped and 15,687 victims of sexual violence (Puentes Ramos). Peasants, indigenous people and black communities have been the most affected by these dynamics, becoming the main victims of war.

the implementation of extractive-based development. This territorial intervention resulted in entrenched uneven resource access and control, dispossessions, land-grabbing, displacements, enforced disappearances, murders, agricultural crops sprayed with glyphosate, mined lands, and ruined infrastructures[10] (e.g., Ojeda; Grajales).

Between 2018 and 2019, I conducted fieldwork in two regions in Colombia: La Macarena, an area in the center-south of Colombia that connects the Amazon with the Andes; and the Choco, a department located on the Pacific coast. Both regions have been epicenters of the armed conflict and experienced several processes of violence associated with narcotrafficking, extractivism, guerrillas, and paramilitaries, with all their respective particularities. La Macarena was the region with the most presence of landmines in Colombia[11], and the Choco has been hit by violence associated with the illegal gold mining, which, in turn, has generated the contamination of several rivers with mercury, including the Atrato River. Both regions have seen the expansion of palm oil plantations under the protection of the paramilitary groups and thus generating dispossessions, displacements, and disappearances as well as soil degradation, mined lands, glyphosate poisoning, and abandoned towns. As a result of these processes of violence and destruction, these territories are stages of what Diana Pardo calls "residuals of war:" materialities and memories of violence capable of shaping relations between people and territories in the present, and I would add, altering the possibilities of the future. In this article, I describe some moments from my fieldwork to think about the residues and memories of the war that shape current livelihoods through the concept of affective ecology.

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[10] For instance, soils, forests and rivers have been contaminated and polluted by the destruction of oil pipelines that insurgent groups have detonated, or by the expansion of extractive economies or by recurrent technical failures of oil/mining companies. Soils have been mined and rivers diverted by hydroelectric dams. The contamination of watersheds has been caused by many factors including the use of rivers as cemeteries for victims (paramilitary violence).

[11] Vista Hermosa, one of its municipalities, is the region where more victims have been reported of these explosive devices than anywhere else in Colombia. Of the 11.399 victims in the national territory, 363 suffered from these explosives in this municipality (Verdad Abierta).

During my field experiences, I heard many peasants using the word "zozobra" to refer to a feeling they experience in places that were visited by violence and thus currently inhabited by residuals of war. In Spanish, zozobra is used to describe the slow capsizing of a ship. In my field sites, it is used to anticipate a fear that something terrible might happen and is a constant source of anxiety and suspicion. For example, many peasants say that there was zozobra when guerrillas or paramilitaries came to their territories and threatened their lives, or when they coexisted with both groups and constantly risked being branded as assisting one or the other: "zozobra is felt in the air. It can all be very calm, but at any moment, the guerrillas or the paramilitaries could come in and blame us for supporting their enemy. That was very scary because we are in the middle; we could be anyone's enemy." Zozobra currently arises when military helicopters and any kind of boat travel the air and rivers at any time of the day.

Once, while I was lying down on a hammock, a helicopter flew over us, and it made peasants stop what they were doing at that moment. Many of them were grouped on the river's shore and talked about the possibility of an army operation. I could feel their tension and concern. Afterward, Doña Esperanza, a woman with whom I was spending the afternoon, talked for two hours about how her son became a guerrilla member for 25 years, and how they suffered from the soldiers' abuses, including the story of her neighbor who disappeared in the army hands. The appearance of these things (e.g., helicopters and boats) in the forest triggers memories of violence and uncertainties of what could happen next. Similarly, Maruja, a woman from the Monguido River in Choco, remembered: "When I heard the dogs bark and soon after, boats passed through the river at night, I was paralyzed with fear. I couldn't even breathe inside the *toldillo* [awning], everything was silent, only the engines of the boats were heard". I asked if she still felt that fear, and she replied: "I had to leave the place where I used to live. I left everything. But when you leave things behind, you also take everything with you. We take our life with us; we bring the violence

with us. We still react with fear when we hear boats approaching at night. Once, I heard them, and my nose started bleeding". Fueled by memories of the violence that ruptured places, people, and lives, zozobra keeps that violence alive and vibrant. Engrained in memories and materialities, zozobra permeates an affective ecology that permanently actualizes the violence of war.

An important caveat: in Colombia, memories of violence are present because violence is not in the past. As the FARC de-occupied territories of war, agroindustrial monocrops and oil companies occupy the same territories. Their activities destroy the very nature that they deem resources: they deforest, contaminate and cause deforestation, destructing ecosystems, contaminating watersheds as well as re-activating paramilitary groups, now named BACRIM (criminal bands). These latter, that now include FARC dissidents, are interested in both legal and illegal extractivism, including coca cultivation. The presence of these new actors in the regions alongside the lack of the current government's interest in fulfilling the 2016 Peace Accord have reignited uncertainty of life and fear of death among peasants: zozobra, the feeling that the ship their lives is, can capsize at any moment[12]. Just over 600 social leaders who defended their territories from extractivism and from the presence of illegal groups have been killed since the signing of the peace accord (El Espectador). Many other peasant leaders have been threatened. The government is trying to re-activate aerial fumigation with glyphosate to fight against coca plantations, which have increased in the last years. Traveling through these territories, one can read in the walls of houses messages written by criminal bands who thus show their presence. As a peasant said: "peace is even more complicated than war, but we are going to fight for it until the end."

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[12] Zozobra is not only linked to the territorial dimension of war but also to the sociopolitical atmosphere generated with the arrival of Ivan Duque to power in 2018, and the idea of "tearing up" the peace agreements. People in rural areas read this juncture as a possible return to the bloody years of the war, which seemed to have somewhat subsided in the days before the agreement was signed.

**Ecologies of Zozobra: memories and ghostly presences**

In the places where I have conducted fieldwork, it is recurrent to hear peasants talk about specific places where "la selva asusta" –the forest frightens– and can make people who practice harm or evil get lost in it. In my previous work, I have discussed the practices that peasants carry out to avoid enraging the spirits of "la selva;" for example, they leave part of their crops to animals in the plots that were previously their habitat, and they go fishing only for the consumption of the community (Montenegro-Perini, Vélez). There are also 'bad' places where acts of violence and massacres happened. In his work in the Choco, Daniel Ruiz shows that in Riosucio, there was a streak of suicides amongst indigenous Embera children that some *Jaibanas* (shamans, local healers)[13] attributed to a spirit that consumed their souls. This spirit lives in the most remote parts of the rainforest; he was enraged because the clashes between the guerrillas and the paramilitaries left dead bodies abandoned in the bush.

Similarly, people may be afraid of transiting places where massacres occurred because they are not sure what might happen to them. Others explain that la selva and its *guardianes* [guardians] are resentful because of the violence that took place in them. Don Álvaro commented that certain places are haunted by the violent events that have occurred, such as murders, disappearances, and massacres, and people might get lost or get frightened if they decide to transit them. In his words: "If you want to go into la selva, but you do not ask permission, or you have misbehaved with it, la selva "te embolata" (it makes you get lost) or "te asusta" (it frightens you). I have friends that have been lost for weeks and when they appear are pale and thin. The war destroyed many things in la selva, and la selva is reclaiming its place". In his work, Ruiz (2018) points

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[13] Jaibana's function goes beyond healing people, it also does it with the land and nature so that there are good harvests and abundant fishing. He is considered a wise man in several Colombian indigenous communities.

out that people do not want to visit and return to their territories after being displaced because they fear those who had a bad death. Their spirits still hang around, and people may not be welcome.

Scholars working on the interface of nonrepresentational theories and Science and Technology Studies (STS) read the returning of these multiple pasts through the concepts of ghost and haunting. Beyond thinking of a ghost as an entity that stands as a representation of someone or something that disappeared or died, these authors argue that it is a presence that alters the experience of being in time (e.g., Gordon; Navaro, *The make-believe space*; Barad; Gordillo). In her work, *Ghostly Matters*, Avery Gordon argues that ghosts' appearance and their haunting presences inform that what has been erased or disappeared is very much present and alive. Ghost's haunting power is a vibrant force in which an unresolved or a violent event makes itself known, sometimes very directly, sometimes more obliquely (Gordon). In this regard, a ghost is an active social figure rather than only a missing or dead person[14]. In Gordon's words: "if haunting describes how that which appears to be not there is often a seething presence, acting on and often meddling with taken-for-granted realities, the ghost is just the sign […] that tells you a haunting is taking place. The ghost is not simply a dead or missing people, but a social figure […]" (Gordon 8) that shapes peoples' daily lives. Others, however, have considered ghosts as not only associated with dead or missing people who haunt and linger in the present as active social figures, but life-enhancing entanglements of humans and more-than-humans that have disappeared but are retained in the materiality of objects, spaces, and territories (e.g., Tsing et al; Barad; Mathews; Navaro, *The make-believe*

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[14] Gordon argues that haunting is not the same as being traumatized, exploited or oppressed, although it usually involves these experiences. Haunting cannot be simply tracked back to an individual trauma. Unlike trauma, she says, it is distinctive for producing a something-to-be-done, it is an animated state in which something unresolved is making itself known and linger in the present waiting for something to be done. Gordon explains that "this something to be done is not a return to the past but a reckoning with its repression in the present, a reckoning with that which we have lost, but never had" (183).

*space*). Anna Tsing sees the ghost as the return of multiple pasts, humans, and more-than humans, and Navaro thinks about it as a thing, a material object in itself. It appears and lingers in the form of nonhuman objects and physical environments (Navaro, *The make-believe space*). In neither case, ghosts are 'actual ghosts' appearing to people; rather, they might be affects of violence inscribed in materialities and abandoned things as well as disrupted relations that exert an effect (and affect) of haunting as people get tangled with them. One might argue that haunting is not reducible to memories as linguistically articulated narratives; it is an embodied affect generated by what is neither an absence nor a presence but exerts pressure over people—or it is an absence that is felt, and therefore a presence. Distancing from the understanding of hauntings as a form of subjective human experience (the epistemological revivification of the past into the present), Karen Barad argues that hauntings are "*lively indeterminacies of time-being, materially constitutive of matter itself*—indeed, of everything and nothing" (Barad 113). In the context presented in this article, this idea suggests that the absence of physicality of those who disappeared or the relations of what used to be is a marked absence retained in certain spaces and materialities –a marking that troubles the divide between absence and presence (Barad: 106). In other words, the absence is a virtual presence remaining in materialities, belying any insinuation of emptiness. As Barad argues, "nothingness is not empty but flush with virtuality - indeterminate platy of the non/presence of non/existence" (Barad: 112).

Haunted places are affective ecologies that inhabit people through the place. Neither real nor unreal because they exceed that conceptualization, haunted places scare and harm people. Peasants are not indifferent to what has occurred and is still occurring in them. Zozobra makes people avoid places where massacres and violent acts occurred. Doña Copete, a woman from the Choco department, commented that in the places where massacres occurred and where there are mass graves, the territory is sick: "When you travel through

those places, the territory talks and talks about violence, the disappeared, and the massacres. It is frightening. The territory is sick; you must heal it or let it heal. To let it heal, you cannot go through or walk through it" (I will explain later what healing means). As Navaro suggests, the fantasy factor in the phantasmatic is not only a figment of the imagination but a concrete manifestation of a social practice, as a tangibility, as real since it shapes and alters people's daily practices.

At the beginning of this article, Carlos' testimony explained that bridges and rivers mark(ed) a geo-human border between the guerrillas and their enemies (the army and paramilitaries). Crossing bridges supposed the risk of never coming back as people were depicted like guerrillas' or paramilitaries' spies, and therefore, they became military objectives. Carlos added to his previous comment: "The other side of the bridge was like another country. But a country that considered us as its enemies". Bridges over rivers became frontiers that separated between the possibilities of living and dying and evoked a sense of anticipation and inevitability if people crossed them. As Pardo argues with landmines, peasants could experience the 'death yet to come,' an experience that captured the zozobra of becoming the next dead person[15].

During one of my visits to a small town located on the Güejar river's shores in La Macarena, I ended up talking with three peasants over an old

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[15] Diana Pardo's work illustrates how suspicion about presence of landmines in rural areas in Colombia violently alter the relations in and with territories. Her work shows that the possible presence of these objects, the suspicion that they may (not) be there, has the capacity to affect socio-ecological relations, perhaps as much as their factual presence (45). She offers the concept of suspicious landscapes to refer to rural territories affectively and materially occupied and shaped by landmines, whose factual presence cannot be confirmed or denied, but only suspected, thereby turning this suspicion into an force that shapes peasants' livelihoods and place-making practices. These suspicious landscapes resonate with the ghostly intensity I have mentioned above as they transmit affect not only by their capacities to harm but even more when they remain unexploded. In Pardo's words: "Mine's nonexplosive capacity stems from their material potential to detonate: their threat of explosion exacerbates the ontological and phenomenological experiences of mines, which have not yet exploded, but might. The explosion is always latently present" (48). In effect, peasants learned to walk as if they were surrounded by landmines: "the possibility of moving and living depends on (re)learning the territory and (re)carving it" (82). The uncertainty of being surrounded by these artifacts taught them how to move, walk, act and perceive those landscapes.

bridge. As we walked it, they commented that the bridge had witnessed several acts of violence. One of them said: "the bridge has seen many things. This place was where the parents said goodbye to their children who joined the guerrillas". Another added: "This was also a place where paramilitaries killed people. They walked to the middle of the bridge, killed people and threw them into the river". As we talked and got closer to one of the extremes of the bridge, one of them pointed at the bridge's columns that holds its cables showing me the traces of bullets in the form of bullet holes on the wall: "Here, guerrillas and paramilitaries clashed against each other many times. They shot from one side to the other. Just as you see the bullets' traces here on the bridge, the houses over there also have traces. *Eso se siente feo* (it feels nasty) every time you see those marks. The violence is revived". One might say that the bullet holes on the walls and the bridge itself retain in their materiality the disappearance and murders of people, the battles between guerrillas and paramilitaries, the farewells of the sons and daughters who went to fight in the guerrilla. People killed and thrown into the river are not events from the past; instead, they happen every time people interact and connect with these materialities. Like the peasant told me when he said: "violence is revived."

Following some of the authors I have introduced throughout this article, I argue that these violent events are ghostly presences remaining in the bridges' traces and materialities, thereby haunting people's lives. According to them, as ghostly presences affect people, people also historicize, symbolize, and interpret them: "My son left these territories in 1999. He never came back, but I still feel the moment when I said goodbye to him as it was today", one of the peasants commented. "In 2002, the most furious combats started. You can see the holes left by the bullets", other peasant said. Moved by affective ecologies, people historicize, interpret, and localize the war residuals in space and time. Inscribed in territories, residuals of war affect, and this affect is mediated and qualified by the knowledges and practices of the people they affect. As Navaro comments:

"affect is tangible, but it is also mediated and qualified by the specific people who experience it" (Navaro 212).

The expression "the violence is revived" suggests that remembering is an act of re-living and re-inhabiting. Following Stewart, stories and memories are productive, not simply static representations from the past. What she calls ordinary affects is a force that comes to be lived as an immanently impactful habit: "something both animated and inhabitable" (Stewart, *Ordinary Affects*). In this way, one might argue that those who were killed and thrown from the bridges into the river, those who left to fight alongside the FARC and never came back, and the combats between paramilitaries and guerrillas are ghostly presences: they happen routinely through permanent acts of memory and are the source of constant zozobra in peasants' lives. Referencing the bullet holes inside of her house, Doña Marta commented: "these holes always remind me what occurred. *Se siente malestar y miedo a veces* (It feels discomfort and fear sometimes)".

Confronting that fear, people also act to heal and repair haunted territories. In her ethnography of human-soil relations in the Colombian Amazon, Kristina Lyons explores how peasants re-build their lives while living in the middle of violence, criminalization, and poisoned landscapes. Lyons thinks with Michelle Murphy's concept of latency to reflect on how the remains of glyphosate become reactivated in the present to disrupt the reproduction of the future. Glyphosate generates poisoning, illness, and impediments to cultivate on the soils, but peasants also have created the means to survive in those landscapes. In her words: "Chemically altered life harbors the memories and material residues of harm wrought against it within the same wounds from which reparative acts may also germinate" (Lyons 421[16].

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[16] Lyons argues that evidentiary ecologies are ecologies that retain traces of violence enacted against them but they may also be alternative forms of evidence-making under conditions of military duress from where peasants practice reparation. In her words: "Evidentiary ecologies may be an alternative form of making and registering evidence when one is unable to meet the

Similarly, as I mentioned before, doña Copete claimed that the territory is sick and in need of being healed. In my conversations with her, she commented: "to heal it, we must not visit it. We need to allow for its recuperation". Some of my interlocutors also added that they need to do more rezos (prayers) than usual when interacting with territories inflicted by war, leave the dead calm and avoid their visits to the places where violent events occurred. This might be read as a form of relationship that seeks to remake connections with those who are no longer physically, yet still materially present: this supposes a practice that does not necessarily have to do with the biological bodies, but, beyond that, "with the materially dead/spiritual alive" (Benjamin 48) beings in their midst.

**Final Thoughts**

Extractivism in Colombia is a form of socioecological occupation that disrupts forms of life by transforming 'nature' into 'natural resources.' This occupation also turns heterogeneous forms of existence into sameness. According to some of the authors I have here considered (e.g., Moore; Law; Haraway; Tsing), modern capitalism has expanded by imposing a world that has granted itself the right to assimilate all kinds of relations by imposing a form of relation that divides the social from the natural, the subject from the object. It renders empty the territories it occupies and cancels the relations that make those territories.

The two regions where I have conducted fieldwork have been historically marginalized and have experienced several processes of violence. In effect, the state has produced them as spaces of wildness and illegality, and peasants have been represented as being linked to drug traffickers and considered guerrilla's auxiliaries (Ramírez)[17]. Paraphrasing Didier Fassin (2004), the state has instituted

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structurally asymmetric demands of state-based knowledge production, and when faced with the limits to the science of toxicology in its application in complex environments" (421)

[17] Some of these areas are also under environmental regulations. La Macarena, for example, was declared "Área de Manejo Especial de La Macarena (AMEM)". The main objective of this zone with its laws is to protect and restore the ecosystems. Since the 1990s, different governmental and non-governmental institutions began to develop environmental policies that were consistent with

a relationship of otherness with these territories by considering them dysfunctional and illegal, and where extractive ventures and developmental programs present themselves as means to activate and correct such territories.

As an analytical tool, affective ecology might have the capacity to challenge this kind of occupation. Rather than addressing what remains after destruction and violence as a "void," the concept allows to explore the becomings of memories and materialities amid violence and destruction. What remains in the aftermath of violence composes new relations among an assemblage of entities temporally divergent (the past becoming the present and thus altering the future) that linger and haunt peoples' daily lives. There is no such thing as an empty space in the aftermath of war; on the contrary, people and territories, humans, and more-than-humans, become through ruptures. As Tsing explains, this is not meant to justify destruction and violence, but rather to pay attention to the emergent relations from where people re-think and rebuild their lives in the midst and/or in the aftermath of violence. This concept may challenge state's conception by which territories of war and their inhabitants are mere objects of intervention that need to be activated and corrected. Rather, it incites us to learn and think with the territories and their inhabitants' practices and relations.

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the principles of conservation outlined by those laws, though its implementation was difficult given the war circumstances. However, these programs represented a significant turning point in comparison with the governmental strategies launched in the twentieth century. Some areas of these regions went from being a laboratory for diverse colonization strategies to one of conservation and sustainable development.

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