

Berraquera: Development at the Fringes of the State

Julián Andrés Riveros Clavijo

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Anthropology

University College London

October 2024

I, Julián Andrés Riveros Clavijo, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to examine *berraquera*, a slang word from Colombia which means to be strong, fight the odds, and thrive despite adversity, as a distinct form of development by addressing several key questions: What kind of development does *berraquera* represent? How does it align with and differ from the neoliberal model in Colombia? What forces shape Berraquera, and how do they operate? Who are the key actors involved, and how do they envision development?

This thesis suggests that *berraquera* is as a conservative alternative to the current neoliberal model. Unlike more radical alternatives, such as *Vivir Bien* [Living Well] (Escobar 2018, 2020), or *Buen Vivir* [Good Living]. *Berraquera* does not aim to overturn the system, instead, it seeks to restore the moral foundations that the state has ostensibly lost at the core of the national development project. The origins of *berraquera* can be traced to the fringes of state control where people act independently of state structures. This context of marginality led to the emergence of a distinct form of development based on moral and religious principles.

This research offers a significant contribution to postdevelopment studies, by bringing attention to the subjects often overlooked in existing scholarship. *Berraquera* provides a lens to explore the perspectives of what might be considered “conservative subalterns” and examines development from a different angle—one of less formal discourses and practices. The anthropological significance of this study lies in its engagement with a form of knowledge that is widely understood in everyday life but remains largely unacknowledged in academic discourse.

By focusing on *berraquera* and other ancillary concepts such as *rebusque* [looking for opportunities], *amaño* [rigging], *el buen y el mal camino* [the good and the wrong ways], this thesis sheds light on the lived experiences of economically precarious and marginalised Colombians providing a more nuanced understanding of their struggles, resilience, and everyday realities. In doing so, the thesis challenges conventional frameworks and deepens our comprehension of development in contexts of marginality.

Impact Statement

Berraquera refers to the resilience, resourcefulness, and determination exhibited by Colombians.

This group, despite playing a pivotal role in Colombia's development process, has remained largely marginalised in scholarly inquiry and has yet to receive the recognition it deserves. Through my research, I aim to rectify this oversight and illuminate the significant contributions of this group to Colombia's development.

In a country like Colombia, which is emerging from a protracted conflict, understanding the dynamics between its people and the state is essential for reconciliation and post-conflict transformation. By examining how different actors navigate and negotiate their relationship with the state, my research offers valuable insights into mechanisms of political participation, the adoption of laws, and the functioning of informal economies.

On a practical level, investigating *berraquera* sheds light on the complex relationship between the people and the state, particularly in regions where the state's presence and effectiveness are limited. This research explores key questions: Why do people not always adhere to the law? Why do many resist joining the formal economy? And why do some avoid political participation? These questions, discussed under the overarching concept of *berraquera*, have long troubled Colombian policymakers, yet they remain unresolved.

Understanding *berraquera* could inform interventions and institutional reforms aimed at strengthening state-society relations, fostering inclusive governance, and promoting sustainable development in Colombia. By gaining a deeper understanding of this relationship, policymakers can design more effective mechanisms for delivering public policies and increasing their social impact.

Moreover, the implications of this research extend beyond Colombia. Many regions around the world face similar challenges arising from weak state institutions, political instability, and informal economies. By studying the dynamics of *berraquera*, my research offers valuable

comparative insights that contribute to a broader understanding of people-state relations in other contexts experiencing similar issues. This cross-cultural exchange of knowledge can enhance international development efforts and inspire innovative approaches to addressing common challenges.

Finally, *berraquera*, the central focus of this research, is a concept deeply embedded in the intangible cultural heritage of Colombians. It is a term commonly used in slang and daily conversation, yet it remains elusive, often overlooked, and underexplored. Through public engagement activities, I aim to share my findings with a broader audience.

I intend to use the concept of *berraquera* as a vehicle for public engagement, transcending the boundaries of academia. I envision a multi-faceted approach that combines innovative communication strategies, interactive platforms, and collaborative initiatives. One key aspect of this approach is the use of digital media, such as podcasts, videos, and social media platforms, to present complex ideas in a clear, engaging, and relatable manner. By leveraging storytelling and visual content, I aim to capture the interest of lay audiences and facilitate their understanding of the research findings. Through these efforts, I hope to bring *berraquera* into wider public consciousness and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of its role in Colombian society.

Note on translation

In Spanish, native speakers frequently use the passive voice to describe life, talk about themselves, or navigate their daily activities. However, this extensive use of the passive voice leads to some intriguing linguistic phenomena. It often creates the impression that the agent responsible for an action is hidden, leaving room for ambiguity. The passive voice highlights the object in a sentence while disregarding the subject. Additionally, it results in what linguists term the "impersonal construction of sentences" (Fernández, 1999).

In contrast, I observed a social reality in which people often do not know what truly happened—who did what to whom, or who is responsible for a massacre or forced displacement. They were either passive subjects in history, at the mercy of external forces, or found it too overwhelming or dangerous to speak about the perpetrators of those actions. These patterns reflect a position of subordination, and sometimes submission, in the face of undefined external forces.

This overlap between linguistic and social reality resulted in an environment where ambiguity was pervasive, making it difficult for me to identify actors with clarity. It became necessary to double-check information or delve deeper to determine who was responsible for what.

Nevertheless, the words and sentences of my interviewees reflect their lived realities and personal experiences. As such, I chose to translate them as faithfully as possible, opting to embrace the ambiguity rather than attempt to clarify or alter the voices of my Spanish-speaking participants. Even though this sometimes resulted in a loss of clarity in the ethnographic narrative or when quoting them, it was essential to preserve the authenticity of their expressions.

In doing so, I aimed to ensure that the participants' voices remained true to their original form, capturing the nuances of their speech and reflecting the complexity of their experiences, even when this introduced challenges in the translation or narration process.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to the Colombian Institute of Educational Credit and Studies Abroad (ICETEX) for funding this research through the Passport to Science scholarship programme. I also extend my thanks to Colfuturo, Fundación para el Futuro de Colombia, for partially financing this project.

I am deeply thankful to all those who offered words of encouragement during the most challenging times of the pandemic, including family, close friends, and acquaintances. Their support was invaluable.

A special thanks goes to my informants, many of whom have been pseudonymised for security reasons. Without their invaluable contributions, this thesis would not have been possible. I am especially grateful to individuals like Doña Tenorio, who, in our face-to-face conversations and phone calls, would always sing and remind me of the *Cantadoras del Pacífico*. I am also thankful to my group of Chilean informants, who generously shared their memes, photos, and ideas with me, particularly at times when visiting the field site was impossible. Their contributions were vital to my research.

I would like to extend my deepest thanks to my supervisor, Professor Hannah Knox, for her invaluable feedback, for helping me stay grounded, and for guiding me in finding my voice and structuring this project. Her insights have been instrumental in equipping me with the necessary tools to bring this thesis to completion. I am also grateful to my secondary supervisor, Dr. Lewis Daly, for his insightful comments on Developmental Anthropology and for introducing me to authors and ideas I had not previously encountered.

My sincere thanks go to Prof. Silvia Rivera Largacha, who served as my field supervisor during my time in Colombia. Her guidance was essential in shaping my thoughts, particularly on post-conflict issues. Lastly, I would like to thank Professor Marc Brightman, with whom I initially began this project and who has provided valuable guidance over the years.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT.....	3
IMPACT STATEMENT.	4
NOTE ON TRANSLATION.....	6
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.	7
LIST OF FIGURES.	13
INTRODUCTION: BERRAQUERA.....	15
THE MEANING OF BERRAQUERA.	15
BERRAQUERA AS DEVELOPMENT.	18
CONSERVATIVE SUBALTERNS.....	20
BERRAQUERA: ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT FROM THE FRINGES OF THE STATE.	21
EL VERRACO.	25
THE AFTERMATH.....	27
ETHNOGRAPHIC CONTEXT: NEOLIBERALISM. ESTALLIDOS. COVID-19.....	30
NOTE ON THEORY: BERRAQUERA, THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF DEVELOPMENT, AND THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF POPULISM.	35
DEVELOPMENT IN THEORY.....	35
AS HISTORICAL PERIOD.	35
DEVELOPMENT AS POLICIES AND PROJECTS.	36
DEVELOPMENT AS TELEOLOGY.	37
DEVELOPMENT AS DREAM AND MYTH.	38
BERRAQUERA: VERNACULAR DEVELOPMENT.	40
POSTDEVELOPMENT AND VERNACULAR ALTERNATIVES TO DEVELOPMENT.	42
BERRAQUERA VIS-A-VIS OTHER NOTIONS OF ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT.	43
POPULISM AND BERRAQUERA.	44
POPULIST RUPTURE.	50
GLOBALISATION AND THE RISE OF RIGHT-WINGED POPULISM.	54
PRESENTATION OF CHAPTERS.....	56
METHODOLOGY	64
FIELDWORK AND COVID-19.	64
DIGITAL AND REMOTE ETHNOGRAPHY.....	65
REMOTE ETHNOGRAPHY.....	66
ETHNOGRAPHY IN PRACTICAL TERMS.	68
TIMELINE.	68
FIELD SITE.	68

RECRUITMENT.	69
TECHNIQUES.	70
PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA.....	70
INTERVIEWS.	71
FOCUS GROUPS.	72
ARCHIVAL.....	73
COMPUTATIONAL AND BIG DATA.....	73
SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS.	74
IN-PERSON PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION.	75
BLOGS, PODCASTS, DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT.....	75
DOCUMENT ANALYSIS.	75
LIMITATIONS.....	76
POINT OF VIEW BIAS.	76
RELATIONSHIPS, NETWORKS AND COVID-19.....	76
REIFICATION.	78
LABELS AND ENDONYMS.....	80
 CHAPTER 1:.....	 81
 FLESH OF PIG, SPIRIT OF A MARTYR.....	 81
 TRABAJO DURO: ALFONSO.....	 81
SAMIRA: EL MAL CAMINO.	82
TRABAJO DURO: LABOUR, MORALITY, AND MONEY.	85
LABOUR.	85
MORAL ECONOMIES.....	87
MONEY AND REMITTANCES.	89
SECTION I: SPIRIT OF MARTYR.	92
MARÍA CRIES.....	92
MARTYRDOM AND <i>TRABAJO DURO</i>.	96
LABOUR AND LABOUR RELATIONS.....	98
SUFFERING AND LABOUR.....	100
THE DUTY TO WORK.	106
SACRIFICE: NIGRATION AND NEEDS.	108
SACRIFICE AND REWARD.....	112
REWARD.	113
REMITTANCES.....	113
REBUSQUES AS REWARDS.	114
CATHOLIC INTERPRETATIONS OF REWARD.	116
SECTION CONCLUSION.....	118
SECTION II: FLESH OF PIG: EL MAL CAMINO.	119
EL MAL CAMINO.....	119
WHO CAN GO DOWN BY EL MAL CAMINO AND HOW?.....	119
THE HAND OF GOD AND “EL MAL CAMINO.”	126
THE STATE AND EL MAL CAMINO: CHURCH AND STATE CLEAVAGE.....	127
GREY AREAS.....	137

ESCOBAR: THE NARCO AND ETHICAL DRUGS.....	137
PROSTITUTION AND WEBCAM WORKERS.	137
CONCLUSION.	138
 CHAPTER 2:	 140
 THE DREAM OF MODERNISATION.....	 140
 INTRODUCTION: EL PROGRESO.	 140
SECTION I: <i>EL PROGRESO</i>: DEVELOPMENT AND MODERNISATION.....	143
MODERNITY IN LATIN AMERICA.	144
MODERNITY IN COLOMBIA AND THE CRIOLLO ELITES.....	145
THE MORALITY OF PROGRESS AND MODERNITY.....	146
EL PROGRESO Y LA CIVILIZACIÓN.....	147
LIBERALISM AND ITS TENSIONS WITH THE CHURCH.	149
EDUCATION AND CIVILISATION.	151
EPILOGUE OF PROGRESS AND CIVILISATION.	152
THE AGE OF DEVELOPMENT.....	154
EL BOGOTAZO: THE END OF <i>PROGRESO</i> AND THE BIRTH OF DEVELOPMENT.....	156
THE NEOLIBERAL TURN AND THE EMERGENCE OF LA MANO NEGRA.	159
NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS: TECHNO-DEVELOPMENT.	161
SECTION CONCLUSION.	164
SECTION II: CONSERVATIVE MODERNISATION.	165
GOVERNMENTALITY AND COFFEE: LIBERAL AND CONSERVATIVE STRUGGLE.....	169
EDUCATION AND SECULARISATION.	170
COFFEE GLOBALISATION.	171
BERRAQUERA AND THE COLOMBIAN STATE.	173
CONCLUSION.	176
 CHAPTER 3:	 178
 POLITICS: VIOLENCE AND POPULISM.....	 178
 INTRODUCTION: “LA RUEDA DEL FANDANGO.”	 178
VIOLENCE: IN THEORY AND PRACTICE.	182
VIOLENCE CONTINUUM AND DIS/ARTICULATIONS.	183
CONTEXT: VIOLENCE IN COLOMBIA.....	184
SECTION I: THE THOUSAND FACES OF VIOLENCE.....	188
MASSACRES AND SILENCE.....	188
LA MANO NEGRA.....	190
NOT TALKING ABOUT POLITICS.	192
AMAÑO.....	195
CONCLUSION.	197
SECTION II: VIOLENCE AS THE MORTAR THAT ARTICULATES DEMANDS AND MOBILISES PEOPLE.	198
CAUDILLOS AND POPULISM.	201
CAUDILLOS IN SOCIAL MEDIA.	203

GETTING THE JOB DONE: MANAGING MEDIA AND AUDIENCES.	204
MANO DURA: THE PROMISE OF DELIVERING VIOLENCE.	207
NON-VIOLENT MOBILISATIONS.....	212
CHARISMA: MEETING EXPECTATIONS.	213
CONTRIBUTION TO THE FORMATION OF BORDERS BETWEEN US AND THEM.	214
PARACOS Y PETRO-ÑEROS: INSCRIBE LOCAL DISCUSSIONS INTO NATION-WIDE DISCUSSIONS.	216
CODA: VIOLENCE IN POLITICS.	219
CONCLUSION.	220
 CHAPTER 4:	 222
 COVID-19: THE RECONFIGURATION OF TRUST	 222
 INTRODUCTION: COVID-19.	 222
POST-TRUTH AND POPULISM.	226
PART I: THE PARRISH OF THE HOLY SAVIOUR.	230
SELF-CARE AND FAITH	232
CHAINS OF PRAYER AND PASTORAL WORK.	235
WELL-MEANT SHARING.	238
THE DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS.	240
PART 2: DISTRUST AND CONSPIRACIES ON SOCIAL MEDIA.	243
DISTRUST: AMAÑOS AND CARTELES.	245
BECOMING CONSPIRANOICO.	249
MORALITY AND SCIENCE.	252
CONCLUSION.	255
 CHAPTER 5:	 257
 OF MULES AND UNICORNS: REBUSQUES AND THE INFORMAL ECONOMY	 257
 INTRODUCTION: EMPANADAS.	 257
REBUSQUES, HUSTLERS, AND INFORMALITY.	261
ANTHROPOLOGY OF INFORMALITY.	263
SECTION II: MULES.	265
REBUSQUE IN THE TIMES OF COVID-19.	267
DIGITISATION OF REBUSQUE AND DEVELOPMENT.	268
LECHONA: REBSUQUES AS INSURANCE.....	272
CREATING COMMODITIES.	276
BENDING THE NORMS.....	281
SALARIED WORK AND REBUSQUES.	283
THE MARKETPLACE: GOD, THE MARKET, AND THE STATE.	286
SECTION II. UNICORNS: GOVERNMENTAL ASPIRATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT.....	290
ECONOMIES FOR UNICORNS.	291
“EL VALLE DE LA SILICONA”: FLEXIBILIZATION OF LABOUR.....	293
CITIZENS THAT ARE ENTREPRENEURS.	299
III. SYNTHESIS: A MULE WITH A HORN.	302

CONCLUSION.	305
CHAPTER 6:	306
BERRAQUERA AS DEVELOPMENT: COLOMBIAN MIGRATIONS TO CHILE.....	306
INTRODUCTION: COLOMBIA AS BARREN LAND.	306
DEVELOPMENT AND MIGRATION.	311
SURVIVAL, LACK OF OPPORTUNITIES AND MIGRATION.	312
BERRAQUERA AND THE CHILEAN DREAM.	316
WHAT IS THE CHILEAN DREAM?	318
EL BARRIO LATINO AND THE FINANCIAL DISTRICT.	320
SAN-HATTAN: THE FINANCIAL DISTRICT.	324
THE ENCOUNTER WITH OTHERNESS: THREATS TO CHILEAN DEVELOPMENT.....	326
CASTROCHAVISMO AND THE ‘GOOD IMMIGRANT.’	331
THE GOVERNMENTALITY OF THE CHILEAN STATE AND BERRAQUERA.	336
CONCLUSION.	342
CONCLUSION:.....	344
BERRAQUERA AS ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT.	344
BERRAQUERA AT THE FRINGES OF THE STATE.	347
THE WILL OF GOD. THE WILL OF THE STATE.	348
POPULISM AND DEVELOPMENT.	350
FOR THE FUTURE.	351
ANNEXE 1: SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK TECHNIQUES.....	374

List of Figures

Figure 1 : a participant greets fellow colombians calling them warriors	30
Figure 2: The author of the post salutes their compatriots, referring to them as camelladores, another term for hard workers	30
Figure 3: greeting fellow compatriots with the word Berraco	80
Figure 4: María Llorca /cries	94
Figure 5: San Lorenzo, slowly and stoically dying.....	97
Figure 6: "migrants know that they need to work hard to win/earn"	100
Figure 7: A man pulls money from a toilet, claiming that's how people in Colombia imagine life abroad—easy as going to the loo.	103
Figure 8: What people think we're doing in Chile or Spain	103
Figure 9: scrubbing in all fours, like an animal	105
Figure 10: a participant greets other Colombians by calling them warriors	116
Figure 11: The author of the post hails compatriots calling them "camelladores", another word for hard workers	116
Figure 12: The immigrant's prayer captures the ideas of suffering, reward, hard work, and the blessing of a newly discovered land.....	118
Figure 13: 'The sacred hearth of Jesus saves Colombia'	131
Figure 14: Despite the constitution prohibiting it, the text notes that many individuals and families still dedicate themselves and consecrate Colombia to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and also to that of the virgin Mary	132
Figure 15: 'Petro will be defeated soon'. a diatribe against the then candidate petro FOR DISTANCING the country from God and bringing communism	133
Figure 16: pictures shared by martha camila.....	136
Figure 17: the leader of the Colombianos Berracos group, posted a picture of a demonstration in Chile.....	207
Figure 18: Iron fist.....	211
Figure 19: A group of Chileans set fire to the tents of migrant campers	212
Figure 20: amaños, god and the state	249
Figure 21: "Share if you believe that Jesus is the greatest of all doctors."	253
Figure 22: Empanadas albinegras and marinara sauce	261
Figure 23: A note from El Colombino SAYS, THAT muleteers are the real Rappi in remote places in Colombia.....	266
Figure 24: 'Does anyone know about job positions for compatriots?'.....	268
Figure 25: selling homemade yogurt. The caption mentions the straining circumstances imposed by Covid-19.....	270
Figure 26: A lechona maker offering Colombian style chicken	271
Figure 27: "Informal vendors are also modernising. Vendors selling yuca and plantain from wheelbarrows now accept electronic payments. They use Nequi and Asigita cash apps for transfers."	271
Figure 28: street vendor in Bogota. Rebuscando. 2023	272
Figure 29: The making of Lechona. Credits to Fernanda Barriga for the pictures.....	275
Figure 30: Raffles. the raffle of a house in SOUTHEAST Colombia	279
Figure 31: "The blessing of the business and sales." bogotá, 2023.....	289
Figure 32: Graffiti in Bogota. 'Labour violence. No social welfare. Precarity.' 2023	298
Figure 33: Antofagasta-Barrio latino	324
Figure 34: some tweets arguing for the expulsion of immigrants. Arguing that they are destroying Chile	329
Figure 35: explore a sample of some conversation revolving around Colombian immigrants in Chile on kumu.	330

Figure 36: "The image shows an African man rummaging through the trash, while another man, supposedly Venezuelan, begs for alms. The title reads: 'Venezuelan in Chile begging, Haitian who doesn't speak Spanish working.'" 336

Figure 37: "This map shows the route that migrants used to take before the pandemic. Now, the airline Jetsmart offers direct flights to Santiago and Antofagasta, departing from Cali, Colombia." 342

Introduction: Berraquera.

In early March 2020, I arrived in Bogotá, Colombia, ready to begin my fieldwork. My original plan was to travel by bus from Cali, Colombia, to Antofagasta in northern Chile. My aim was to study how the alternative development concept known as *Vivir Bien* (Escobar, 2020, p. 9), proposed by Afro-descendant communities, had evolved following their exodus to Chile, where many people from the Colombian Pacific had recently emigrated. However, the outbreak of the pandemic and subsequent lockdowns quickly disrupted my plans. I never embarked on that journey, but instead, I encountered something entirely unexpected: a concept called *berraquera*, which would become the central theme of this thesis.

The first person I met during my research was Maritza, a self-identified *Negra del Pacífico*—a proud Afro-descendant woman from Colombia's Pacific Coast. She was in the final stages of her degree in communication at a local university. We met at a small, bustling café opposite her campus, where we shared coffee and empanadas. I had sought her out because she had an aunt living in Chile—a member of a relatively recent wave of migration. Although no one could pinpoint exactly when it began, Colombians, particularly Afro-descendant women from the Pacific, had been steadily migrating to Chile for at least a decade.

My focus was on hearing the stories of these migrants, understanding their experiences and lives. Above all, I was eager to learn how *Vivir Bien*—a philosophy rooted in balance and well-being—had adapted in such distant lands. To my surprise, when I asked Maritza about it, she simply said, "I've never heard of it". Taken aback, I tried to explain myself more clearly.

Julian: "Alright, Maritza, here's what I'm interested in. I want to study development as understood by Afro-descendant communities from the Pacific. Escobar describes it as an

alternative form of development—one deeply rooted in the riparian territories, local villages, nature, and traditions. It stands in opposition to mainstream ideas of development”.

Maritza: "I'm sorry, I've never heard of that before. Those ideas sound fascinating, but they don't really match my understanding of development, nor do they reflect the needs of my community”.

Julian: "Okay, then what does? What do you think development is, or what should it be?"

Maritza: "Well, I come from Barbacoas. I don't know if you've heard of it—it's a small town in Nariño, down in Southwest Colombia. My family originally comes from an even smaller village nearby, but when my mother was young, she moved to Barbacoas. To me, Barbacoas is the most beautiful place on earth. It rains every day, some of the beaches have black sand, and the tides are strong but warm. But... there's nothing there. Absolutely nothing”.

Julian: "What do you mean?"

Maritza: "Well, my mother's a nurse, but the hospital is falling apart. They owe her nine months' salary, and she's always complaining that there are no medicines, no supplies, and they're constantly working beyond capacity. She says they run that hospital on prayers, and it's a miracle it's still open. She struggles every day—how can we live like that? My father teaches at the local school, and it's the same story. The state hasn't paid him in months, and the school has no infrastructure. There's a leak in his classroom, no books, no library.

The entire town, and really all the towns along the Pacific, face the same situation. There are no roads. To even get there, I have to take a bus, then a *mototaxi*, and finally a boat—it takes ages and costs a fortune. How can anyone live like that? These towns have been

completely abandoned by the State. There are no opportunities, so the only real option is to leave”.

Julian: "I see... Is that why your aunt left?"

Maritza: "Yes. There were other things going on in her life, but that was a big part of it. She knew she'd be starting from zero, but it was better than staying here, waiting for something to happen. I don't think she's really making progress though. She's in debt—she had to pawn her belongings just to pay for the journey. And after all these years, she's still barely surviving. But you know what? I think she's a *berraca*. I know she's struggling, but I admire her. She wasn't afraid to leave and explore places no one from our community had been to. She's tough. My mother says she was taking too many risks, that she was stubborn, but I get it. She's fighting for something, for her family”.

(Pauses)

"So, for me, development is about infrastructure. It's about roads, a hospital that works, having money to feed your kids—it's about opportunities. If no one's going to give that to us, if the State won't provide solutions, then we must go and get it ourselves. And for that, we need some *berraquera*”.

This early conversation opened my eyes to the possibility that the word *berraquera* embodied an entire notion of development—one that existed both in dialogue with, and in opposition to, the state's neglect. It pointed to a concept where individuals are the central agents of development, suggesting that their efforts and struggles can create well-being and opportunities for themselves and their families.

Before our fourth meeting, the pandemic hit hard. Bogotá, usually a noisy, bustling city, was suddenly silenced, with death lurking around every corner in the form of "the bug", as many called COVID-19. The national authorities imposed strict curfews, even

threatening military enforcement. Life came to a complete halt, and unfortunately, I lost contact with Maritza for a long time. However, our conversations had already revealed the immense potential of studying *berraquera*.

During that time, I began actively following several Facebook groups run by Colombians in Chile, which Maritza and others had recommended. In the early months of my fieldwork, amidst the lockdowns and curfews, I explored the concept of *berraquera* largely through these online forums.

In the following pages, I will unpack the meaning of *berraquera* and explore its core idea: that *berraquera* represents a distinct form of alternative development. I will then introduce the participants of this research, trace the origins of the concept, and examine how it influences the ideas and practices. Following this, I will provide a detailed account of the ethnographic setting in which my fieldwork unfolded. Finally, I will delve into the theoretical frameworks essential for understanding *berraquera*, with a particular focus on the anthropology of development and studies of populism.

The Meaning of Berraquera.

What does *berraquera* mean? The word *verraco* comes from the Latin *verres*, meaning a breeding boar, pig, or uncastrated swine, carrying the same meaning in Spanish (RAE, 2022). I use *berraco* and *Berraquera* with a “B” because this is how most of my informants spell the word, likely since in Colombian Spanish, “B” and “V” are pronounced similarly. One meaning of *berraquera* or *Berraco* is synonym of being angry; “*Que berraquera*” or “*Que berraco*”, but another meaning, closer to the connotation that I employ here is that of being strong or tenacious.

Berraquera is part of Colombian slang, used in everyday life, that from afar seems devoid of deep meaning but on closer inspection expresses deep ideas regarding development as I will show over the course of this thesis. *Berraquera* is a vernacular concept used by

Colombians to refer to many things: a demeanour, a go-get attitude, is finding the strength not only to survive but to thrive in adverse contexts, is collecting forces to wake up and fight every day, being relentless and unstoppable, very much like the strength and anger of a raging animal. In fact, the word *berraquera* was used intensively to praise or congratulate someone for being strong and tenacious.

I argue that *berraquera* is also the belief that individual hard work creates development and well-being for individuals, their families, home, and host countries. It is the belief that individual efforts can overcome excruciating external circumstances —such as the pandemic, and the lack of opportunities. The belief that individuals and development must follow God’s teachings and commandments, and that the state, although a significant actor and referent regarding development, is not necessarily the entity that will bring about development, at least not without people like my informants.

Both my early chats with Maritza, as well as my participation on these Facebook groups, showed me a new perspective on development, a version of development that they called *berraquera*, that comes from a particular group of Colombians who had in common their desire to emigrate or that already emigrated, principally to Chile to find opportunities.

However, I must warn that *berraquera* can have more meanings than the one I am presenting here, however, this was the principal meaning my participants gave to it.

Moreover, there are other words or notions that I found that expressed something similar like ser *Guapo* [strong, handsome] in the Colombian plainlands, “*ponerle huevos*” [having balls], “*meterle garra*” [having claws] and so on. Nonetheless, *berraquera* was the most prominent and the word they mostly used to describe themselves and their ideas about development.

In the next section, I will explain what it means to understand *berraquera* as a form of development.

Berraquera as Development.

The core argument of this thesis posits that *berraquera* can be understood as an alternative form of development, distinct from the current state-led neoliberal model.

The key difference lies in the moral foundation underpinning each: *berraquera* promotes a development path grounded in Christian moral values, while neoliberal development is perceived as lacking this ethical dimension. Though both approaches share common ground in advocating for economic progress and liberal principles like hard work and entrepreneurship, they diverge sharply regarding the role of the state, which *berraquera* views as corrupt, fraudulent, and morally compromised.

This thesis aims to explore *berraquera* as a form of development, addressing questions such as: What type of development does *berraquera* present? How does it both align with and diverge from Colombia's neoliberal model? What forces shape it and how? Who are its key actors and how do they envision development?

This divide between the *berraquera* and neoliberal development, as notions of development is experienced by my participants as a rupture that creates certain relations and influences some attitudes, as Maritza highlights, people will not choose waiting for the state to solve their problems but instead striving to achieve development independently. Their lives unfold in a space where the state plays only a marginal, often antagonistic role, yet still influences their concept of *berraquera*. In this context, forces like God and Catholic teachings are pivotal to shaping this notion of development.

Ultimately, *berraquera* exist as a form of alternative to the current neoliberal development model, however, far from being a radical alternative as in the case of *Vivir Bien* studied by Escobar (Escobar, 2018, 2020), *berraquera* is relatively conservative, as it strived to recover the morality based that the state had lost at the centre of the national development project.

Furthermore, this alternative provided by *berraquera* seems to be originated at the fringes of state outside of its effective control, as it was a set of ideas formed during a time of territorial expansion that transcended up to today.

This research is relevant contribution because it empirically, adds the discussion subjects left behind in development studies, as I will discuss later in this introduction they could be understood as conservative subalterns, also, sees development from another angle, that of less structured discourses and practices. Examining *berraquera* is anthropologically significant as it offers access to a form of knowledge that, while widely understood in everyday life, remains largely unrecorded and unacknowledged in formal discourse and in academic production.

As a vernacular term, *berraquera* provides a valuable lens through which to explore the lived experiences of economically precarious and marginalised Colombians—experiences that have often been overlooked in existing research. By foregrounding this term, it becomes possible to understand these individuals in ways that go beyond the conventional categories in which they are typically situated, revealing aspects of their lives that standard frameworks frequently overlook. In doing so, we gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of their struggles, resilience, and day-to-day realities.

Conservative subalterns.

Who are the participants in this research, and how do they shape my understanding of *berraquera*? I am studying a diverse group of individuals, some of whom proudly refer to themselves as *Berracos* to highlight their resilience and strength. This group, however, is loosely connected, sharing certain ideas about development and common values (see Chapter 1), though not universally. As a result, *berraquera*, as I explore it here, is not a fully coherent or uniform concept. Instead, it is a fluid collection of political, economic, and moral orientations that together form an alternative to mainstream development.

Initially, my focus was on the inhabitants of the Pacific region, particularly Afro-descendants. Scholars such as Oslender (Oslender, 2007), Escobar (Escobar, 2004), and Asher (Asher, 2009) have examined how these communities were forcibly displaced in the name of development. Echeverri (Echeverri B, 2016) further established a link between this displacement and the early migration of Afro-Colombians to Chile.

When I began my fieldwork, I quickly realised that Afro-descendants were not the most prominent group of emigrants. Consequently, my research shifted—not only in terms of the subject matter but also the population I was studying. Instead of focusing on a single group, I found myself engaging with a far more diverse set of Colombians. Some hailed from the Pacific coastal region, while others came from the West and Southwest—areas shaped by the territorial expansion of *the Colonización Antioqueña*. Others were from Central Colombia, including Bogotá and its surrounding cities, and still others from the Caribbean.

Moreover, my informants were not just current immigrants living in Chile, but also prospective migrants still based in Colombia. Some were relatives or friends of those abroad, while others had no direct connection to Chile at all. Additionally, several of my informants were Chileans whose insights and facilitation proved invaluable. Demographically, my participants spanned various social classes, although the majority were working class. While a few had completed tertiary education, with some even holding postgraduate degrees, most had only finished secondary schooling.

A particularly significant group I engaged with was the Health Pastoral of the Church of the Holy Saviour. This diverse group, predominantly women, many with backgrounds in nursing and medicine, provided essential support to those in need during the pandemic. Their insights and feedback were crucial to my research.

Engaging with such a diverse group has revealed that *berraquera*, as I study it, is far from a uniform concept. While there is consensus on certain issues, there are also disagreements and

unresolved tensions, particularly on political and moral grounds, as I will explore in the chapters on violence and morality. *Berraquera*, as I understand it in this research, offers a flexible framework that helps navigate the challenges of studying a varied sample. It also allows me to move beyond fixed categories like ethnicity or class, which still dominate much of Colombian anthropology.

In summary, I interpret *berraquera* as a fluid concept, somewhat analogous to the idea of mestizos—a term often tied to race or ethnicity, reflecting the blending of racial identities in Colombia's social fabric (Restrepo et al., 2017; Wade, 2003).

Why is studying a group like my informants empirically significant to the post-development debate? I argue that while my participants can be viewed as subaltern, living in both symbolic and physical spaces at the margins of state-led development, the alternative vision of development they propose is conservative—an outlook often overlooked in the anthropology of development.

Subaltern groups are often portrayed as downtrodden yet morally upright, positioned as champions of alternatives to development and modernity. Examples from Latin America include Brazil's *Movimento dos Trabalhadores sem Teto* (Duriguetto, 2017; Miranda, 2008), the *Zapatistas* of the EZLN (Rabasa, 1998; Restrepo et al., 2017; Restrepo, 2009), and Colombia's *Proceso de Comunidades Negras* (Escobar & Rocheleau, 2008; Pardo, 2002). Indigenous movements in Bolivia and Ecuador have also managed to incorporate their visions into state frameworks (Acosta & Abarca, 2018; Altmann, 2016; Gudynas, 2016; Rodríguez Mir, 2008; Schavelzon, 2015; Torres-Solis & Ramírez-Valverde, 2019).

In stark contrast, William Westermeyer's ethnography in *The Anthropology of Donald Trump: Culture and the Exceptional Moment* (Eller, 2021; Westermeyer, 2022), explores the identities of Trump supporters, often labelled "deplorables". These individuals see themselves as disenfranchised, subjugated by liberal elites. Yet, their "spoiled" identities serve as the

foundation for activism driven by grievance. Unlike subaltern movements that seek alternative futures, they retreat to traditional American values—hard work, Christianity, and conservatism—resisting new modes of living.

Like Eller and Westermeyer's observations, my participants proudly identify as inheritors of campesino Catholicism and republican liberalism—traditions that have become ghostly anachronisms in the face of neoliberal development and the digital, entrepreneurial skills it demands. Rather than proposing alternatives to development, my informants often support and align with significant aspects of liberal ideas, practices, and relationships. In many instances, they actively advocated for maintaining the status quo, even justifying gross human rights violations (see chapter on violence), despite occupying disadvantaged and marginalised positions.

However, as Laclau suggests—an argument I will expand on in the theoretical section—revitalising declining political systems and offering alternatives requires considering groups that have long been dismissed, even if their proposals are conservative (Laclau, 2005).

In conclusion, I am studying subjects who, in some ways, contradict the tenets of alternative development. Although they have been marginalised and excluded from the benefits of neoliberal development, the alternatives they present are conservative. This perspective is often overlooked in the anthropology of development. In this sense, my research moves away from romanticised representations of subalterns and challenges the tendency to dismiss their claims as mere populist rhetoric.

In the next section, I will explain how the notion of *berraquera* emerged at the fringes of the central state.

Berraquera: Alternative development from the Fringes of the State.

Where does the term "*Berraco*" come from and how did the tale of a stubborn boar evolve into a symbol of tenacity for many Colombians? How does this legend connect to the modern notion of *berraquera* as development? The story of the *Verraco*—a defiant boar that inspired the concept of *berraquera*—emerged during Colombia's agrarian expansion, spanning from the late 18th to early 20th centuries. During this time, institutions like the church and political parties shaped the frameworks that are still present in *berraquera* today, while the central state's reach remained weak (see Chapter 2 for further details). The modern understanding of *berraquera* as development carries with it the themes of independence, resilience, and tenacity rooted in the *Verraco* legend.

This historical phenomenon, known as the *Colonización Antioqueña*, marks a significant chapter of territorial expansion and settlement within Colombia's national borders. At the forefront of this movement were the *campesinos*, muleteers, and *colonos* [settlers]. Through a series of territorial conquests—often marked by clashes with other populations—they carved out what is now known as the *Eje Cafetero* [the Coffee Axis], starting near Medellín in Antioquia and extending into neighbouring regions like Valle del Cauca in the South-West, closer to the Pacific.

As Spanish rule came to an end, the region's once-thriving tobacco and mining industries were in steep decline. By the early 19th century, Antioquia had become one of the poorest provinces of the Nueva Granada (Llano, 2013, p. 4). On top of this, the concentration of productive land in the hands of a few landowners created immense pressure on the peasantry. These factors were the primary driving forces behind the exodus that followed.

Different groups of settlers gradually took various routes to conquer and cultivate lands the state regarded as wastelands, in need of habitation and sustenance. Many *colonos* were also drawn by the allure of *guacas*—treasures of gold and other valuables believed to be buried by the indigenous inhabitants of these lands in ancient times. While the conquest is often romantically portrayed, even by scholars (Parsons, 2022), the reality involved frequent

confrontations with indigenous groups, afro-descendant communities, and rival settlers. What the state deemed "uninhabited" was, in fact, home to people who differed from the dominant *mestizo* population. As Valencia put it, "They truly conquered the territory by hacking and slashing into the jungle with machetes" (Llano, 2018, p. 15).

Initially, the settlers cultivated crops such as cassava, corn, and plantain, but these soon gave way to coffee, which would become the region's dominant crop. Smallholding *colonos* began earning stable incomes through coffee exports, with some even rising the socio-economic ladder and amassing sudden wealth. During this period, the *hacienda* system—a large-scale agricultural enterprise—began to flourish, allowing landowners to accumulate even more land and power. By the first half of the 20th century, coffee farms and an emerging coffee oligarchy solidified their local influence (Palacios, 2009, p. 310). According to Londoño, "the development of the coffee economic model, inseparable from the *Colonización Antioqueña*, was credited with bringing peace and prosperity to the new nation" (Londoño, 2002, p. 189).

In rural areas, civil power did not rest with the state but it was instead wielded by *gamonales* and *caudillos* [local landowners aligned with political parties], who operated with little interference from the central government. Additionally, the Catholic Church played a dominant role in shaping the vision, attitudes, and behaviours of the populace (Huff, 2020), as it was largely responsible for educating the people.

Although the state made efforts to introduce secular education by seizing control of assets, including schools belonging to religious orders (Liz, 2012; Salcedo, 2004), its influence over the population remained weak. The Church staunchly opposed Liberalism (Arias Trujillo, 2009; Rojas, 2017), condemning it as atheist, immoral, and materialistic—a system where only material wealth and individual gain mattered.

According to Andrade, the Church feared that secular, liberal education would leave the population vulnerable to dangerous, atheistic ideas (Andrade Alvarez, 2011). This fear led the

Church to align with the Conservative Party, even using the pulpit as a political platform (Helg, 1987, p. 163). In some cases, "secular schools in villages had to close due to lack of students", as priests urged peasants to enrol their children only in private Catholic schools (Saldarriaga Velez, 2010, pp. 84-85).

On the one hand, the *colonos* were the instruments of the state to conquer the wastelands, the labour force that would develop the country (Bushnell, 1993b; Rojas, 2002), and be instrumental in the transportation of goods and materials. Furthermore, at the same time, according to Ospina, the Catholic religion (Ríos Molina, 2002), along with partisan political affiliations, was the base of the identity of the *colonos* (Lara, 2013).

It could be a coincidence, but a significant number of my participants living in Chile or planning to move in, come from the regions that comprise the conquered areas. Lara states that the history of the *Colonización Antioqueña* (Lara, 2013; Ocampo, 1986) is typically portrayed by scholars as one of the mixed-race men and their families who triumphantly conquered and cultivated the land, at least according to the prevailing national narrative. In my research, many of the individuals I interviewed identified themselves as descendants of this legacy and the grandchildren—biologically or symbolically—of the *colonos*, someone even mentioned: "*nuestros abuelos desarrollaron este país a lomo de mula*" [our grandparents developed this country on the back of mules].

El Verraco.

During the *Colonización Antioqueña*, several myths and legends gained popularity, such as *Madremonte* and *La Patasola* [female vengeful spirits], serving as cautionary and moralising tales (Ocampo López, 2001, p. 31). Among these stories is the legend of *El Verraco de Guacas*.

The story tells of Spanish conquerors discovering indigenous *guacas* (treasures) in a small town in Antioquia (Suaréz Guava, 2017), leading them to name the town accordingly. At

some unknown point in history, a boar—*un verraco*—began terrorising the local peasants, escaping at night to raid farms and prey on sows from neighbouring properties.

The *verraco* trampled salt ponds, destroyed crops, broke into chicken coops, killing the animals, and preyed on smaller livestock. It fought relentlessly against the peasants who attempted to stop it. According to legend, the villagers both feared and respected the animal (Cadavid Misas, 1996). They admired its physical traits—large, powerful, and ideal for breeding—as well as its qualities of tenacity, courage, and fearlessness, while simultaneously being intimidated by its destructive nature.

The story goes that, weary of the *verraco*'s rampage, the villagers banded together to hunt it down. The boar was finally killed, but in a symbolic twist, its legend endured, transforming into an adjective to describe individuals who shared its traits.

According to the tale, a villager named José María García was the first to be called *berraco*—a charismatic and strong ladies' man, often embroiled in trouble due to his many affairs, yet possessing the same remarkable strength and tenacity as the boar. Over time, the term *berraco* evolved to describe "one who, through courage and vision, achieves their goals. *El berraco*, the tough one" (Bacal, 2021).

However, Ocampo López cautions that *berraco* is also synonymous with *El Putas*, "the personification of evil... the enemy of God and man... Satan" (Ocampo López, 2001, p. 105). This darker meaning was rarely encountered in my research, as few people used the term in this way.

In contrast, there is the enduring myth of *la raza paisa*. Another legend that emerged during the colonisation period, with repercussions still felt today, is the idea of the *raza paisa* or *Antioqueña* [Paisa/Antioqueña Race]. This myth posits that the *Antioqueños*—or *paisas*, as they are commonly known—are a distinct and superior breed. This notion has been explored from genetic and anthropological perspectives. Peter Wade explains that

the "idea of *raza Antioqueña* glorifies the image of a lineage marked by hard work, business acumen, adventurous spirit, self-confidence, democracy, and whiteness—or at least not being *black or indigenous*" (Wade, 2000, p. 140).

Wade further elaborates that the national narrative portrays *paisas* as "enterprising, colonising go-getters" who belong to a genetic isolate (Wade, 2020, p. 10). He clarifies that the concept of *raza Antioqueña* reflects a process of whitening and eugenics from the republican era, aligning with Simón Bolívar's vision. Bolívar aimed to dismantle the caste system imposed by the Spanish, contributing to the construction of a post-racial democracy as part of modernity (Wade, 2020).

The Aftermath.

It remains unclear how the concept of berrquera spread to other regions of Colombia, but today, many people—regardless of whether they are direct descendants of the muleteers who led the colonisation—recognise the contribution of these pioneers to the nation's development. They assert that berrquera is not exclusive to Antioqueños, but a quality shared by all Colombians.

Today, the term berraco/a is commonly used in everyday language to express tenacity and toughness. Many individuals proudly identify as berraco or berraca. My participants still exists at the fringes of the state physically and symbolically, a space in which the control and power of the central states are weak (Poole & Das, 2004) this is evident in many instances, for example at the margins of the formal economy (Chapter 5), at the margins of the political process (Chapter 3), at the margins of the migratory enforcement (Chapter 6), interacting with institutions briefly, trying to take advantage of the affordances given by the state, but also seeking opportunities in formal and state sanctioned sources and informal ones. This space that separated them from central powers was aggrandise due to the pandemic which unfolded for most of my fieldwork.

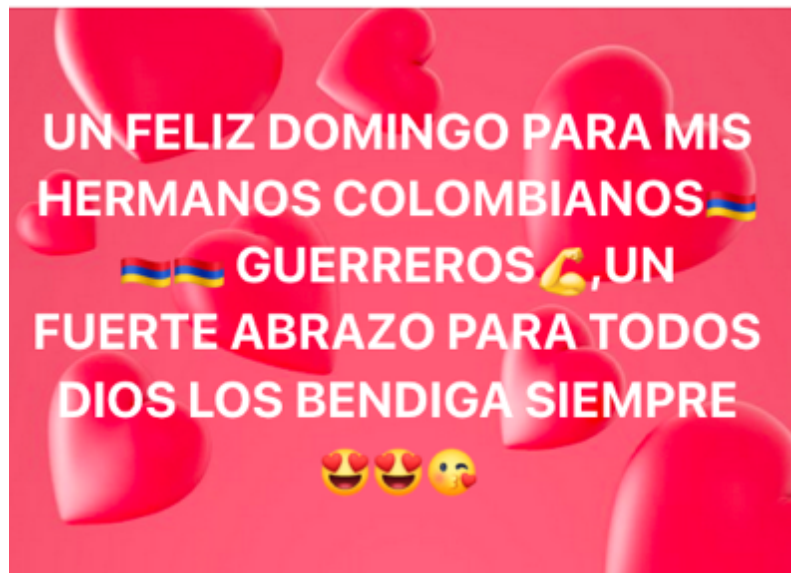


Figure 1 : A participant greets fellow Colombians calling them “warriors”

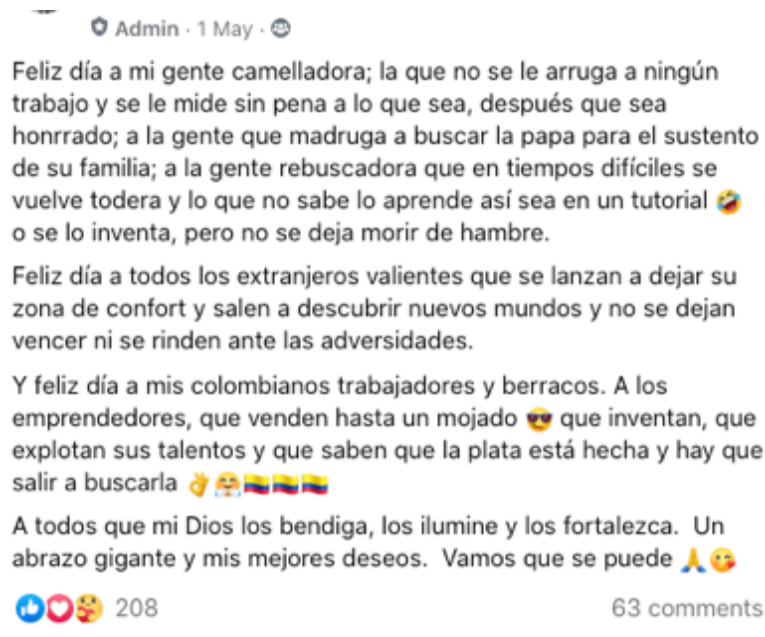


Figure 2: The author of the post salutes their compatriots, referring to them as “*camelladores*”, another term for hard workers

Colombia and its people have changed significantly since the time of colonisation. The country is now more decentralised and politically plural (López-Murcia, 2022). While the Catholic Church’s influence on state affairs has diminished, it still operates many schools across the country (Guillén, 1993; Zapata, 2022). Most of my informants identify as Catholics—though many are non-practising—and tend to be less conservative than previous generations. A smaller minority belong to Pentecostal churches (Rondón

Palmera, 2007). Even though Colombian society is more secular today, this does not mean that the presence of God, as a guiding and ultimate force, is any less significant (Beltrán Cely, 2013; Quezada, 2009).

In the next heading I will provide some detail about the ethnographic context of this research. Certainly, many of the contextual variables influenced the topics and relationships that I observed and discuss over this work.

Ethnographic context: Neoliberalism. *Estallidos*. Covid-19.

What was happening globally, and specifically in Colombia and Chile, during my fieldwork?

How did the ethnographic context shape my research? The context in which I conducted this study significantly influenced not only my methods (see Methodology) but also the topics and relationships I explored. The Covid-19 pandemic imposed restrictions but also exposed ideas, emotions, and dynamics that might not have surfaced in other circumstances. The pandemic laid bare the cracks and failures of neoliberalism, making them part of daily life, and highlighted how the concept of *berraquera* offered an alternative.

Although I was physically based in Colombia during my fieldwork, many of my informants were in Chile, and this dual context significantly influenced the findings presented in this thesis.

Colombia and Chile share several historical similarities: both were once part of the Spanish Empire's overseas territories, gained independence around the same period, and were founded as modern nations grounded in the principles of modernisation and economic liberalism.

Similarities are not only historical, during the time of my fieldwork both countries had experience violence including violence from the state, political turmoil, *estallidos sociales* [Social outburst/explosion], and of course, a global pandemic. Both countries are decidedly neoliberal and even the institutional design and political apparatus resemble each other. There

is, however, one stark difference: People consider Chile a developed/ing country, while Colombia is not.

Neoliberalism is the structural scenario where this research happened. Neoliberalism is not only an economic system but an ideology and way of organising life that proposes specific kinds of relations between the actors of development: a state that regulates rather than provides and a market that should distribute and create wealth, with a citizenry that receives services and it is a client of the state (Biedzynski, 2016; Bornstein, 2003; Elyachar, 2005; Esping-Andersen, 1990; Gibbon, 2002; Kontinen & Millstein, 2017). I found these official discourses and dominant dynamics in this research.

In neoliberalism people must fend for themselves, as the aid coming from institutions is meagre, so I found stories plagued with experiences of “increasing poverty, deterioration of life conditions, and increasing hopelessness” (Ortner, 2016, p. 55), but also, as Empson mentions, this living conditions manifested as generative force that pushes people to “forge new paths” (Empson, 2020, p. 12), this materialise for instance in the resourcefulness that my participants exhibited to face the living condition of the pandemic (Chapter 5).

In a beautiful yet sorrowful ethnography that shows the experiences of the urban poor in Santiago de Chile, Clara Han, in a book entitled *Life in Debt Times of Care and Violence in Neoliberal Chile* (Han, 2012), depicts the sadness, helplessness, and loss of agency that people in marginalised areas lived. Han works on the paradox of being poor in a country that is supposed to be doing good and scratching the neoliberal promise of development. However, Han also plays with the notion of debt, studying how people developed strategies to survive in neoliberal Chile by being perpetually in debt, but also debt is the word used by the state after the return to democracy to express what the state owes to its citizens, however, over the time the obligation has faded out.

In the words of Elizabeth, one of my Chilean informants, *El Estallido Social* [The Social Outbreak], “a series of violent protests, that were on the rise just weeks before the curfews of 2020, was the symptom of this massive debt, poverty, and the fact that the promise of development was only for the few”. To some extent, there was a moral justification for insurrection for a population sector.

Shortly after the *Estallidos* broke up in Chile, they followed up in Colombia with similar intensity and similar grievances. Debates, tensions, and fights between those in favour and those against became common topics of discussion among my participants. As reported by *La Tercera*, “low pensions, high prices of medicines and healthcare, a general rejection of the elites, and the disbelief on institutions accumulated over the last years” (La tercera, 2019) were among the structural causes. In Colombia, the trigger for the *Estallido* was the tributary reform.

My informants commonly rejected *Estallidos* arguing that they would only allow for communism to flourish, it was very common to find on Facebook the slogan of a right-wing Colombian politician who said, “*yo no paro, yo produzco*” [I don’t stop, I work/produce] to explain why the *Estallidos* were negative.

Without warning, Covid-19 abruptly halted the *Estallidos*, and effectively all the attention and conversation moved from the social unrest to the sanitary emergency. The sanitary emergency made evident structural problems such as lack of health infrastructure, lack of qualified medical personnel, and the lack of protection from the state. Both the Chilean and Colombian governments attempted to solve this catastrophic event by giving credit to people in need instead of other forms of assistance. Most of my informants did not have “regular status” in Chile, thus not qualifying for credit.

Almost identically, the Colombian state responded by giving loans to businesses, and postponing social security payments. The government launched highly targeted aid packages

that required hard-to-meet conditions to access them. Likewise, the aid for Colombians abroad was almost nil, except for a small stimulus of about 20 dollars. At this time, the focus of attention of my informants was divided between their dire realities in Chile and the dire situations of their relatives in Colombia.

The situation worsened when the government of Sebastián Piñera also offered them free humanitarian flights back to Colombia, but with the clause that they sign a legal document in which they promised not to return to Chile for at least ten years, which my informants considered “a slap in the face”.

Almost at the same time, a group of Colombians comprised mostly of *sin papeles* [undocumented], who had lost their jobs and consequently their homes, for which they decided to camp in the streets surrounding the Colombian consulate, asking for help, repatriation and, bluntly, to be treated with dignity.

These were turning points for my informants that deteriorated their trust in institutions in both states. These events made them question their role in development and how it should look like which I analyse along this thesis.

In summary, the most striking context for this research was the fact that it was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic. Many of the observations, experiences, and discussions I explored emerged from the tensions and disruptions brought about by the pandemic. It laid bare the vulnerabilities and fractures of neoliberalism, intensifying pre-existing issues.

While my fieldwork did not extend into the pandemic’s aftermath, both Colombia and Chile briefly resumed their *Estallidos* and life gradually returned to normal for my participants.

Notably, both countries went on to elect left-wing presidents: in Colombia, for the first time, an ex-guerrilla member became president, alongside an African-descendant woman as vice president.

Note on theory: Berraquera, the Anthropology of Development, and the Anthropology of Populism.

I frame this research within the discourse of development, more specifically post-development, as it centres on how my informants envision development—what it should entail and how it should manifest. This includes exploring the tensions and points of agreement with the prevailing neoliberal development model, as well as the alternatives that berraquera proposes to this hegemonic framework. However, while the development paradigm offers valuable insights, it may fall short in capturing the full complexity of empirical realities I encountered, particularly concerning issues of violence, mistrust, populist discourses, and politics. In this regard, populism studies provide complementary perspectives.

In this section, I will delve into the two primary theoretical frameworks guiding this research, highlighting their analytical utility. I will begin by reviewing the literature on Development and Post-development, followed by an examination of key ideas on populism, with a particular focus on the work of Ernesto Laclau.

Development in Theory.

I propose that *berraquera* can be understood as a vernacular form of development that exists in dialogue with mainstream development discourse. This makes it essential to closely examine the literature on development to compare *berraquera* with established theories, and to interpret current development models in Colombia and Chile. A thorough understanding of development theory also helps to characterise and analyse these models.

Development has been explored in several ways: as a historical period, as discourse and practice (primarily through policies and projects), as a teleology or ideal state of being, and finally, as a dream or myth. These meanings often overlap, and the literature does

not always clearly distinguish between them. In this research, I consider both *berraquera* and neoliberal development across all these dimensions.

As Historical Period.

Arturo Escobar, in *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (Escobar, 1995), argues that the post-World War II reconstruction ushered in a new global order, with the United States at the forefront, exporting its worldview to other nations. In 1949, President Harry Truman announced his vision of a “fair deal” for the world, emphasising the need for the United States and its allies to address the challenges of “underdeveloped areas” of the globe (Escobar, 1995, p. 3). This discursive act not only constructed the concept of an “underdeveloped” Third World but also introduced the notion that it could be lifted out of poverty and misery through economic strategies aimed at achieving “high levels of industrialisation and urbanisation, the technification of agriculture, rapid growth in material production and living standards, and the widespread adoption of modern education and cultural values” (Escobar, 1995, p. 4).

Escobar contends that this was an attempt to extend the American Dream to less fortunate nations, which over time transformed into a nightmare. Instead of delivering the promised prosperity, “the discourse and strategy of development produced its opposite: massive underdevelopment and impoverishment, untold exploitation and oppression. The debt crisis, the Sahelian famine, increasing poverty, malnutrition, and violence are only the most pathetic signs of the failure of forty years of development” (Escobar, 1995, p. 4).

Development, often framed as the global expansion of Western modernity, promotes ideals such as economic growth, technological progress, and individualism as universal objectives. This model assumes a linear progression towards a Western standard of modernity, frequently marginalising local traditions, values, and alternative developmental pathways. Consequently, it imposes external ideals while neglecting the

diverse social, cultural, and political contexts across the world. While the historical period known as "development" has a clear starting point, its endpoint remains ambiguous, if it has ended at all.

Development as Policies and Projects.

The second key feature of development is its technical component, often manifested through development policies and projects. Escobar argues that such measures were implemented in so-called Third World countries by "experts", typically members of international commissions or development agencies. A notable characteristic of the knowledge produced by these experts is the heavy reliance on economic jargon and frameworks to legitimise their interventions.

James Ferguson, in his seminal work *The Anti-Politics Machine: Development, Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho*, provides a critical anthropological analysis of these international development projects, focusing specifically on efforts in Lesotho (Ferguson, 1994). Ferguson critiques how development agencies from the Global North conceptualise and intervene in countries of the Global South. He argues that these projects often fail because they misinterpret local social, economic, and political contexts, treating them as static and isolated, rather than dynamic and interconnected within a global system.

Ferguson introduces the concept of "anti-politics" to describe how development interventions depoliticise the very issues they claim to address. Rather than recognising the political and structural roots of poverty and inequality—such as colonial legacies or unequal power relations—development projects narrow their focus to technical solutions. This reductionist approach presents complex problems as purely administrative or technical challenges, thereby obscuring broader political and economic dimensions. In this way, the "anti-politics" stance diverts attention from power dynamics and systemic inequalities.

Ferguson's work underscores how development organisations create an "illusion of development", presenting their initiatives as apolitical and neutral. However, they often reinforce existing power structures and state control. This is particularly relevant to my research, as my informants challenge the state's vision of development, highlighting that what is framed as rational and progressive often lacks the moral foundation necessary for governance.

Majid Rahnema and Bawtree provides a critical assessment of development's outcomes, arguing that development has not only failed the millions it was intended to benefit, but that the very premises upon which it was built were fundamentally flawed. The authors contend that ideas of Progress and Development have had disastrous consequences for vernacular societies, stripping them of the very elements that gave their lives meaning and warmth (Rahnema & Bawtree, 1997, pp. 378-393). The failure, according to these authors, is not merely one of planning, but that development itself offers the wrong solutions to people's real needs.

Furthermore, Rahnema and Bawtree assert that development is an ideology born in the Global North, primarily serving geopolitical and economic interests with hegemonic ambitions (Rahnema & Bawtree, 1997, p. 381). This approach has imposed concepts like the "global village", which ultimately erased the authenticity of real, local villages.

Escobar extends this critique, arguing that the result of development is not only the shift towards a production-based economy but also the intensification of violence that began with colonisation (Escobar, 1995, p. 2014). Yet, from this violence, an alternative identity may emerge, hinting that the answers to what lies beyond development could arise from such marginalised groups. While post-development studies have traditionally focused on social movements in the Global South, *berraquera* also offers a compelling alternative.

Development as Teleology.

The third way in which development appears in anthropological literature is as a form of teleology (Grillo & Stirrat, 1997; Li, 2007), where development discourses and plans set

out a future horizon towards which all actions and objectives are directed. In Colombia, achieving these goals has historically been tied to specific subjectivities. For instance, as I will explore in Chapter 2, *El Progreso* was associated with civilisation and the creation of modern, educated subjects with liberal values. In the present day, development aspirations demand individuals with advanced technical and entrepreneurial skills. In Chapter 6, I discuss the *Chilean Dream*, a national narrative reflecting Chile's developmental achievements.

For Appadurai, modernisation is often seen as an "elsewhere"—a distant version or place that the state aspires to reach. He argues that "the mega rhetoric of developmental modernisation—economic growth, high technology, agribusiness, schooling, militarisation—is still very much with us" as a global force, shaping aspirations in many countries (Appadurai, 1996).

To achieve its developmental aims, the state utilises a range of tools to create the necessary conditions, one of which is the shaping of particular subjectivities, a process explored through the lens of governmentality (Alene et al., 2022; Andreucci & Kallis, 2017; Corbridge et al., 2005; Liu & Palmer, 2020; Wallis, 2013). As Watts explains, referring to Foucault's notion of governmentality: "Government famously referred to the "conduct of conduct", a calculated and rational set of practices aimed at shaping behaviour and securing rule through multiple authorities and agencies, both within and outside the state, across various spatial levels" (Watts, 2017, p. 13).

Examples of this process can be seen in David Harvey's work, where he identifies concepts like freedom and dignity as foundational values in capitalist and neoliberal societies, particularly in the United States (Harvey, 2009). Selmeczi, for instance, observes how the legal systems in neoliberal countries are rooted in the idea of *homo œconomicus*, the rational, economic subject of liberal law (Selmeczi, 2011). In China, Wallis introduces the concept of *suzhi*, or "quality", which is tied to the state's goal of fostering citizens

who are constantly striving for self-development, economic advancement, and personal improvement as part of the modernisation agenda (Wallis, 2013, pp. pp. 44–46).

Development as Dream and Myth.

One way of understanding development, often mentioned but rarely fully theorised in the literature, is as a *Dream* or *Myth*. This perspective is particularly relevant to my case as it highlights the failures, irrationalities, and contradictions inherent in developmental teleology and policies. For example, in the chapter on *rebusque* and economics, I closely analyse state documents outlining their developmental objectives and the steps required to achieve them, revealing how these efforts often proved fruitless.

Rahnema and Bawtree refers to this as the "Promethean myth of Progress" because it seeks to "civilise the uncivilised" by delivering the metaphorical fire. Similarly, Watts notes that it is common in development plans for key elements—such as objectives, premises, and evidence—to be presented in a disjointed, distorted, and overly universalist manner, often creating a narrative that bypasses critical reflection (Rahnema & Bawtree, 1997, p. 289).

A compelling example is Swift's study on how desertification in Africa has been leveraged as a key governance narrative, involving multilateral organisations and pastoralists, even though the data does not consistently support this portrayal (Swift, 1977). Development has also been described, more informally, as a *nightmare*, a term found in some classic texts on the subject to illustrate how failed development policies can be counterproductive and even harmful, for instance, as Escobar observes, "instead of the kingdom of abundance promised by theorists and politicians in the 1950s, the discourse and strategy of development produced its opposite" (Escobar, 1995, p. 4).

Another vivid example is presented by Klaas, who examines the so-called "miracle" of Côte d'Ivoire. Initially hailed as a development success due to its extensive cocoa production, the country's economic measures collapsed when cocoa prices plummeted,

leading to social and political instability, culminating in massacres and coups d'état (Klaas, 2008).

In this research, I observed how the principles, mechanisms, and institutions designed to sustain a neoliberal state, and its development goals were not only exclusive and limited, but proved counterproductive, especially during moments of crisis like the Covid-19 pandemic. *Berraquera*, as a set of ideas, appeared to offer an alternative response to these shortcomings.

The key question then becomes: To what extent does it make sense to consider *berraquera* as a development project akin to those typically examined in the anthropology of development? Does *berraquera* replicate conventional development narratives, or does it challenge ideas of developmentalism, modernisation, and progress? In summary, I argue that *berraquera* is shaped by, and in constant dialogue with, dominant forces such as neoliberalism—at times aligning with, and at other times opposing them. It offers a conservative critique of state-sponsored development by seeking to revitalise and re-moralise its teleology, emphasising the need to reintroduce moral dimensions into the developmental discourse.

One key difference between mainstream development as studied by development theorists and *berraquera* is its lack of the formal structures typical of conventional development models. *berraquera* does not have the sophisticated discourses, policies, mathematical formulas, developmental theories, or economic frameworks found in initiatives like Colombia's National Development Plans. Instead, *berraquera* manifests in the explanations people offer for their actions, in popular sayings, and in biblical passages they cite to support their arguments.

In this sense, *berraquera* can be understood as a vernacular form of development. A useful approach to exploring *berraquera* is to compare it with other similar concepts studied in post-development literature. In the following pages, I will outline my

interpretation of *berraquera* as vernacular development and then compare it with other cases from the anthropology of post-development.

Berraquera: Vernacular Development.

What possibilities and challenges arise in understanding *berraquera* as a vernacular notion of development?

I argue that *berraquera* can be seen as vernacular because it originates from subaltern groups, emerging from various places in a fragmented and unstructured form, contrasting with the perceived sophistication of mainstream development models.

My interpretation of the term *vernacular*, as it applies to *berraquera*, aligns with its etymological roots, which refer to something "typical of a place, region, or country", suggesting it is native or indigenous (RAE, 2024). Heath describes vernacular in literature as an "umbrella term for anything not considered high-style... often viewed as a diluted or informal version of high-style" (Heath, 2003, pp. 48-49). However, I depart from these pejorative definitions, choosing instead to approach vernacular and *berraquera* without preconceived notions. In this regard, Ono and Sloop offer a more suitable definition, describing vernacular as "discourse, as speech that resonates within local communities. This discourse is neither fully accessible nor entirely discoverable, except through texts. Yet, vernacular discourse also includes culture: the music, art, criticism, dance, and architecture of local communities" (Ono & Sloop, 1995, p. 20).

In this thesis, when I present *berraquera* as a vernacular notion of development, I am referring to a form of popular knowledge—one that is not systematically codified or coherently documented, but rather expressed through colloquial sayings, everyday expressions, and what my participants often described as "*sabiduría popular*" [popular wisdom/knowledge]. This *sabiduría popular* serves as a vast repository of practical knowledge for navigating daily life.

With this approach, I was able to connect fragmented ideas gathered from Facebook groups and interviews with participants. However, because *berraquera* is inherently fragmented and informal, some ideas in this thesis remain unresolved, with grey areas and points of contention—such as the ethics surrounding prostitution or drug production (see Chapter 1).

In conclusion, my approach to *berraquera* examines both its discursive elements and the practices closely tied to it. I treat *berraquera* as more than just a set of abstract ideas; it is also shaped by the actions and behaviours it inspires. By considering both dimensions, we can gain a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of its meaning and significance.

Postdevelopment and Vernacular Alternatives to Development.

How might *berraquera* contribute to debates on post-development? I argue that studying *berraquera* offers a valuable contribution to post-development debates by examining a group of people and a concept that presents a conservative alternative, one that has been largely overlooked both empirically and theoretically in scholarly work.

In this section, I will engage with the anthropology of post-development and explore alternative development models such as *Vivir Bien* (Escobar & Rocheleau, 2008) and *Buen Vivir* (Gudynas, 2016), in order to contextualise and deepen our understanding of *berraquera* in relation to these existing frameworks.

Decolonial thinking has significantly influenced post-development scholars in Latin America, particularly through the ideas of the Coloniality/Modernity Group, which has produced a body of scholarship on decoloniality with a focus on envisioning alternatives to modernity (Gómez, 2014), 2014). According to Parisa Nourani, the collaboration between decolonial thinkers and subaltern groups in Latin America has seeded discourses advocating for a civilisational shift, with *Buen Vivir* and post-extractivist being two prominent examples of this transition (Nourani Rinaldi, 2022, p. 238).

In Colombia, much of the available literature has concentrated on the elites, portraying them as the primary drivers of history in economic and political terms (see Chapter 2). This focus has often overlooked the contributions of subaltern groups to the country's history and social fabric. However, scholars such as Rojas have revised history from a decolonial and subaltern perspective in Colombia (Rojas, 2002), alongside works like Escobar's studies on the *Proceso de Comunidades Negras* (Escobar, 1992; Escobar & Rocheleau, 2008), which provide important insights into the role of marginalised communities.

To some extent, post-development studies view subaltern groups as potential carriers of alternatives to modernity and development. Recently, the anthropology of post-development has shifted from focusing on small, localised cases to exploring global alternatives (Gardner & Lewis, 2015, p. See Chapter 3). Key discussions have emerged around issues like the Anthropocene (Moore, 2017), and climate change (Knox, 2020, 2015). However, this is not the case for the group of people I studied. They are not necessarily opposed to modernity or capitalism. Instead, they propose a "soft reboot" of development, in which morality—particularly one inspired by Christian values—plays a central role.

This is where the anthropology of populism becomes more relevant, as it better captures the complex and nuanced relationships between elites and non-elites. In these dynamics, elites and non-elites may function as collaborators or adversaries, but most importantly, they serve as reference points for shaping the ideas and worldviews of the subaltern groups I studied.

Berraquera vis-a-vis other Notions of Alternative Development.

How does *berraquera* relate to other alternatives to development? Could it embody the seeds of a post-development approach to the future? Although *berraquera* is not part of a formal social movement and is therefore less structured, the practices and discourses of

my informants reflect a certain degree of opposition to the state's developmental framework.

The central question posed at the conclusion of *The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* by Escobar and *The Post-Development Reader* by Majid Rehem and Bawtree is: what lies beyond development? What are the alternatives to development, and what paths exist beyond Western development and modernity? The short answer to these questions is explored in the field of post-development studies. While *berraquera* is conservative in nature, I argue that it offers an alternative to neoliberal development and, as such, can be examined in dialogue with post-development perspectives.

As Acosta explains, post-development focuses on seeking "ways of organizing life outside of development, especially rejecting the core concepts of conventional development" (Acosta & Abarca, 2018, p. 28). One of the early, tentative answers Escobar proposed was that the alternative to development should avoid claims of universality, reject globalising tendencies, and likely not emerge from the state or adopt top-down approaches.

A potential answer could lie in grassroots social movements, often referred to in the literature as New Social Movements, these movements are not driven by fixed or ascriptive identities but by specific causes; they are culturally orientated and present more fluid, less reified identities (Buechler, 1995). According to Escobar, such movements are "modest and tactical, emerging out of the conditions and practices of daily life" (Escobar, 1995, p. 218; Escobar et al., 2002). Through their practices and protests, these movements not only resist but also offer alternatives to dominant models of development.

In theoretical terms, these alternatives to development are envisioned as originating primarily from the Global South, emphasizing small-scale, localized thinking and collective action that challenges universalism (Esteva & Prakash, 1997).

One of the first groups to capture media and scholarly attention was the EZLN -Zapatista Army of National Liberation-, known for their resonant slogans such as "a world where

many worlds fit" and "for us, nothing; for everyone, everything" (EZLN, 2018) Their dramatic methods echoed the legacy of Emiliano Zapata. As Esteva describes, "they called for an end to 500 years of oppression and 40 years of "development" (...) They plead for the protection of the "commons" they have reclaimed in response to the crisis of development (...) and create space for new forms of social life" (Esteva, 1994, pp. 302 - 303).

Among the key grievances of the EZLN were demands for greater autonomy, a new role for women, protection of the commons, the eradication of paramilitary groups and state violence, and strong opposition to globalisation and neoliberalism. As Esteva and Suri summarize, "ordinary men and women are learning from each other how to challenge the very nature and foundations of modern power, both its intellectual underpinnings and its apparatus" (Esteva & Prakash, 1997, p. 280).

Another monumental case of post-development is *El Buen Vivir*, which has been incorporated into the constitutions of both Ecuador and Bolivia. Gudynas describes it as "a set of ideas being forged as a reaction to and alternative to conventional concepts of development" (Gudynas, 2011, p. 1). What is particularly interesting about *Buen Vivir* is that it emerges from various indigenous communities across the Andes, such as the Ecuadorian *Kichwa* people's notion of *Sumak Kawsay* or the Aymara concept of *Qamaña* in Bolivia. Rather than forming a monolithic framework, *Buen Vivir* has diverse interpretations, reflecting its multi-community origins. This aspect resonates significantly with *berraquera*, as both are concepts that are dispersed across different regions and social classes and adapt to local contexts and challenges.

Although it is challenging to generalize across such heterogeneous proposals, one commonality in these visions is the re-signification of nature—not as a mere inventory of resources, but as a subject with rights (Gudynas, 2011, p.3). Additionally, these ideas advocate for moving beyond the European modernity project, emphasizing radical localization, the decolonization of knowledge, recognition of emotions and affections, and

possibilities of being and existing in ways that diverge from the colonial-modernity framework (Gudynas, p. 464).

The diverse ideas surrounding *Buen Vivir*, particularly its anti-universalizing stance, can be summarized in the concept of pluriversality. This concept suggests that, in opposition to universalizing frameworks, there exist counter-narratives informed by multiple geographical inspirations and different communities.

From this conceptualization, a substantial body of literature has emerged, examining the potential to make pluriversality a political object and the very possibility of designing and “forging possible ways of being” (Murphy, 2020, p. 950). Etymologically, “*pluri*” refers to many—many universes—implying a range of possibilities for existence, being, and becoming. As Kothari et al. state, “Despite the fact that many pluriversal articulations create synergies between them, unlike a universalist approach to sustainable development, they cannot be reduced to a global policy managed by the United Nations or any other global governance regime, nor by regional or state regimes” (Kothari, 2019, p. 10) (See also Demaria & Kothari, 2020).

In conclusion, theories of post-development, along with the empirical cases that inform them, are often represented as local and radical responses to development and modernity. However, this is not the case with *berraquera*, which, despite being a counter-hegemonic discourse emerging from the Global South and promoted by subaltern peoples, occupies a different space. Post-development studies can sometimes present limiting perspectives, frequently overlooking other equally dynamic alternatives that may be less radical. These alternatives are not necessarily rooted in indigenous or ethnic minority movements or collective social movements; they may instead be grounded in more individualistic and Catholic frameworks, as seen in *berraquera*. While such approaches risk being dismissed as mere populism, they nonetheless provide a significant counterpoint to dominant narratives of development.

Populism and Berraquera.

The primary framework for this research is the anthropology of development, with a particular focus on post-development. However, certain empirical aspects necessitate a closer examination that extends beyond traditional development anthropology. In this context, theories on populism offer valuable perspectives that can enhance and deepen my exploration.

I propose that while development and post-development provide useful frameworks for analysis, insights from populism studies can also serve as analytical tools for examining relationships with the state and other relevant actors. This approach underscores the need for a more critical anthropology of populism—one that not only explains but also embraces the forms of developmentalism represented by *berraquera*.

Moreover, there exists potential to explore how *berraquera's* post-development aspirations could be made intelligible or relevant to the state. This raises important questions: How can studies of populism inform our understanding of *berraquera*? What insights can *berraquera* provide to the study of populism?

At the core of my argument is the observation that while participants generally agree with the state's economic vision of development, they perceive it as lacking in moral terms. Their understanding of what development entails and how it should unfold diverges significantly from the state's approach. My analysis centres on this interpretative gap, the tensions it produces, and the lived experiences within what I term the "fringes of the state". This space is characterized by the state's incomplete control and inconsistent governance, where influence is occasionally felt but remains sporadic and weak.

Theories of populism, particularly those proposed by Ernesto Laclau, provide insightful tools for navigating and understanding the complex relationships between my informants and the state. Laclau's concept of rupture—which I will explore in detail later—refers to a critical break

in the established socio-political order that destabilizes existing structures and meanings. This rupture creates space for the emergence of new identities and discourses, allowing marginalized or subaltern groups to challenge dominant hegemonies and redefine societal norms.

In this context, *berraquera* emerges as a counter-hegemonic yet conservative discourse. However, it remains fragmented and disarticulated, coexisting with violence and deep mistrust toward the state. Development theories alone cannot fully explain this complexity, underscoring the necessity of incorporating insights from populist studies. In the following paragraphs, I will elaborate on the specific ways in which populism, as a theoretical framework, aids in understanding the empirical realities I encountered, with particular emphasis on Laclau's contributions, though not limited to them.

As discussed in Chapter 3, *Politics: Violence and Populism*, violence plays a pivotal role in Colombia's political landscape. Political leaders have employed this fluid notion both discursively and practically to assert governance. While the anthropology of development in Colombia acknowledges the role of violence in implementing development projects (Oslender, 2007), it often treats violence as a mere consequence of development. However, I argue that violence is integral to the mobilization and consolidation of demands—a process that is more effectively analysed through the lens of populism.

Furthermore, the concept of *amaño* [rigging], which I explore in detail in the chapter on mistrust, emerges prominently in discussions surrounding politics and economics. It highlights the state's failure to effectively address the demands and needs of its citizens, fostering a relationship steeped in institutional mistrust. This dynamic underscore a deeper disconnect between the state and its populace concerning their visions of development—both in practice and as a long-term teleology.

In this context, *berraquera* functions as a counter-hegemonic discourse formed from unarticulated and disorganized grievances that political parties and leaders have failed to rally behind. This is precisely why integrating the frameworks of post-development and populism is so valuable for this work. While post-development allows me to grasp the depth of *berraquera's* fragmented discourse and its interactions with other frameworks, such as neoliberal development, populism provides the analytical tools necessary to assemble these pieces and critically examine the relationships they create. Together, these frameworks offer a clearer understanding of both *berraquera's* objectives and its broader context.

In summary, populist theories yield valuable insights for understanding the tensions and gaps between my participants and the neoliberal state. This disjunction resembles what Laclau termed the populist rupture and the articulation of demands, concepts that I will now elaborate on.

Discourse and Articulation of Demands.

Laclau's theory of populism is dispersed across several of his works. In this section, I will synthesise the key elements relevant to this research, particularly his concepts of the articulation of demands and the populist rupture. A central tenet of Laclau's thought, likely shaped by his activist background, is the recognition that populism is not an inherent feature of any predefined group, political movement or party. Crucially, populism transcends traditional binaries such as right versus left or authoritarian versus libertarian. Instead, populist ideas and discourses can emerge in any context where political processes unfold: "There can be populisms that emerge from very different ideologies. Mussolini was a populist, but so was Mao Tse Tung. This means that the specificity of populism should not be sought in ideologies or social bases. Instead, populism should be understood for what it is: a way of constructing the political" (Laclau, 2013, p. 12).

As a result, Laclau shifts the focus from identifying characteristics that make a group inherently populist to understanding the function that populism serves within political dynamics. The

function of populism is to universalise and contribute to the creation of political identities, “achieved through vague discursive practices. It is precisely through this vagueness and imprecision that a more fundamental political function is fulfilled. (...) However, because these demands and symbols arose in a country where many other social demands were also being denied, they began to symbolise something far broader than the original group. In this way, collective action became universalised around these symbols” (Laclau, 2013, p. 13).

In this sense, populism takes on many forms. One of its key forms is as a discourse, but discourse in the sense of a speech-act—an utterance that is not merely a statement but also an action and performance. Specifically, political discourse creates articulations between various elements. These elements are somewhat ambiguous, but they generally include ideas, people, signs and signifiers, and demands. Through discourse, these disparate elements are arranged into a certain order or logic, which ultimately leads to the articulation of a political subject. As he explains:

‘By discourse, as I have attempted to make clear several times, I do not mean something that is essentially restricted to the areas of speech and writing, but any complex of elements in which relations play the constitutive role. This means that elements do not pre-exist the relational complex but are constituted through it (...) Since Wittgenstein, we know that language games comprise both linguistic exchanges and actions in which they are embedded, and speech-act theory has put on a new footing the study of the discursive sequences constituting social institutionalized life. It is in that sense that Chantal Mouffe and I have defined discourses as structured totalities articulating both linguistic and non-linguistic elements’ (Laclau, 2005, pp. 12-13).

According to Laclau, these articulations can manifest in various ways, often led by a leader who embodies or represents a collective will or *volonté Générale*; “The inability to form a complete totality breaks the link between signifier and signified, leading to the rise of “floating signifiers”

in society. Political competition is essentially the struggle of different forces trying to anchor these signifiers to specific meanings” (Laclau & Howarth, 2015, p. 28).

The process of articulation leads to the formation of a collective political subject—commonly addressed as "the people", "the crowd". or "the underdog". This, in turn, creates a collective identity, on this regard Laclau says: “There are non-class ‘superstructural’ elements that must be incorporated into the process of social struggle, which requires understanding how class-specific discourse articulates with populist elements, giving them coherence. The people, therefore, will be the articulation of elements based on a class principle or ‘the presentation of popular-democratic interpellations as a synthetic, antagonistic whole in opposition to the dominant ideology’”(Retamozo, 2017, p. 161).

Following this logic, the creation of this collective subject also establishes boundaries, producing differentiation between “us” and “them” in what Laclau called antagonistic frontier. Typically, these others are framed as political antagonists, often referred to as "elites" or "the powerful", which fabricates an antagonistic relationship between the two groups, as Laclau posit it: “the presence of some privileged signifiers which condense in themselves the signification of a whole antagonistic camp (the 'regime', the 'oligarchy', the 'dominant groups', and so on, for the enemy; the 'people', the 'nation', the 'silent majority', and so on, for the oppressed underdog—these signifiers acquire this articulating role according” (Laclau, 2005, p. 87).

Giménez Aliaga offers an important clarification regarding the formation of antagonistic groups and collective actors, often referred to as "the people". He warns that both media and some analysts frequently misrepresent this collective subject as a "mass of desperate, ignorant, and bigoted" individuals (Aliaga, 2017, p. 3). As Eller notes, this framing, seen in discussions around movements such as Trump supporters reflects a bias that links populism with the uneducated and lower classes, portraying them as more susceptible to dangerous

populist rhetoric and demagoguery (Eller, 2021). Such representations skew any reasonable analysis by ignoring the complexities within populist movements.

Laclau's theory provides a more nuanced understanding of how these groups form. He argues that populist articulations arise from demands, yet it is not necessary for all individual demands to align perfectly many are in fact empty signifiers; "An empty signifier can, consequently, only emerge if there is a structural impossibility in signification as such, and if this impossibility can only signify itself as an interruption (subversion, distortion, etc.) of the structure of the sign" (Laclau, 1996, p. 66).

Rather, different demands and signifiers can be articulated together even if they are not entirely in harmony. This diversity is not a weakness but a characteristic feature of populist mobilization. A single demand may serve as the linchpin for others, giving coherence to the multitude of grievances—a phenomenon Laclau describes as empty signifiers. These signifiers are flexible and open to interpretation, yet they provide a rallying point for the collective subject.

Although these articulations may be temporary and open to dispute, they can still mobilize people effectively. Laclau, rather than viewing populism as inherently negative, sees it as a constituent and fundamental aspect of politics. This perspective is echoed by Katzembekis, who argues that populism's malleability makes it difficult to assign an inherent value to it, whether "good or bad, reactionary or progressive, democratic or anti-democratic" (Katsambekis, 2017, p. 204).

Through the populist process of articulation, dissonant demands can be partially filled with meaning and challenge the institutional order. For at least a moment, the collective subject—ambiguous and fragmented as it may be as in the case of *berraquera*—can contest the status quo and confront elites who hold superior positions of power and legitimacy. This process, while often transient, is no less potent in its ability to shake existing power structures.

In Ernesto Laclau's theory, the "articulation of demands" refers to the process by which individual social, political, or economic grievances are linked together to form a collective identity or movement; "articulation makes the emergence of 'people' possible" (Laclau, 2005, p. 75). Initially, these demands may exist as isolated, specific issues—such as calls for better wages, rights, or representation. However, through the process of articulation, they become unified into a broader struggle that challenges existing power structures.

Laclau argues that this articulation is crucial for the formation of political identities and hegemonic blocs, as it allows diverse social groups to align their different grievances into a common narrative. By forging these connections, articulation transforms fragmented demands into a cohesive political force capable of mobilizing collective action and contesting dominant ideologies.

This process is inherently contingent and fluid, as the articulation of demands depends on the capacity to frame different grievances under a shared banner. The success of this framing shapes the direction and scope of political change. Consequently, the articulation of demands enables the transformation of scattered issues into a potent political force that can challenge the status quo and existing hegemonies.

Populist Rupture.

Ernesto Laclau's notion of "populist rupture" is central to his theory of populism. The rupture refers to a fundamental fracture in the established political order that allows for the rise of populist movements. For Laclau, populism arises when there is a growing disconnection between the political system and the people, particularly when the existing institutions fail to respond to a variety—even ambiguous—of social demands, "The transition towards a more just and democratic society required a break from and complete displacement of a corrupt, discredited elite, which lacked political communication channels with the vast majority of the population" (Laclau, 2006, p. 60). This creates a sense of unmet grievances and unaddressed needs within society.

A rupture occurs when these isolated demands, previously dispersed and unlinked, converge around a unifying discourse or symbol that articulates them as part of a broader antagonism between "the people" and "the elite" or "the establishment".

In this rupture, populist leaders or movements emerge by constructing a new political frontier, framing the people as a unified entity in opposition to the ruling elite, which is portrayed as corrupt, disconnected, or self-serving. This antagonistic division is crucial for populism, as it redefines the political landscape through a sharp "us versus them" dynamic. The rupture marks the moment when previously disregarded demands are politicised, and the status quo is destabilised, enabling the creation of new forms of political identity and representation.

Laclau emphasises that this rupture is not merely a structural or institutional shift but a discursive one—populist leaders, through their rhetoric, articulate a chain of equivalences among various social demands, giving them a common voice. This symbolic unification of grievances is the core of the populist rupture, as it creates a collective identity for "the people" and positions them as the agents of political change. In doing so, it challenges established power dynamics and opens the space for a new hegemonic project, reshaping the political terrain.

In an article from 2006, Laclau did not only made clear his own political stance but also made evident one of the most crucial features of populism, in this text he further substantiates the notion of rupture using the case of Venezuela as example, he said: this occurs "when there is a dichotomization of the social space by which actors see themselves as participants of two bands in confrontation (...) unsatisfied demands, and its crystallization around a set of symbols and a leader" (Laclau, 2006, p. 56), this would have been the case of Venezuela in which "the transition to a more just and democratic society required the rupture with a corrupt and discredited elite, with null communication with the vast majority of the population" (Laclau, 2006, p. 58). Laclau also points out that any possible change demands a change of regime but to achieve this it is imperative to

construct a new collective political subject, in that case revolting around *bolivarianismo* [Chavez's ideology] and a leader, like Hugo Chávez.

Katsambekis agrees on the central argument but focuses his attention on the issue of representation, according to him "populism needs some notion of 'crisis' to flourish" specifically a crisis of representation in which consolidated groups or elites fail to incorporate demands into the establishment, and this could be instigated on moral or ethical grounds; "where there are serious doubts about the moral integrity of the political elite and the policies being implemented" (Katsambekis, 2017, p. 207). This point is crucial, as part of the critique moved forward by the general ideas of *berrquera* are made on moral grounds rather than facts, I will come back to this idea along this document.

Globalisation and the Rise of Right-Winged Populism.

There is still one more thing that requires clarification, how does populism look like in a globalised world and neoliberal democracies? Many anthropologists recognise Laclau's contributions and applaud the understanding of the positive effects of populism as way to reinvigorate declining democracies and political systems, however, in the face of rising populism in Europe and the Americas, current trends in the studies of populism have warned us about the hazards of right-wing populism in world that seems to be in crisis.

Starting the new millennia Žižek spoke of a crisis of representation in global capitalism in which the working class had been left behind even by the global left, leaving a vacuum capitalized by right wing parties (Žižek, 2006), that open the door to the emergent leaders like Donald Trump, Bolsonaro, Putin, Bukele, Orban, and in the specific case of Colombia's Alvaro Uribe, who draws on the tradition of Latin America Caudillos [local chieftains] to build a certain right-wing populism of which I will speak on the Chapter about Violence.

According to some scholars, these populist leaders would have capitalized the vacuums but in doing so promoted an agenda comprising lies and dangerous policies and rhetoric. One prodigious case is Trump style, Stoller said: “in this universe of meaning, black becomes white, facts become ‘alternative’ facts, and fiction becomes truth. Trump is now attempting to transform this alternate universe of meaning into an authoritarian state based on the ‘Big Lie’” (Stoller, 2018a). Hervik decisively says that the election of Trump challenged not only democracy but science (Hervik, 2020, p. 145), characterising Trump populism as “anti-”: anti-science, anti-feminist, and anti-democratic.

In a similar vein Gomberg points out the way in which Trump discourses offer unrelated solutions to actual problems, for instance, the detriment that the American working class has suffered over the last decades can be attributed to the evolution of global capitalism and deindustrialization, nonetheless Trump utilized immigration as a scapegoat and the spearhead of his policy, Gomberg-Muñoz calls this kind of rhetoric nothing more than an “ideology that offers oversimplified explanations” (Gomberg-Muñoz, 2018, p. 141).

Perhaps one of the most harmful stances in which populist discourses were present, was during the pandemic, as Donald Trump and Jair Bolsonaro, promoted antiscientific discourses undermining the credibility of national and international institutions possibly aggravating the sanitary chaos ensued after the outbreak of Covid-19. As d’Ancona mentions, the anti-scientific stances most likely impacted public health (d’Ancona, 2017, p. 38), and as I observed in here, it ended up eroding trust in institutions.

Karen Ho adds that in general, Trump’s populism has created concepts such as the “common man”, that however, only represents the “white, properly masculine, and heterosexual” not only giving a persona to the idea, but discriminating all that do not fit the ideal (Ho, 2018, p. 148), that in certain way appeals to rural Americans that had felt left behind by more cosmopolitan elites.

Gusterson agrees with other scholars regarding the dangers of populism, but recognises a deep misalignment between liberal elites and the electorate, and suggest that liberal elites had also reduced all the issues to simple formulas such as lack of education and resentment from blue-collars (Gusterson, 2017). On this regard Giménez-Aliaga picks up one argument wielded by Laclau; “the pejorative use of the word populism is bound to a technocratic conception of power” (Aliaga, 2017, p. 5) in which only a technocratic elite of experts is mandated to rule (I will explore this in greater detail on Chapter 2 and 5), to this, Friedman proposes an antagonistic continuum that goes from the cosmopolitanism of the elites and in the other end the indigenization of the working class, a process of decay in which the distance between the two groups only becomes more acute in times of “cycles of political economic hegemony and decline”. This polarisation is a consequence of globalisation, where elites identify with upward mobility and global networks, while the working class, experiencing downward mobility, becomes increasingly tied to local contexts (Friedman, 2018, p. 135).

There is the positive side of populism to revitalize democracy, but there is also a negative side related to the rise of global populism marked racism, antiscientific, misogyny and antimigration demeanour, leveraged on biased and absurd rhetoric. One general comment that I can make to these authors is that despite most of their framing speak of globalisation and liberalism, in fact during my research president Piñera in Chile promoted a neoliberal and nationalist agenda, but recent trends might be signalling the end of free trade and global liberalism amidst the trade war between China and the US which has led to an increase in protectionism, amplifying nationalist discourses and demands (The Economist, 2018).

In summary, fostering a dialogue between the anthropology of development and studies of populism can be fruitful. According to Cal Mudde and Kaltwasser, the anthropology of populisms focuses on the antagonism between “the pure people” and “the corrupt elite”

(Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2012, p. 8), studying the *volonté générale* or the general will.

However, beyond simply calling it *volonté générale*, in *berraquera* there is a discourse and set of practices that propose alternatives to things as they are.

Berraquera, in this regard, seems to be a counterhegemonic discourse made up of grievances not properly articulated nor mobilised, that political parties and leaders have failed to assemble. This is precisely what makes merging the frameworks of post-development and populism useful for this work.

While post-development and development helps me understand the depth of a fragmented discourse such as *berraquera* and how it interacts with other discourses such as neoliberal development, and help me understand its teleology, the framework of populism helps me to put it together and carefully analyse the relationships that it creates.

Presentation of Chapters.

Chapter 1, *Flesh of Pig. Spirit of Martyr* opens this thesis. I selected this chapter to be the first as it introduces the readers to the worldview of my participants and shows their moral foundations. One key point of the chapter is to present what the moral mores of my informants are. It also presents the idea that some of them believe that the state has lost its moral compass and has drifted away from the teachings of the catholic dogma rendering it vulnerable to corruption and other ailments. This act of drifting away will have consequences and will appear in other chapters relating topics such as politics and violence, and mistrust in institutions.

This chapter is divided in two sections, the first one discusses the positive side of morality and what kind of actions and values, such as hard work [*trabajo duro*], would lead them to have a good life, while in the last sections I discuss the contrary: the actions that might

lead people through bad paths or taking bad steps [*mal camino, and malos pasos*]. This chapter helps advance the central argument of this thesis by pointing out that my informants interpret some state positions as morally wrong, and therefore what they expect from the future and from development are not compatible in moral terms.

Chapter 2, the Dream of Modernisation, is heavily based on historiography, but combines the ethnographic explorations of National Development Plans—a manifesto-like document, which outlines the perspectives and challenges to achieve certain kind of development during each presidential term. I also include, in minor proportion, some interviews. In this chapter I make an exhaustive historical exploration Colombia's national history, exploring some events that up to today have repercussions and influence the perceptions and worldviews of my participants, some of these events are, to name just a few, the Constitution of 1991 by which Colombia became a lay state, the emergence of violence, and violent actors such as, narcotraffic, paramilitary, and political parties, and the turn to neoliberalism.

The central argument of this chapter is that Colombia since independence up to the twentieth century pursued *El Progreso*, an all-encompassing notion of modernisation and development influenced by European ideas of enlightenment, that sought to improve the nation not only economically, but also morally, however, due to internal struggles among parties, church and other actors this project never fully materialised, and by the twentieth century was substituted by development and neoliberalism, which are far more narrow, present themselves as rational, even apolitical, but overall devoid of a morality that may participants resent.

This chapter advances the central argument of this thesis by showing the historical process that led the Colombian state to shift its conception of development, which my informants interpret as drifting away in moral grounds.

Chapter 3, Politics: Violence and Populism, is an exploration of how my informants experienced violence, not in a monumental way, but in a more subreptitious one, experience in everyday life. A key argument of this chapter is that violence has been crucial to articulate populist discourses, but ultimately political actors in Colombia have failed to successfully articulate demands and reinvigorate the political landscape contributing to the perpetuation of violence.

This chapter is divided in two parts, the first one examines the day-to-day life of experiences of violence, while the second part presents a more detailed analysis of how certain political leaders with some relevance on social media mobilise among other things violence, to promote their political views.

The contribution of this chapter to the central argument is that my participants regard politics as intrinsically rigged game [*amañado*] and politicians as inherently prone to corruption, thus increasing their distrust in politics and state affairs, aggrandizing the cleavage between them and the state.

In Chapter 4, Covid-19: the Reconfiguration of Trust, I analyse how due to the poor management of the pandemic, and the emergence of anti-scientific discourses, many of them promoted by political leaders, the cleavage between my participants and the state widened. In this chapter I pay attention to the ways that mistrust plays a role in the experiences and behaviours of people during the pandemic, and the kind of relationships that they establish with the establishment. In the first section I study how the members of the Parrish of the Holy Saviour understood the pandemic and acted upon it, in the second part I analysed how some people radicalised and started believing in conspiracy theories, in both cases those attitudes and behaviours appear as responses to a state discourse that no longer provided meaning, making them shift their trust into catholic dogma and some in conspiracy theories.

This chapter contributes to the central argument of this thesis by exploring how the gap between people and state broadens and how mistrust accentuate the sense of rupture particularly in moral and political terms.

Chapter 5, *Of Mules and Unicorns: Rebusque and Informality*, explores the economic practices of my informants in a moment where the containment measures to tackle Covid-19 were at its high and life as usual ceased. In this chapter I analyse the concept of *rebusque*; a notion referring to look for opportunities in many sources, and a noun to call a small business or venture. In the first part of the chapter, I examined how *rebusques* were digitised and how my participants use them as means to survive in a context of sanitary emergency and neoliberalism that offered little alternatives. In the second part, mostly based on communiqués and I deal with the aspirations of the state of becoming a developed nation basing its economy on digital and cultural ventures known as “Economía Naranja” [the Orange Economy], and how in this process citizens like my informants are often neglected or seen as hindrances.

This chapter contributes towards the main argument by showing how despite the many differences between what my participants think development should look like and the vision from the neoliberal state, in economic terms their values and ideas aligned, but it also shows, how at the fringes, where the state does not have full control, economic forms of survival detrimental to the state policies can emerge and thrive.

In Chapter 6, *Berraquera as Development: Colombian Migrations to Chile*, I explore the tensions, contradictions and negotiations of what different actors think development should be. One key argument of this chapter is that many of my informants conceive Colombia as a land without opportunities, or where opportunities are exhausted, thus looking for opportunities somewhere else becomes a motivation.

In this chapter I not only explore the migratory experiences of some of my informants, but also examine migration facing the ideas about development from neoliberal Chile. In this context I explore how discrimination towards immigrants, selectivity and border securitisation exist to protect a feeble affirmation that Chile “is a developed country” from external threats like immigrants, often accused of bringing instability, violence, and underdevelopment. Here, the notion of *Castrochavismo*, a tool promoted ad nauseum by right-winged populist in Latin America, are now used by my participants to claim that they are “good immigrants” and that they contribute to the national development effort in an effort to counter a narrative that excludes them, this chapter made evident that my informants wish to be part of development by reforming and revitalizing it, perhaps infusing the values, morality and practices present in *berraquera*.

In general, the chapters show how, Intentionally or unintentionally, my participants are pushed to inhabit a space where the state’s involvement is weak or minimal. However, within this space, they find ways to realign with other actors, such as God, to create a form of development that, while it may overlap with the state’s objectives in some respects, does not necessarily depend on the state’s presence or support.

This chapter supports the central argument of this thesis by pointing out that *berraquera* does not argues for radical reformulation of development. Even if people suffer the consequences of living in marginal conditions they do not ask for a full or radical change in the system but to regain the morality that the neoliberal state has lost and to be recognised as agents of development that can create opportunities and well-being for their home country, their recipient country, and their families.

Methodology

In this section, I outline the methodology used in this research. I begin by explaining how the pandemic shaped my methodological approach. I then discuss the theoretical principles underpinning my methods, with a focus on digital and remote ethnography. This is followed by a detailed account of the practical methods employed. Finally, I conclude by addressing the key limitations of this study.

Fieldwork and Covid-19.

When I began my PhD, my initial methodology aimed to explore how the Pacific people's concept of Living Well evolved after their migration to Chile. However, as my research progressed, the focus shifted to a more pressing question: What is *berraquera*, and what are the ideas and practices surrounding it?

Initially, I planned to divide my time between Colombia, where I would be based in Cali, with regular visits to Pacific communities, and Antofagasta in northern Chile. I also considered following the common bus route from Cali through Lima to the Chilean border, tracing the migrant journey as Marcus suggests. A small portion of the research was intended to be conducted online, as I identified Facebook groups as key resources for those planning to migrate to Chile.

However, just before fieldwork began, the pandemic struck, and strict lockdowns halted travel. With borders closed, I swiftly adjusted my approach, prioritising digital ethnography. While many researchers paused their work, I pushed forward, recognising the need to maintain momentum. I began with the digital aspect of my fieldwork, a method that quickly became essential as movement remained restricted for an extended period.

Over the course of the year, digital ethnography became central to my research. When restrictions finally eased, I was able to explore regions within Colombia, although international travel to Chile remained limited. Throughout this period, I broadened my sources and informants, leveraging digital tools to conduct remote ethnography and gather data on concepts of development. This approach enabled me to comprehensively explore both digital spaces and on-the-ground realities, resulting in rich, triangulated data that provided deeper insight into *berraquera* and its associated practices.

Digital and Remote Ethnography.

I adopted the methodological approaches of digital anthropology as they provided an adaptable framework for the complexities of remote fieldwork and digitally focused research during the pandemic. Drawing on Marcus's approach, I developed a methodology that allowed me to trace the flow of life and movement, following people wherever their journeys led to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences, worldviews, and social dynamics (Marcus, 1995, pp. 106 - 110). As the pandemic progressed, my informants increasingly shifted to digital spaces, and so I followed them there.

What are the core principles of this approach, and which elements were most relevant to my methodology? I will briefly outline the key sources and concepts that shaped my approach.

The first principle is the continuum of experience between digital and physical spaces. Atkinson and Hammersley argue that ethnography "does not have a standard, well-defined meaning" and has been reinterpreted over time to adapt to new disciplinary contexts (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019, p. 17). A key shift they highlight is moving beyond the traditional divide between online and offline, or virtual and actual, towards methodologies that integrate both. Research in digital field sites has significantly evolved in the last two decades, recognising the seamless interaction between virtual and physical worlds, rather than portraying digital spaces as isolated "mini-societies."

The second point is that the core principles of traditional ethnography remain highly relevant for digital ethnography. Pink defines digital ethnography as "an approach to doing ethnography in a contemporary world," urging researchers to consider how we live and research in a digital, material, and sensory environment (Pink et al., 2015). This approach retains classic ethnographic principles, including reflexivity, holism, inductive reasoning, the emic perspective, naturalism, and a systematic approach (Kovalainen, 2015).

A strong example of these principles applied in a digital context is Tom Boellstorff's 'Coming of Age in Second Life.' Using traditional ethnographic methods like participant observation, interviews, and field notes, Boellstorff demonstrates that virtual spaces can be treated as legitimate field sites, challenging the assumption that online spaces are less meaningful than physical ones (Boellstorff, 2015, 2020).

A third key concept is Pink's idea of "non-digital-centric-ness" (Pink et al., 2015, p. 9), meaning that the focus of analysis should remain on people, not technology. This aligns with Daniel Miller and Mirca Madianou's concept of polymedia, which highlights how people navigate multiple communication platforms (email, social media, messaging apps) based not just on technological affordances but on social, emotional, and cultural factors. In a polymedia environment, individuals choose platforms based on context, balancing factors like cost, convenience, privacy, and emotional tone, rather than simply the platform's technical features (Madianou & Miller, 2012).

Remote Ethnography.

Lastly, John Postill addresses the "fear of missing out" in remote ethnographies, a challenge for researchers engaged in digital or remote fieldwork (Postill, 2016). This fear or anxiety stems from the concern that, by not being physically present, ethnographers may miss key cultural nuances or interactions essential for understanding the community. During the Second World War, figures like Margaret Mead and Rhoda Métraux (Mead & Métraux, 2000), and Ruth

Benedict (Benedict, 2005) demonstrated that remote ethnography was feasible, provided it allowed for a more flexible interpretation of ethnographic practice. Today, with the rise of digitalisation, digital ethnography has emerged as an essential tool, although it still faces some scepticism.

Traditionally, as established by Malinowski's work, ethnography required physical immersion within a community (Lucy, 2022, p. 66). Not being physically present can lead to what Postill calls "fieldwork anxieties"—the fear of missing significant insights and delivering superficial descriptions (Postill, 2016, p. 66). These anxieties are particularly heightened in remote ethnography, where researchers depend on digital communication to observe social practices. However, Postill also highlights the advantages of this approach, as it facilitates sustained engagement with dispersed or hard-to-reach communities over extended periods. He encourages researchers to acknowledge the limitations of remote fieldwork while emphasising the valuable insights that can still be obtained through mediated participation.

To address concerns about providing thin descriptions, I conducted extended, systematic observations—two hours each in the morning and afternoon—carefully monitoring discussions across multiple groups. I collected images and recorded the conversations surrounding them, especially memes, which often sparked significant discourse. For topics of particular importance, such as social unrest or COVID-19 conspiracy theories, I expanded my research by incorporating relevant online sources, including blogs, newspapers, and YouTube videos referenced by participants, which I followed up with them. These efforts enabled me to develop rich, thick descriptions, which I subsequently categorised and analysed in depth.

Thick description refers, on one hand, to high-quality ethnography, which involves a detailed and careful analysis of research findings. On the other hand, it also denotes the intellectual implications of this specific methodology as articulated by Geertz. In summary, dense description encompasses both the rigor of good ethnographic practice and the theoretical approach that Geertz advocated (Luhmann, 2015, p. 291).

In conclusion, digital ethnography is now a well-established methodology. Key concepts include the evolving nature of ethnography, the continued relevance of traditional ethnographic principles in digital contexts, and the concept of polymedia, where communication platforms are shaped by social and emotional dynamics. Postill's insights on the fear of missing out in remote ethnography underscore both the challenges and the unique opportunities of studying communities through digital methods. In the following sections, I will outline the practicalities of my methodology, detailing the specific techniques I employed and how they were applied throughout the research.

Ethnography in Practical Terms.

Timeline.

During the weeks prior to the lockdowns, I managed to carry out a few interviews in Bogotá, then the 12 next months of this research was strictly remote, after about a year lockdowns loosened in Colombia, and circulation permits were not mandatory in most of the national territory. I was finally able to move to Santa Marta. At this time, Colombia introduced "intermittent curfews," which allowed limited movement based on identity number and gender. This eventually expanded to short regional trips.

During this period, I continued conducting remote fieldwork while international flights gradually resumed on an intermittent basis. This allowed me to visit parts of the Caribbean coast, particularly Montería and Córdoba, where some of my participants and their families were based.

By the 14th month, I planned a trip to Chile to visit Antofagasta and Santiago, aiming to meet participants in person. However, I was unable to travel as I was infected with Covid-19, thus I decided to resume fieldwork remotely.

Field Site.

My field site was diverse and not confined to a single geographical location. Instead, it was composed of a network of interconnected nodes. One of these key nodes was social media, specifically platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and YouTube, with occasional engagement on other sites. The participants of my fieldwork also extended across various physical locations where my informants were based. These included urban centres like Antofagasta, Santiago, La Serena, and Viña del Mar in Chile, as well as Bogotá in Colombia, along with smaller towns such as Villeta, and rural villages like Cereté, Loricá, and Santa Marta in the Colombian Caribbean.

This approach aligns with Burrell's (Burrell, 2009; Jenna, 2016) concept of "patchwork ethnography," which frames fieldwork as a dynamic and fluid network, rather than a static, predefined site. In this model, fieldwork protocols are designed around short-term visits and fragmentary but rigorous data collection, allowing ethnographers to engage with their field site as a collection of interconnected experiences rather than a single location (Burrell, 2009, p. 51).

Following these principles, I began my fieldwork in a Facebook group called "Colombianos in Antofagasta." From there, I discovered more than 20 other groups that participants actively used as a central part of their daily experiences. These groups served multiple purposes, including sourcing information, finding job opportunities, posing questions about immigration laws, and promoting business ventures. Some groups had as many as 13,000 participants, while others had only around 500 (see Annexe 1).

During this phase, I engaged with people primarily through online interviews and established WhatsApp groups that functioned as panels or focus groups. Once pandemic restrictions eased, I conducted short-distance travel and was able to meet participants in person, further enriching the ethnographic data collection process.

Recruitment.

I employed three main strategies for recruitment. First, I activated pre-existing networks from my time prior to fieldwork. These networks consisted primarily of individuals I met during my master's programme at UCL, particularly those from Chile, as well as contacts in Colombia facilitated through collaborations with Rosario University, Javeriana University, and members of the Parish of the Holy Saviour in Bogotá.

The second recruitment method involved leveraging contacts in Antofagasta. Initially, I established a close relationship with the Jesuit Migrant Service (SJM), an NGO serving migrant populations from Colombia, Haiti, Peru, and Venezuela, particularly in northern Chile. I engaged with SJM through multiple interviews and training sessions focused on immigration issues, and I briefly volunteered with them, although this partnership did not last as long as anticipated. To avoid conflicts of interest, I sought participants outside the institutional framework, and some individuals I met through SJM introduced me to other potential participants.

Finally, I recruited directly from Facebook groups. I openly shared my research purpose, intentions, and terms of the investigation on my social media profiles. I posted recruitment adverts in relevant groups and commented on other members' posts, suggesting private conversations. Despite a low success rate with this approach, I managed to secure several meaningful interactions, some of which were more sustained than others.

Techniques.

Once traditional ethnography became unfeasible, my strategy shifted towards identifying alternative spaces and methods to gather data, aiming to increase its volume, depth, and diversity. My overall approach centred on continuously corroborating and expanding my findings through a rigorous process of triangulation.

Participant Observation on Social Media.

Initially, participant observation on social media was intended to be just one element of my research, but it quickly became the backbone of my study. I conducted observations across more than 24 Facebook groups (see Annexe 1), though the core of my focus centred on around five main groups. These groups varied in size, with some having over 13,000 members while others had as few as 600. I found that many individuals participated in multiple groups simultaneously. My observations also extended across platforms, as I occasionally used Instagram to follow specific participants and monitor marketplace activities.

Postill on how to research media effects, argues for a systematic and exhaustive approach which demands deep involvement in the places where informants might inhabit, observing, expanding on their comments, following the social media places they follow, and watching the videos they watch (Postill, 2024, p. Chapter 4). I followed this idea, to ensure a systematic approach, I established a routine for observations, typically dedicating two hours in the morning, two in the afternoon, and two in the evening to monitor activities in these groups. During these sessions, I interacted with posts, asked questions, made comments, and explored the platforms further. As time passed (over the course of about seven months), my routine evolved, becoming more targeted as I identified specific areas of interest. Consequently, my focus narrowed to topics, and I noticed a saturation of recurring themes. Towards the end of the research period, the only significant new development was the increased prominence of Colombia's presidential campaign.

To engage with participants, I utilised the affordances of each platform. I saved posts, commented, published memes, asked questions, and created polls, mimicking the typical interactions of other group members. Throughout this process, I was transparent about my identity and research intentions, although I was largely ignored by most participants.

Interviews.

Just before the pandemic lockdowns, I managed to conduct a few in-person, semi-structured interviews. However, from that point onwards, all interviews were conducted virtually until restrictions were lifted. The virtual interviews were held through various platforms: some via Facebook Messenger, others through WhatsApp, and a few on Google Meet. The durations of these interviews were highly variable, and I rarely followed the traditional interview format with a semi-structured questionnaire and lengthy sessions, as most participants were not inclined to engage in that manner. In total I did 33 interviews in different formats and lengths, as detailed on table 1 in annex1.

To adapt, I primarily relied on asynchronous communication, exchanging lengthy voice notes—sometimes several minutes long—on a single topic. This process often spanned extended periods, with participants responding a day or two later, while others would occasionally 'ghost' me for months. As a result, interviews were conducted in a fragmentary way, stretching over weeks or even months. The pace of the conversations was dictated by the participants' free time, with many sending me notes while juggling their daily activities. This flexible approach allowed for meaningful engagement, even within the constraints of remote and asynchronous communication.

Focus Groups.

The development of focus groups emerged organically and proved to be highly inclusive (See Colom, 2022). I successfully established two focus groups on WhatsApp with collaborators: one consisting of Colombians and the other of Chileans. Much like the interviews, these focus groups were asynchronous, often relying on voice messages. Remarkably, the groups continued beyond my stay in Colombia, with one still active to this day.

My relationship with participants in these WhatsApp groups was highly collaborative. I shared materials, ideas, and findings, including social network analyses (SNA) and tweets I discovered. In return, participants actively shared links, memes, and their own thoughts with me. These

groups played a vital role not only in facilitating open discussions but also in validating my hypotheses and interpretations.

One notable collaboration involved the group administrator of the Parish of the Holy Saviour. For an extended period, she would send me various pieces of information about COVID-19 for fact-checking before sharing it with the group. This relationship also stemmed from her understanding of my research interest in the pandemic's impact on social discourse.

Archival.

it was not part of the initial proposal; however, Facebook groups and Instagram profiles serve as living repositories, capturing the memories of both groups and individuals that with authorization and guidance from the users and keepers I could access. Their potential as personal and collective archives has been widely recognised as a way to study immigrants and preserve their memories (Siegenthaler & Bublatzky, 2021). During my observations on social media, I frequently noted that new posts often referenced previous discussions and posts, illustrating the interconnectedness of online discourse.

Since the information within these groups was public, I could consult past events and discussions, which provided me with valuable contextual understanding and interpretations. For example, I was able to gather insights on participants' views regarding social unrest or discussions surrounding *Castrochavismo*, enriching my overall analysis of the cultural and social dynamics at play.

Computational and Big Data.

This aspect was not part of the initial proposal; rather, it emerged as demands imposed by the pandemic and was almost experimental. I blended big data with thick qualitative analysis (Pedersen, 2023). I discovered Twitter to be a contrasting point to the public information discussed in Facebook groups, effectively amplifying qualitative insights with computational

methods doing what some researchers have called Thick Data methods, a way of utilising large datasets while remaining qualitative and adherent to make thick descriptions (Born & Haworth, 2017).

My approach on Twitter was primarily computational. I registered as a researcher to access large volumes of data and employed a simple code to automatically capture this data using Gephi (Compare with Bjerre-Nielsen & Glavind, 2022). I conducted two types of data harvesting: first, I scheduled regular downloads every two weeks for several months, and then I performed targeted searches on specific days, such as Colombia's Independence Day and Chile's Independence Day. I utilised various keywords to construct different queries, including terms like "Colombians in Chile," "Colombians in La Serena," and "foreigners in Chile," as well as contemporary issues such as "COVID-19 in Chile," "social unrest," and "new immigration law."

I processed the information in two main ways: first, through social network analysis (SNA), and second, via content analysis of the tweets. This dual approach significantly aided in contextualising and interpreting events, particularly as I encountered numerous radical voices from both Colombians and Chileans expressing strong opinions on issues such as migration, drug trafficking, and communism. I retrieved approximately 40 tweets per batch which is a minimum number as compared to other possible queries or topics.

Semiotic Analysis.

Although I had initially contemplated this aspect, it became increasingly frequent and detailed throughout my research. I contributed to the thick description by decoding memes, live streams, and videos, while actively searching for indexes, icons, signs, and signifiers. In addition, I examined the comments on videos and images to understand the meanings people attributed to these visuals. Following Pinney's suggestion, I also sought to comprehend what people did with the images, exploring their interpretations and interactions in depth.

In-person Participant Observation.

Due to the curfews, it was nearly impossible to conduct fieldwork until the 13th month, as I was primarily permitted to go out only for market shopping. Once restrictions were lifted, I seized the opportunity to make targeted observations during specific visits to locations such as Bogotá, Villeta, Montería, and Lórica. During these visits, the closures were intermittent and travelling often necessitated quarantine measures. Although these encounters were highly fragmented, limited, and restricted, they were also remarkably immersive. While I managed to conduct some face-to-face interviews, most of my interactions took the form of everyday conversations.

Blogs, Podcasts, Digital Environment.

I developed this approach as I progressed through the research. When participants referenced a relevant topic or event—such as statements from politicians, news items, or discussions circulating within the groups—I sought additional information from various sources, including newspapers, other groups, blogs, alternative social media platforms, and even YouTube. A similar approach was implemented by Postill in studying para social relationships and cultural wars, as a means to increase depth and width of descriptions (Postill, 2024). This process was essential for creating context and enhancing my understanding of the issues that concerned them.

Document Analysis.

In development studies, it is common to incorporate the perspectives of practitioners and state actors. Therefore, from the outset, I decided to analyse public policy documents, specifically focusing on the COMPES documents and National Development Plans (all 16 existing documents to the date, plus some notes, comments and executive versions), as well as other relevant public policies pertaining to development. To facilitate this analysis, I employed

content analysis using NVivo, developing inductive categories that I subsequently contrasted with other sources.

In summary, my methodology was adaptive to reflect the specific circumstances imposed by Covid-19 related measures in Colombia and Chile, incorporating a plethora of techniques including individual interviews, participant observation, focus groups, content analysis, and some computational methods.

Limitations.

In this heading I will speak about some limitations that I found during my research and will briefly discuss how I addressed them.

Point of View Bias.

A key bias in this research is that my view was for a long time limited to what social media exposed. On the positive side, Facebook offered a space of relative intimacy, where people shared personal confessions about family abroad or their fears.

However, I couldn't observe the material environment or spatial factors, such as the camps and protests outside the consulate, which I only saw via livestreams (these protests were illegal due to curfew violations). The next figure tells that some Chilean residents attacked the campers.

To address these biases, I cross-checked social media observations with interviews, message exchanges, and questions in Facebook groups to expand my understanding. Rather than focusing on the built environment or a small group of informants, I concentrated on the broader population, tracking key events and discussions among the most active users, as Postill suggests (Postill, 2016).

Relationships, Networks and Covid-19.

As mentioned earlier, one way I addressed the challenges of remote and digital work was by building relationships with informants who contrasted, reinforced, or contradicted my findings.

A major difficulty during this fieldwork was maintaining consistent, long-term relationships. In traditional ethnographies, relationships develop more easily because participants and spaces are often stable, as seen in Latour's study of laboratories or my initial plan to focus on the Latin Quarter of Antofagasta, Chile.

The difficulty in maintaining relationships stemmed not only from the openness of the digital space but also from the dynamics of Covid-19. Initially, many people were willing to engage. In fact, during the three weeks before curfews, I conducted three face-to-face interviews in Bogotá, Colombia. I had also established networks in Chile, particularly in Santiago and Antofagasta, working with contacts I'd developed since the start of my doctorate, including individuals and institutions such as NGOs and local universities in both Colombia and Chile.

However, due to Covid-19, these networks collapsed, resulting in the loss of nearly a year's work. About six months after the lockdowns began, I discovered that one of my participants had lost family members. Overwhelmed by grief and depression, she withdrew from the study. Others similarly excused themselves, unable to participate due to personal difficulties. The same occurred with institutions I had worked with, such as the Jesuit Migrant Service in Antofagasta and the Universidad del Norte in Chile, both of which, after some initial involvement, went silent.

It's important to remember that the pandemic impacted countries differently. In both Colombia and Chile, advanced health or universal social protection systems are lacking, and access is highly restricted (Malamud & Núñez, 2020). These nations are also heavily stratified economically and socially, with most of my participants belonging to lower economic classes,

some with irregular statuses that prevented them from accessing state services. Their priority was survival, not participation in my research.

I managed to establish new relationships, which I categorised as follows:

1. General: Most relationships were impersonal, akin to those formed in public spaces or at events, often anonymous and transient.
2. Informant: With some, I established closer ties. These individuals, found either through Facebook groups or outside networks, engaged in ongoing exchanges. Some provided information via written or audio messages, while others agreed to one-on-one interviews, both virtual and in-person.
3. Collaborator: My collaborators were deeply involved in the project, with some still engaged. I formed two WhatsApp groups—one with people recruited from Facebook, and another with a group of Chileans. These collaborators not only offered constant contact but also helped interpret colloquialisms, explain historical events, discuss ethnographic materials, and provided logistical support.

Finally, my participants established para-social relationships. Ethnography is typically based on close, reciprocal interactions, yet many of the relationships I encountered could be described as para-social or asymmetrical, as there was little to no reciprocity (REF). This was particularly evident in the Facebook groups, where participants spoke with familiarity about distant figures such as Bill Gates, Queen Elizabeth, and George Soros, especially in discussions around conspiracy theories or politics. Similarly, with certain micro-influencers.

Reification.

My object of study, *berraquera*, lacks a concrete temporal or spatial form; it is more of an evolving idea that often remains implicit, and investigating it comes with certain risks. As Quiceno Toro explains in her work on the “*Vivir Sabroso*” of the communities of Colombia's

Atrato region, it is not possible to present a definitive version but rather "an initial approximation, drawing attention to the potential of the concept that must later be explored" (Quiceno Toro, 2016, p. 5).

One major risk is reifying the concept, presenting it as a fixed, well-structured idea when it is often fluid and unformed. This is compounded by the inconsistency and variability of the concept itself, where different people may ascribe slightly different meanings and practices to it, posing a challenge for accurate representation.

Another challenge of studying such an undefined concept is the absence of an established body of work, like manifestos, declarations, or even podcasts and streams, which are often associated with social movements. Unlike *Buen Vivir*, I am not studying a formalised social movement but rather a vernacular concept, with uncertain origins and elusive boundaries. *berraquera* is a term used by Colombians across regions and social classes with seemingly common, but not identical, meanings. Here, I present the meaning, uses, and connotations of the word as understood and used by my informants.

To mitigate the risks associated with studying a concept like *berraquera*, I developed a diverse corpus, drawing from a variety of sources to triangulate information. This corpus includes conversations on platforms like WhatsApp, podcasts, one-on-one interviews, focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, participant observation, brief conversations, audio message exchanges, and data collection, among other materials that I will expand on in subsequent chapters.

Another strategy was to focus on the subtleties of language, valuing elements often dismissed as trivial or meaningless, such as interjections and common phrases. For example, I realised the significance of religious language in casual expressions like "if God allows" or "God forbids." These phrases, which at first seemed like routine language, revealed the deep influence of religious beliefs on the thoughts and actions of participants.

Labels and Endonyms.

As I began my research into the concept of Living Well, I quickly found myself reevaluating the idea of *berraquera*. Participants frequently referred to themselves as Berracos, using the term in greetings and as part of titles for various Facebook groups, such as "Colombian Berracos in Chile." However, this was not the only term they employed; they also used expressions like "community," "countrymen," "compatriots," "comrades," "warriors," "fighters," and "entrepreneurs."

In common discourse within the receiving society, the term "migrant" is frequently used pejoratively, sometimes associating Colombians with terms like "drug trafficker" or "hitman," which reinforces harmful stigmas. Consequently, in this work, I have chosen to refer to the general group as "informant," or "participant," "Colombian in Chile," and occasionally Berraco when individuals self-identify as such.

While I recognise that this approach risks generalisation and reification, my intention is the opposite: to counter stigma by using language that promotes affirmative identity.



Figure 3: Greeting fellow compatriots with the word Berraco

I carried out a highly creative and adaptive ethnography which took advantage of recently developed methods for digital research to navigate the obstacles imposed by the Covid-19 restrictions, while being rigorous about producing thick descriptions and abiding to such as inductivism, reflexivity, to systematically approach the research.

Chapter 1:

Flesh of Pig, Spirit of a Martyr.

Trabajo Duro: Alfonso.

Back in 2020, while I was still planning my trip to Chile, I was introduced to Alfonso by a prospective informant I had connected with through a friend's mother. Alfonso described himself as a *mulatto*—a colonial term for someone of mixed African and Spanish heritage. He also portrayed himself as a hard worker, proudly stating that, despite being nearly 50, he is "as strong as an oak" because he has "never shied away from any job." Alfonso hailed from a small town near Lorica in the Córdoba department, a place known for its significant influx of immigrants from the Turkish Empire, referred to in Colombia as Turks or Arabs.

When we first met, Alfonso attributed his strong work ethic to his heritage, explaining that his grandfather was a Turk who laboured tirelessly from dawn till dusk. Alfonso was a well-known figure in the Colombian community in Santiago. Our initial conversation took place via WhatsApp, where he approached me not as a researcher but as a potential worker, conducting what felt like a job interview. He inquired about my experience in construction, cleaning, and hospitality. I saw this as a brilliant opportunity to meet others and learn more about the working conditions and aspirations of Colombians in Chile. Unfortunately, this plan never materialised due to the curfews that were imposed just a few months later.

Alfonso is likely one of the pioneers of Colombian emigration to Chile. He had previously lived in the United States, where he worked as a cleaner. During his time there, he managed to build a small fortune but had to return to Colombia due to legal troubles. Reflecting on his experience, he told me, "In the United States, I learned the value of starting my own company. I had worked with my hands since childhood, but there I learned to work with my head."

Alfonso established an enterprise in Chile that provided personnel for general services and day labour in construction. I later discovered that he hired people regardless of their migratory status, which earned him praise from the community as a generous gesture, sharing opportunities with those in need.

Although Alfonso's enterprise was not exclusively for Colombians, he preferred hiring them—not due to their nationality but because of their reputation for hard work and willingness to seize opportunities. Some of his workers would put in up to 60 hours per week, and when Alfonso recognised their dedication or urgent need, he would offer them additional hours. Frequently, Alfonso and others in the Facebook groups would post job offers, seeking people for various tasks, typically paid by the hour or day. Whenever we parted ways, Alfonso would leave me with a rhetorical question: “What did we come here for? To work!”

My informants consistently described work as a central element of their lives—the primary motivation for emigrating or planning to emigrate. They viewed work as the legitimate and rightful means to provide for their families and improve their circumstances. When I asked about their reasons for emigrating, they often responded simply: “To work,” or “I came to work for my family.” Even those fleeing dangerous situations insisted that securing a job was their main reason for migrating.

Samira: *El Mal Camino*.

My uncle is no longer with us—he was killed. In fact, my uncles, plural, didn’t just die; they were murdered. Both of my parents grew up in a neighbourhood in Bogotá that was far from ideal—a place that had always been a bit dangerous, often referred to as “la olla” [a hub of delinquency, where drugs are distributed]. Somehow, my grandfather acquired a plot there and built his house.

My grandmother was very strict with my mother and the other women in the family. The household had a somewhat sexist atmosphere. The women were forbidden from opening the

door, meeting men from the neighbourhood, or even going to the corner shop. My grandmother didn't want my mother and her sisters mingling with the locals because she knew many were involved in shady activities and on the wrong path. However, things were different for the male siblings. While my grandmother was protective of them, she didn't impose the same restrictions, so they formed friendships with people from the neighbourhood.

My uncle Amadeo was shot. My grandmother always maintained that it was a case of mistaken identity, but when we were older, my mother told us the real story. It appears that Amadeo was deliberately targeted by someone who knew him, as he was called out by name before he was shot. He was just 16 or 17 at the time. Years later, my father let slip something that shocked me: "Amadeo was a *vago* [literally vagrant, figuratively lazy, idle or sketchy] killed because he got involved with bad people in the neighbourhood. It was retaliation. He didn't like to study, and he didn't like to work. I saw this coming long before it happened."

There were five siblings—three women and two men—and it seems like the male lineage was cursed. After Amadeo's death, my other uncle, let's call him Fernando, also met a violent end. He didn't want to study, didn't want to work. He only took on occasional gigs in construction but mostly spent his time with unsavoury friends. The official story is that he was run over by a hit-and-run driver and found dead on 68th Avenue, not far from the neighbourhood.

However, when my mother and aunts went to the coroner's office, they were told he had injuries consistent with being struck by a blunt object—bruises, fractured ribs, and signs of torture. They deduced that he was likely murdered and then his body was dumped on the avenue.

My mother, aunts, and grandmother all knew that Fernando was on a dangerous path. They didn't know the specifics, but they knew the consequences. It's like the book *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*— everyone knew he would meet a terrible end long before it actually happened.

To my informants, work is a central and defining element of life. It is the primary reason for emigrating, the means to gain recognition, and the way to progress and support their families. As illustrated by Alfonso, work is the path to advancement in life. In contrast, the absence of work and the lack of motivation to study are viewed as *malos pasos* [bad steps], the initial stages of following *el mal camino* [the wrong path], as seen in the tragic stories of Samira's uncles.

In this chapter, I will explore the moral narratives of my participants, in which *trabajo* [labour], particularly *trabajo duro* [hard work], plays a central role. Key questions I aim to address include: Why is labour so crucial to their lives? How does labour relate to *berraquera*? How does labour connect with their moral values? How does morality relate to development and other relevant actors, such as the state?

I argue in this chapter that, in line with Catholic doctrine, my informants tend to categorise morality into good and bad. Good is associated with hard work, adherence to social norms, and moral values, such as creating and sharing opportunities, and enduring hardship. Conversely, bad is generally linked to the mundane, flesh, and the concept of *malos pasos* and *el mal camino* [the wrong path, bad steps]. Through these distinctions, my informants shape a moral framework that seems absent in the state. In consequence, this chapter is divided into two sections. The first section is dedicated to what is considered good, often embodied in the images of saints and martyrs. The second section focuses on what is considered bad and more mundane, associated with earthly desires.

Before continuing, a few clarifications are necessary. First, the evidence in this chapter primarily stems from the narratives of my informants, through which I attempt to reconstruct the discourse on morality, I do not intent to present a detailed examination of moral evaluations but to outline a general framework and scrutinise some of their main tenets. While this discourse may appear Manichaeian, in reality, it is more nuanced, and I will provide examples and details where possible. Secondly, although I examine morality and its relation to

Catholic doctrine, my focus is not on institutional or authoritative religious phenomena. Lastly, I use work and labour as the central themes of this chapter because, in both discourse and practice, morality is often externalised through the ideas and practices surrounding work.

Trabajo Duro: Labour, Morality, and Money.

Cassaniti and Hickman presented a paper discussing the agreements and disagreements within the anthropology of morality. They drew two main conclusions. First, morality is not studied in isolation but in relation to other domains or experiences. Second, there is the challenge of studying morality as normativity—that is, how people adhere to prescribed moral rules—rather than how they make individual choices (Cassaniti & Hickman, 2014). Mattingly adds that anthropologists have increasingly moved away from viewing the individual as an autonomous agent who independently determines their moral path (Mattingly, 2012).

Regarding Cassaniti and Hickman's second point, my research mainly examines how my informants reproduce dominant moral discourses. However, I also highlight instances where their actions deviate from these norms or where they face moral dilemmas. These are "grey areas" or emerging moralities, which I will mention when necessary but not explore in depth. A significant example is the issue of prostitution, which remains a source of debate and division.

Trabajo duro (hard work) is central to the concept of *berraquera*. There are three key aspects to understanding its importance. First, *trabajo duro* is a transformative process embedded in relationships. Second, it is governed as much by moral principles as by rational thought.

Finally, there is the role of money. While it is not the only outcome of production, it is perhaps the most visible. This is reflected in both the currencies my participants use and the remittances they send back to Colombia.

Labour.

The notion of labour is used in two complementary ways: first, as the central component of the productive process due to its capacity to transform raw materials into products and commodities; and second, as a set of social relationships that have evolved historically.

The concept of labour has been present since the early nineteenth century, introduced by David Ricardo and Adam Smith through the Labour Theory of Value (Stigler, 1958). It is central to Marxist analysis. Marx's work focuses on economic relations, with labour playing a key role. According to Marx, labour is the time and effort invested in adding value to raw materials by transforming them into commodities. These commodities represent not only products but also a complex process of exchange and social relations (Marx, 2020). More specifically, "abstract labour is the labour that becomes social" (Bellofiore & Davies, 1998, p. 6); thus, the transformation process and value creation also generate social relations. For classical liberals, labour reflected a supernatural force, whereas for Marx, it was purely natural, manifesting human power (Lebowitz, 2015). To my informants, labour closely aligns with Marx's description, as it reflects the effort they invest in tasks.

As a set of relationships, labour has been the subject of extensive literature, examining how it creates and mediates large-scale social connections. Kasmir argues that neoliberalism "ushered billions of people worldwide into a range of labour relations—waged and unwaged, relatively stable and wholly insecure, formal and informal, bonded and free" (Kasmir, 2020, p. 1).

In Kasmir's analysis, labour and the social relations shaped by contemporary labour processes have many dimensions, including the violence inherent in capitalist expansion, through accumulation and dispossession (Raju, 2017), the construction of necropolitical regimes (Mbembé & Meintjes, 2003), the dislocation of labour, the disorganisation of the working class, and, more broadly, the precarious work conditions experienced by those at the margins of capitalism. These include unpaid or informal labour forces, who remain subservient to capitalist structures despite their marginalisation (Kasmir, 2020; Standing, 2012).

A case that parallels the relationships in which my informants are involved is presented by Frydenlund and Dunn, who studied meatpacking workers in the US during Covid-19. An executive order deemed meatpacking workers essential, while another restricted undocumented workers from being employed, limiting recruitment to those with refugee status, thus creating a state-sponsored supply of workers.

The authors argue that "refugee workers experience labour unfreedom as the condition of being coerced by the state to sell their labour in a specific sector and to specific capitalists – what we rethink here as a 'labour niche'" (Frydenlund & Dunn, 2022, p. 5). They explain that US supply chains became reliant on immigrant and racialised workers, often working in poorer conditions than the wider local population. Contrary to popular belief, illegal immigrants and refugees are not freely selling their labour but are coerced by both the state and certain NGOs to take up positions like butchers in factories.

Another element that resonates with my case is their conceptualisation of refugee workers statelessness. Refugees are often excluded from full citizenship both in their home countries and in the host nation, leaving them as liminal citizens. Frydenlund and Dunn state, "Becoming stateless does not force refugees outside capitalism, but it places them on its margins, in precarious circumstances, suspended between hypermobility as precarious workers and immobility as unfree industrial workers" (Frydenlund & Dunn, 2022, p. 5).

Similarly, in my case, migrants who initially entered Chile legally soon found themselves in a liminal state. Though not criminals, they became infractors of the law when their permits expired. The tightening of immigration laws made it nearly impossible for them to achieve 'regular status', effectively pushing them to live on the fringes of the state while remaining central to the economy.

Moral Economies.

The study of morality in economic relations has a long history in the social sciences, dating back to the early work of Weber. It has been a key focus for anthropologists investigating the moral frameworks behind economic transactions and the spread of capitalism into remote regions of the world.

Weber's *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Weber, 2012), broadly explores the connections between religious systems and economic systems, particularly linking Protestant beliefs to the rise of capitalism. E.P. Thompson described the paternalistic regime of feudal Britain, where economic exchanges were disrupted by liberal practices. He argued that protests and riots were not merely responses to hunger but to a regime lacking in morality. For Thompson, these acts of resistance were grounded in moral arguments against individualism and early industrial capitalism (Thompson, 1971).

Similarly, James Scott applied the idea of the moral economy to peasant societies. He argued that social obligations formed part of survival strategies, becoming the lens through which social justice was judged (Scott, 1977). Today, anthropologists use the concept to study different aspects of social justice, such as access to water (Beresford et al.) and welfare and humanitarianism (Götz, 2015).

The term *moral economy* often connotes resistance to injustice and social change. In this sense, *berraquera* sometimes serves as a moral justification for certain actions and attitudes. However, more often, it supports the preservation of the status quo.

Another branch of anthropology focuses on the substantivist debate, which explores human, cultural, and social factors as alternatives to the rational choice model assumed by liberalism. In *Anthropology and Economy*, Stephen Gudeman (Gudeman, 2016), argues that the economy is a blend of self-interest and mutuality. He also conceptualises domestic and individual work as a link between household economies and broader economic structures.

Gudeman acknowledges the interconnection between these realms, stating: “Neither side is complete without the other that influences it. Their balance varies across cultures and time. The tension lies within economies and within us. We calculate our relations with others, and we empathise with them. We measure some things and consider others to be incomparable. The tension is social and personal” (Gudeman, 2016, p. 2).

This view echoes Polanyi’s concept of embeddedness, which, despite varied interpretations, suggests that “all economies are embedded and enmeshed in social relations and institutions” (Gemici, 2008, p. 6), therefore, any analysis of market-society relations must consider how embedded or detached economies are from their social contexts.

Money and Remittances.

According to Mauss, for generations, societies have been exchanging. Exchanging is enmeshed in social relationships. It is not purely economic, as there are obligations to reciprocate, give and receive that operate on moral grounds, not only among individuals but among groups, this often just referred as Gift. These exchanges build solidarity and cohesion, which are essential to social groups’ survival (Mauss, 2002). Similarly, Graeber elaborates on debt and sees it as “the only lenses through we can view our relationships with others” (Graeber in Bain-Selbo, 2014, p. 494).

Money is often presented as a capitalist invention, some studies are dedicated to the use of money at the peripheries of global capitalism sometimes presented as transformative force even with the power to destroy social relationships (Parry & Bloch, 1989). Money, as many other currencies in the past has several functions related to exchange including indexing social relationships of credit and debt, restricting some transactions to particular currencies, and even, as in modern capitalism, to represent value (Truitt, 2020).

Parry and Bloch in *Money and the Morality of Exchange*, argue that money has no intrinsic meaning, and meaning is given by preexisting worldviews. This book also shows the

introduction of new moneys -in opposition to primitive money- in different geographies, in one chapter, Parry works on the tensions between an exchange and a gift economic system, analysing how in many instances, exchanging can threaten the social tissue, and money as a mediator of the relations can signal moral corruption (Parry & Bloch, 1989).

In the same vein, Toren -same volume-, reconstructs life in a Fijian village where drinking *yaqona* reflects the social structure and values of the villagers. The community regard money as alien and threatening their moral order unless purified (Toren, 1989).

Michael Taussig (Taussig, 2010) presents a similar reading in *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism*. In the Colombian Pacific, semi-proletarianised African descendant workers (many of them *jornaleros*) incur contracts with the devil, the opposing side of the divinity. Here, people engage with the devil in exchange for wealth in the form of money. However, this money is inherently negative, leading to infertility and premature death. Instead of understanding the belief and behaviours of people in terms of clashing capitalist and pre-capitalist forms of existence, he understands that the pact with the devil is a way of apprehending and incorporating capitalism and understanding how capitalistic societies fetishise money (Ollman, 1977).

Finally, one manifestation of money in this case is in the shape of remittances. Remittances, depending on the point of view, range from mere money transfers, as held by the World Bank and most economic studies (Giuliano & Ruiz-Arranz, 2009, p. Ratha ; Ratha et al., 2016), to broad transnational exchanges of social capital, as in the term of social remittance (Levitt, 1998; Solari, 2019). Some authors see remittances as a positive force (Brown, 2006), while others consider them negative because they have the potential to create dependency (Kireyev, 2006).

Remittances also have a moral edge. Simoni and Voirol mention that “remittances are usually (...) a strategy of economic diversification for households; they may improve living conditions

(including health and education) (...) and create economic opportunities” (Simoni & Voirol, 2021, p. 2517). The authors hold that remittances only occur between people connected prior to the

emigration, in this sense this money has attached notions of obligation and debt. The authors also pose that those who sent money would consider it as the right thing to do as their duty was to help (Simoni & Voirol, 2021, pp. 2519-2520).

A relevant empirical case is the Philippines, as remittances in this nation historically account for a significant portion of its gross product (Navarro et al., 2023). In this sense, literature has depicted immigrants as having catholic inspiration, to the point that Bautista called the practices they engage economies of sacrifice (Bautista, 2014), or transnational moral economies. For Katigbak moral economy of remittances is underpinned by emotional constructs such as love, ingratitude and guilt, concepts shaped by a transnational family hood that mediated by faith (Katigbak, 2015).

Some studies of remittances from the point of view of Catholicism give an account of the varied roles, interpretations, and meanings assigned to money. For instance, some have focused on the transnational institutional religious participation (Rodríguez Rodríguez, 2013), the nexus between development, Catholicism and remittances (Sobreviñas & Cruz Tulud, 2022) and the behaviours associated with sending remittances from a different religious background.

In summary, labour and money cause and are immersed in social relationships of multiple scales, while some see it as transformative forces, other have focused on pointing out the social ailments that they cause, both things are enmeshed in moral valuations which are the central topic of this chapter.

Some questions relevant to my case that emerge from the literature in what kind of labour relationships are my participants imbued? What kind of transformative power exist in *trabajo duro* -hard work? What are the morals and obligations behind money and remittances?

Section I: Spirit of Martyr.

María Cries.

I met María online. We communicated sporadically through voice messages on Facebook Messenger, where she gradually revealed more about herself. She mentioned that she barely had time to message but encouraged me to follow her posts and ask questions, which she would answer when she had free time. We spoke frequently before the pandemic, but as the curfews began, she slowly faded away.

Maria is from Valle del Cauca, a department in southwest Colombia. She describes herself as a hard-working woman, "una trabajadora, una luchona y una berraca." She has been tough and independent from a young age. She told me she started working at fourteen, helping her mother run a *miscelánea* [a stationary shop] in Cartago. Every day after school, which started at 7 am and finished at 2 pm, she would go home, eat, take a short nap, and then help her mother with the shop.

"I had to do my homework at the *miscelánea*. I did everything from cleaning, handling payments, using the cash register, selling, and organising products," she reflected. "The work wasn't too complicated, but balancing school with the *miscelánea* was challenging. I was never a good student, but my mum worked hard for both of us—my little brother and me—for our future. She also helped my grandma financially. (...) My mother also took on *trabajitos* [side jobs], sometimes working in a restaurant, and she tried different things for the *miscelánea*. There was a time when we sold *pastel de papa* and *aborrajados* [potato pie and sweet fried plantain] (...) I think that's when I learned the value of hard work."

Maria also recounted an occasion when she found her mother crying after a mysterious phone call. At the time, her mother denied it and changed the subject. Maria recalls, "I still remember that. My mum worked every day from dawn till dusk but was also worrying about money so much that she eventually got sick. She tried to hide the fact that we owed too much money, but she kept it to herself. You could really see her suffering, but she wouldn't say a word."

As I followed María, I learned that she was active in several Facebook groups run by and for Colombians in Chile. Her usual posts were motivational, filled with *frases de actitud positiva* [positive phrases], blessings, and Bible passages, often paired with images of Looney Tunes characters or religious symbols. She always opened her posts with phrases like "Queridos compatriotas" or "Mis colombianos berracos y trabajadores" [Dear compatriots, My hardworking and *Berracos* Colombians]. She was also known for reposting job opportunities and sharing business ideas. On one occasion, she suggested, "What if we organise and sell products from our lands outside the football stadium?"

Her voice messages carried the cadence and accent typical of her region, but there was also a firmness and energy to her tone, at times even sounding mighty. The image she projected on Facebook and through her voice messages was that of a tough, entrepreneurial woman—that's how I imagined María.

But one day, that image shattered. One of her most popular posts was titled "I have a confession to make," followed by a simple statement: "I cry." This puzzled me, as these words didn't align with the María I had come to know. Beneath her tough exterior, she was vulnerable, though she rarely let anyone see her struggles. How did she cry? Why did she cry?

The post coincided with the worsening situation: curfews, job losses, and growing uncertainty. In the post, María shared an image of an anime-style girl, who looked nothing like her, captioned, "She is me. She is crying." The picture showed a young woman covering her mouth in shock, with large green eyes, tears streaming down her face. Translucent bubbles softened

the image, adding to its dramatic and colourful tone. The caption read: "*Me imagino que a muchos nos pasa ¿Alguna vez escribiste 'estoy bien' con los ojos llenos de lágrimas? Yo sí.*" [I imagine this happens to many of us. Have you ever written 'I'm fine' with tears in your eyes? I have.]



Figure 4: María Llorca /cries.

This "confession," as María called it, garnered much attention. It was intimate and unexpected, as she had never shown any vulnerability before. Moreover, this moment sparked widespread conversation and a chain of similar messages, each following the same 'confession' format: a short phrase revealing a hidden truth, expressing empathy, and highlighting the suffering masked by a composed exterior.

Some of the comments from other participants are worth noting to illustrate the scene. The following is a selection of comments from that post:

-*Muchas veces y más que estamos lejos de nuestras familias en Colombia.* [Many times, especially as we are far from our families in Colombia]

-*Siiiiiii porque hay veces que es mejor sufrir en silencio.* [Yes, because sometimes it's better to suffer in silence]

-*Muchas veces.* [So many times]

-*Uy sí para no preocupar a mis hijos.* [Yes, to avoid worrying my children]

-*Uy Siiiiiii queriendo gritar y no poder.* [Oops, yes, wanting to scream but unable to]

-*Siii. Creo que han sido incontables las veces.* [Yes, I think there have been countless times]

-*I confess that I hide it from my family.*

This post marked an inflection point for me, as I gained a deeper insight into social interactions on Facebook and a clearer understanding of how people post. It was also a turning point for several members of these Facebook groups. After María's confession, many others began to use the platform to confess their own struggles—particularly their fears about the newly emerging Covid-19 outbreak, as well as their personal suffering, the suffering of their families, loneliness, and the inability to satisfy those emotional needs. There was a shared sense of silence and longing for those left behind, revealing that beneath their image as hard workers, many were fragile and suffering.

In María's story, the dominant theme was *trabajo duro*—she and her mother worked tirelessly. But this hard work was accompanied by concealed suffering. There was also a sense of sacrifice: María couldn't achieve good marks in school because she was working, and there was the notion of future reward, as María mentioned her mother's hard work was for the benefit of her and her sibling.

I contend that *trabajo duro* [hard work] is one of the most prominent values among my informants, but I argue that it does not stand alone. It is often intertwined with other notions, such as suffering, sacrifice, *pasar necesidades* [a state of being in need], and the promise of future reward. The image of the martyr, rooted in Christian traditions, perhaps best encapsulates these ideas. In the following pages, I will attempt to untangle these concepts and explore how they are interconnected. Some key questions arise: What makes hard work hard? How are sacrifice, suffering, *necesidades* [needs], rewards, and *trabajo duro* linked? And how does the image of the martyr embody these other ideas?

Martyrdom and *Trabajo Duro*.

After María's post, a member of one of the Facebook groups shared an emotional outburst, stating that he was "exhausted, fed up with his job, and couldn't take it anymore." The post included an image of a saint—a Caucasian man with a short beard, a long, pointy chin, and sunken eyes marked by dark circles. Above his head was a glowing halo. The saint's face was calm and expressionless, his eyes staring into the distance. In the background, a series of torture instruments were visible, the most prominent being something resembling a grill or rotisserie spit. The image was captioned: "San Lorenzo en su parrilla muere por dar testimonio de su fe y decir la verdad" (sic) [Saint Lawrence on his grill died for bearing witness to his faith and telling the truth].

According to legend, St. Lawrence was a Spanish-born deacon of Rome, martyred in the third century on the orders of Emperor Valerian. His torture involved being grilled alive (Lorente Muñoz, 2023). The image was jarring. The open flames and visible burning of the saint stood in stark contrast to his stoic, unflinching expression, as though he had fully accepted his fate.

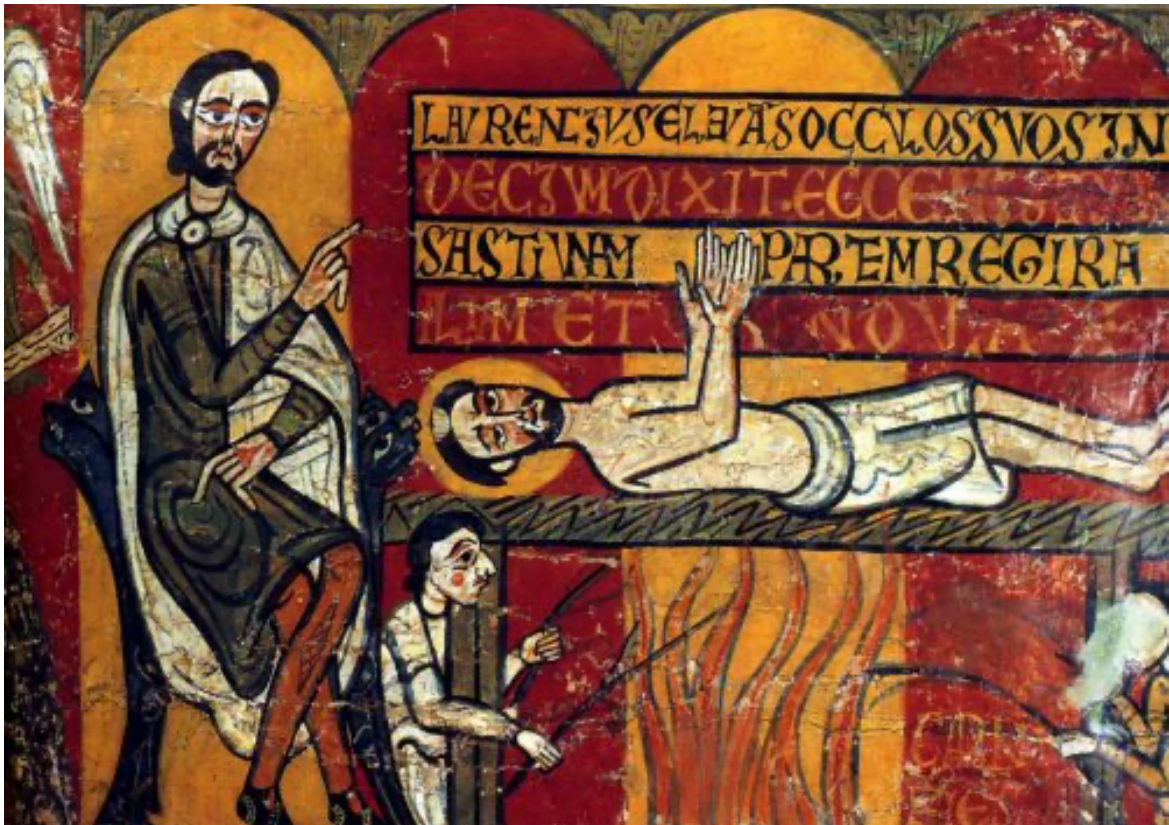


Figure 5: San Lorenzo, slowly and stoically dying.

An etymological exploration of the word "martyr" reveals that it originally had a judicial and secular meaning, referring to a witness of an act or crime (Timofeeva, 2017). However, early Greek Christians adapted the term to describe anyone who died defending their religious beliefs. Flanagan and Jupp note that the "demise of the martyr is deliberate and sacrificial" (Flanagan & Jupp, 2014, p. 105). In this case, the image of the martyr is stripped of its direct liturgical meaning, but the element of suffering and resignation remains intact.

It seems that the user who posted the image of St. Lawrence intended it as a joke, but there was an underlying truth about labour embedded in the humour. A significant number of people commented on the post, expressing how they identified with both the image and the martyr. Some of the comments were:

- "I feel the ordeal every day. I feel so identified."
- "My boss is a cunt, he thinks he is better than us because he is Chilean."

- “I wake up every morning to *bultear* [carry heavy weights or *bultos*, a synonym of handwork in this context] yet I can’t complain.”
- “I hate my job, but I can’t quit because I have a princess waiting for me at home - referring to a daughter.”
- “I eat shit every day and my family thinks I am making big money [estoy forrado de plata] they don’t know, I don’t want to worry them.”
- “I have to this for my family, it is hard, but it is my obligation. I am making this sacrifice so they can be good.”

In the labour process, my participants identified with martyrs, viewing their work as a burden they must silently endure, maintaining a stiff upper lip despite the injustices they face. Bautista argues that Filipino immigrants also identify with martyrs—perhaps more explicitly—and promote positive values around sacrifice. He calls this *Catholicised neoliberalism* and *economies of sacrifice*, which legitimise remittances. Bautista also notes that both the state and the Catholic Church exert a form of governmentality. Furthermore, he describes self-mortification rituals, such as flagellation, linked to a reciprocal exchange logic, where pain is seen as a path to salvation through the moral duty of providing for one’s family (Bautista, 2014, p. 436).

Labour and Labour Relations.

The type of work most of my participants perform falls under the category of *trabajo duro* [hard work]. It is considered "hard" mainly due to its physically exhausting and subservient nature, often bordering on servility, as expressed by the common phrase: "me mandaron a hacerlo" [they commanded me to do it]. When asking about their occupations, the vast majority of those I interviewed worked in manual labour. Common jobs included construction, carrying heavy materials, security work, and tasks like cleaning offices or homes. For women,

live-in housekeeper roles (*cama adentro*) were common, where their stay was covered but they earned less, lived by the employer's rules, and were sometimes suspected of providing sexual services.

Many jobs, like cooking or dishwashing, involved long hours and overnight shifts, marked by physical and mental discomfort. Alfonso, for example, avoided security work due to the personal risks it entailed. Overall, these roles involved asymmetrical power dynamics, with participants often feeling humiliated or stripped of agency by their bosses. They frequently expressed a desire for jobs that offered more freedom.

Maria shared her experience cleaning an office building, calling it "tortuous" due to the physically taxing tasks of sweeping, mopping, and scraping floors. As she explained, not working hard enough meant a subpar result, but working too hard led to physical pain. She took pride in doing a thorough job, which speaks to the paradox of *trabajo duro*—valuing hard work but also acknowledging its toll on the body.

The subordination inherent in their work was another point of frustration. They often complained about their bosses or *dueñas de casa* [house owners], with Maria noting that some house owners distrust live-in maids, fearing they might steal or seduce their husbands. Zoila, a Chilean friend of mine, remarked on the stereotype of the "*vieja cuica*" [posh old lady] who distrusts her workers but still expects them to serve her. This dynamic recalls *marianismo*—a counterpart to *machismo*—in which domestic workers were historically expected to provide not just services but also sexual favours (Steven, 1973).

The labour relationships described by my participants resemble the conditions faced by meatpacking workers as outlined by Frydenlund and Dunn, who play a vital economic role yet face increasing hostility from governments (Frydenlund & Dunn, 2022). Their roles are often gender-segregated, and because these jobs don't require frequent documentation checks, many workers are drawn to them regardless of their legal status.

In summary, my participants express an ambivalence toward their jobs. While they see their work as gruelling and full of suffering, they also take pride in it, viewing it as the primary means of supporting their families. Many referred to the money they earned through hard work as *trabajo bien ganado* [well-earned money]. In this sense, the earlier image of the martyr resonates deeply—they, like the saints, endure their burdens stoically for a cause they believe in. So far, I've explored what makes *trabajo duro* hard, how the martyr metaphor reflects their lives, and how suffering shapes their experience working abroad. Next, I will delve into topics like reward, need, and sacrifice.



Figure 6: "migrants know that they need to work hard to win/earn"

Suffering and Labour.

In this section, I explore the relationship between suffering and labour. How is suffering linked to hard work? How does it manifest in social relations?

Maria and I exchanged several messages as I sought to gain a deeper understanding of her experience as an immigrant worker. In one message, she said, “uno trabaja y no se da de cuenta sino hasta el final” (sic) [one works and only realises later]. Initially, the meaning of this phrase wasn’t entirely clear to me, so I asked for clarification. She explained that she often didn’t notice how gruelling her work was until the end of the day. In the morning, she would feel fine, but as her shift progressed, the work became an ordeal, though she wasn’t fully aware of it until her body began to ache. She specifically mentioned lower back pain from awkward working positions and dry hands, likely caused by latex gloves or chemical products.

However, suffering was not just physical; it was something deeper, often unspoken, even unclear to the participants themselves. It emerged through reflection or moments of honesty, like Maria’s confession. When I followed up with Maria to ask about other forms of suffering, her replies became infrequent. Before she stopped responding entirely, she said, “some ailments come from the soul, like feeling your heart crushed.” Her words lingered with me. Although I tried to explore this further with other participants, many avoided the topic. Occasionally, people would post comments on Facebook, without any prompting, revealing their suffering—particularly in relation to *trabajo duro* and their condition as immigrants.

Suffering is often kept secret, conveyed indirectly. Rather than openly discussing their feelings, people use images, particularly memes, as proxies for their voices. Costa found similar behaviour in southeast Turkey, where “the range of photographic images posted on Facebook is quite limited due to the social constraints ruling the public appearance of individuals” (Costa, 2016, p. 68). In Costa’s case, this was to preserve an individual’s reputation, while for my participants, it was about presenting a stoic and resilient front.

The following figures illustrate this point. One image shows a man holding a 10,000 CLP note - the highest denomination-, with a wad of money in the other hand. He is kneeling by a toilet, looking at the money with a mischievous expression. The image is titled, “A lo que vamos al

extranjero" [the reason why we go abroad], accompanied by scared and laughing emojis, a facepalm, and the Chilean flag.

The comment section beneath this post was filled with messages such as:

- "That is exactly how my family sees it."

- "My children think I'm an ATM, but in reality, I have no money."

- "I might be responsible for this. My mother thinks I'm *rompiéndola* [cracking it] because I post pictures in nice places. I don't own any of it, but she believes I'm making a lot of money. I don't want to worry her about my situation."

The next image follows the ironic tone of the previous one. It shows a toilet paper holder, but instead of toilet paper, it holds a wad of euros. The image is titled, "Lo que la gente cree de los que estamos en Chile o España" [what people believe of us who live in Chile or Spain]. Both pictures suggest that money is easily obtained, as if expelled from the body. This interpretation is confirmed by a comment saying, "My friends think I shit money and piss whiskey." Yet, the comments reveal that financial struggles are largely hidden from relatives in Colombia:

- "I haven't told my wife I'm struggling to make it through the month, but I still need to send money for my children."

- "My friends think I'm a warrior making big money, but they don't know about the humiliation and struggles I face every day."



Figure 7: A man pulls money from a toilet, claiming that's how people in Colombia imagine life abroad—easy as going to the loo.



Figure 8: What people think we're doing in Chile or Spain.

Another revealing post featured a woman cleaning a toilet, depicted in a Japanese-style animation. She is on her knees, scrubbing the lid, wearing a face mask and gloves. Juana Alzate, who shared the post, captioned it: “Ella soy yo. Ahí está en cuatro patas, fregando” [She is me. There she is on all fours, scrubbing]. This comment requires some unpacking and analysis.

Firstly, Juana identifies with the character, not only because she works as a cleaner but also on a deeper level, as someone frail and forced to work despite her suffering. I have seen similar instances where people use such images to express feelings of exhaustion or hardship. In Juana’s case, the identification reflects her physical labour and a sense of working with contempt. This resonates with the concept of *Marianismo*, particularly the Virgin Mary as a mourning figure who endures her suffering with quiet resignation.

Secondly, there is a theme of dehumanisation. Juana’s phrase “on all fours” evokes the idea of working like an animal, contrasting with human, bipedal labour. A comment on the post said: “sometimes we work as mules, as if we were carrying *bultos* or *jalandos un trapiche*” [carrying heavy bags or grinding in a sugar mill]. Juana’s point is that the nature of her work, and the social relations that lead to it, reduce her to an animal-like state, forced to labour as a beast rather than a human.

In this case, suffering is experienced as dehumanisation. Marx’s words on external labour echo my informant’s experiences: “Labour is therefore not voluntary, but coerced; it is forced labour (...) Its alien character emerges clearly in the fact that as soon as no physical or other compulsion exists, labour is shunned like the plague. External labour, labour in which man alienates himself, is a labour of self-sacrifice, of mortification” (Marx, 2020, p. 30).



Figure 9: Scrubbing in all fours, like an animal.

In summary, *trabajo duro* and suffering are closely linked, with suffering appearing as a direct consequence of hard work. As Maria once told me, “Si uno no termina hecho mierda, es que probablemente uno no hizo nada bien” [if you're not wrecked after work, you probably didn't do it right]. In other words, doing hard work properly inevitably leads to discomfort, whether physical or mental—this is one form of suffering.

I also explored how suffering manifests in social relations. While my participants are often seen as hard workers, their suffering is typically hidden from family and those left behind. It's

an experience only fellow emigrants truly understand yet suffering feels almost inherent to the labour process.

The Duty to Work.

Overall, people described their jobs as hard and themselves as hard workers. Despite the negative aspects they associated with their jobs, they found meaning and purpose in them. The primary reason was that their work provided for themselves and their families, which I confirmed. However, is there more to this? Are there additional reasons? I argue in this section that my informants also view hard work as a moral imperative, rooted in Catholic interpretations of labour.

Facebook is frequently used by my participants as a job board, with numerous examples too many to detail here. People regularly post job offers or promote their services. For example, one person advertised himself as a *jornalero* [day labourer], listing his skills as: “*trabajador, responsable, que se le mide a todo, y honesto*” [hard worker, responsible, willing to take on anything, and honest]. Many commented, wishing him well and praising his initiative and resilience, without offering any actual job opportunities.

Similarly, one participant posted a call for *jornaleros* at a construction site in an affluent Santiago neighbourhood. The post was brief, mentioning only the site and payment, but it included an extended caption paraphrasing a Bible passage: “Dios dijo que labrarás la tierra con el sudor de tu frente” [By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food]. The writer then shifted to praise the Lord, encouraging faith and hard work. The message was clear: God commands hard work to meet one's needs.

The paraphrased text was from the Old Testament. Some comments included the full quotation: “And to the man he said: Because you obeyed the voice of your wife and ate from the tree of which I commanded you, saying: You shall not eat of it; cursed is the land because of you; with pain, you will eat of it all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles it will produce

for you, and you will eat plants of the field. By the sweat of your face, you will eat bread until you return to the earth because from it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust, you will return” (NIV, 2023, Genesis 3:19). A response read: “It is our duty, the only way to survive and stay away from bad things.”

This passage from Genesis recounts the expulsion of Adam and Eve from paradise, with God cursing Adam to toil and Eve to suffer pain. Participants cited this as the basis for the notion of *trabajo duro* that glorifies arduous work. As one comment put it: “uno tiene que partirse el lomo trabajando pa’ congraciarse con Dios” [one has to break his back working to ingratiate himself with God and fulfil His mandate]. I exchanged one brief but significant message with the post’s author. Though he took me less seriously, he replied: “hay gente que no quiere trabajar y pues están jodidos, la pereza es la madre de todos los vicios” [there are people who don’t want to work and are screwed; laziness is the mother of all vices].

I discovered that constant work is expected, and people who stop working for extended periods are often labelled as “lazy or weak.” As noted in the brief response from my participant, not working is viewed as a choice leading to idleness and vice. This is evident in Samira’s account: Amadeo, according to Samira’s father, died because he refused to work or study, thus being considered a *vago* [lazy, sketchy].

My informants’ views align with Weber’s interpretation of Puritan doctrine:

“According to the Puritans, the obligation of man to follow a calling and conscientiously cultivate his vineyard. The Covenant of Grace which God contracted with the faithful made salvation possible, but this involved more than simple faith, since it included the obligation of external behaviour and works as well. The pattern of such behaviour must not be understood as being merely economically orientated, although it was that too. Signs of salvation were reflected not in the actual achievements of material signs of grace, as Weber suggested, but in man’s continuous efforts and intentions to fulfil the Covenant” (Kolko, 1961, pp. 245-246).

Puritans believed humans had a duty to follow a calling, akin to tending a vineyard. This duty, part of the 'Covenant of Grace,' involved not just faith but also proper behaviour and meaningful actions. While economic activities like diligent work were part of this, salvation was judged not by visible achievements but by genuine, ongoing effort to fulfil one's duties and align with the divine covenant. Thus, hard work as a divine command should be pursued diligently, even if it leads to suffering; otherwise, labels like *vago* might be used, and one could face a fate similar to Amadeo's.

Sacrifice: Migration and Needs.

I have established that many participants view labour as a duty that inherently involves suffering. This suffering manifests both physically and mentally. However, there are additional layers of suffering specific to their immigrant experience.

Trabajar duro is inherently painful, but migration adds another layer of hardship. Many participants describe their migration as a sacrifice and a constant state of need. What are they sacrificing, and what does being in need entail? I argue that they sacrifice their connections with loved ones, leading to unmet needs.

One popular post highlights this struggle: It reads: "Who said emigrating would give you a good life? Let me tell you that that person lied. Emigrating means working in any job, enduring mistreatment, being yelled at, taking insults, waking up at the dawn, going to bed late, and even sleeping on the streets. Keeping things to yourself and crying silently, taking in all the hardship. If a family member can send you only ten dollars, be grateful; you don't know the effort and tears behind it. I beg you please pray for immigrants and don't mock them. Only God witnesses our suffering."

Replies to this post varied. Some emphasized that migration aims to "buscar el bienestar de sus familias" [ensure their families' well-being]. Another person replied: "Migration is an opportunity for Chileans to exploit and abuse your ass; as employers take advantage of our

situation (...), maybe it's time, to tell the truth to our families and let them know about our conditions, about racism and xenophobia." One popular reply simply stated: "People don't know how much we have sacrificed." This reflects the broader pattern of negative experiences kept secret from their families.

I had the chance to probe a bit more into the experience of suffering, realising that it was of course not only related to the person who migrated but by those left behind. The following example illustrates the point:

An acquaintance introduced me to Jorge. We spoke briefly once, but he connected me with his mother, with whom I later conducted an interview. The conversation lasted only a few minutes over Messenger. Given his limited time, I was very direct and asked why he decided to go to Chile. His response was puzzling and unclear at the time. He said, "Es un acto de fe y solo tenía la mano de Dios (...) le pedí la bendición a mi mamá antes de irme. Ella me echó la bendición y me besó, pero al final uno sacrifica muchas cosas" [It's an act of faith. I only had the hand of God. I asked my mother for her blessing, and she kissed me goodbye. In the end, one has to sacrifice a lot].

A few weeks later, I spoke with Doña Ana, his mother. She expressed constant worry about her son. Despite his attempts to assure her that everything was fine during their conversations, she said, "Una madre siempre sabe, el tono y la mirada dicen mucho" [A mother always knows; the tone and the look in his eyes say a lot]. She wondered, "Será que está comiendo bien, si está durmiendo bien (...) no éramos ricos, pero le di todo lo que necesitaba, le di comida y un lugar para dormir" [I wonder if he is eating well, if he has a place to sleep (...) We weren't rich, but we provided everything he needed: food and a place to sleep].

She never spoke openly with her son about his situation but suspected it was difficult. She wondered if he was being mistreated: "¿Estará sufriendo humillaciones? ¿Estará pasando necesidades? ¿Estará pasando trabajos?" [Is he enduring humiliations? Is he in need? Is he

suffering any kind of tribulations?']. Despite Jorge being in his late thirties, I had the impression from her tone and examples that Ana was referring to someone of school age.

Ana had lost the ability to meet her son's needs and could only speculate about his *necesidades* [needs] and the "humillaciones que sufría" [humiliations he endured].

It is noteworthy that Ana rarely spoke about her concerns directly. Her suspicion that Jorge might be treated unfairly was a source of distress, and she was unable to console him. This situation reflects Marianismo, where mothers are typically devoted care providers, especially to male family members. However, with Jorge abroad, Ana's role as a provider, both materially and spiritually, is compromised. Had Jorge not emigrated, Ana could have supported him, and he might not be in such a -perceived- difficult situation.

Ana's questions warrant further unpacking. The first question concerns humiliations, referring to the unequal power dynamics between workers and their employers. *Pasar trabajos* pertains to enduring the mistreatment often faced by immigrants in unstable and exploitative work conditions.

The second concept is *pasar necesidades*, which I described as a state of unmet need. This condition involves constant, unresolved requirements, ranging from basic necessities like food and shelter to more existential needs such as the comfort of family. The physical distance between those in need and those who could fulfil these needs creates an irreconcilable gap, leaving the need perpetually unsatisfied. As one Facebook user expressed in a post about his unmet needs: "Es no tener la caricia de mi madre, una cama tibia y una agua 'epanela" ['It's not having the caress of my mother, a warm bed, and a hot sugar-cane beverage'].

The third concept is *pasar trabajos*, which literally translates to *pass work/labour*. However, it more accurately means to 'go through hard times, struggle, endure hardships, face difficulties. Therefore, the question "¿Estará pasando trabajos?" is better translated as "I wonder if he is

facing hardships?” Essentially, Ana was questioning whether her son was enduring significant struggles.

The primary sacrifice migrants make is the severing of familial bonds, leaving them in a state where their needs cannot be fulfilled, breaking the roles of caregiver and receiver. Sacrifice here carries a dual meaning: on the one hand, migrants see themselves as the sacrificial lamb, offered up for the sake of their families. On the other, they are also the knife that severs these family ties.

The theme of sacrifice was pervasive. On Facebook, participants often shared images captioned with Bible verses, followed by lists of daily sacrifices they kept hidden from their families. Some examples include: “the caress of my mother, the smile of my children, afternoons with my father, coffee and bread in the kitchen, football matches on the streets.” The list goes on.

Julius Bautista provides a compelling analysis of transnational labour in the Philippines, linking it to notions of sacrifice. He argues that emigration is shaped by what he calls the discourse of hero-martyrdom, portraying migrants as “paragons of the highest civic and pious virtues. Roman Catholic institutions in the Philippines play a crucial role in legitimising the state’s neoliberal discourse by infusing modern-day heroism with Christ-like martyrdom (...) fashioning them into transnational agents trained to externalise moral values of docility and subservience in the pursuit of overseas work” (Bautista, 2018).

In Bautista’s case, emigration is part of a national strategy to revive a declining economy. In contrast, my informants’ discourse centres around providing well-being to their families and communities, aligning with national efforts (see Chapter 6).

Sacrifice and Reward.

In Catholic dogma, sacrifice leads to reward or redemption, often represented as eternal life for living piously. In *Salvifici Doloris*, Pope John Paul II defines suffering as both supernatural and deeply human: “It is supernatural because it is rooted in the divine mystery of the Redemption of the world, and it is likewise deeply human, because in it the person discovers himself, his own humanity” (Pablo II, 1998).

On one occasion, a well-known member of the group posted a simple, yet profound question on a Facebook backdrop: “¿Quién dijo que emigrar te daría una buena vida?” [“Who said emigrating would give you a good life?”]. Another user responded with a lengthy message, which I summarise here:

“El sueño que tu emprendiste, Dios te lo va a recompensar... Has dejado tu tierra atrás, pero no has perdido la fe... Dios ve todo tu esfuerzo, cada sacrificio, y te va a bendecir... No te rindas, que lo mejor está por venir.”

[“The dream you embarked on, God will reward you for it... You’ve left your homeland behind, but you haven’t lost faith... God sees all your effort, every sacrifice, and He will bless you... Don’t give up, the best is yet to come.”]

This reply powerfully reflects the idea of future reward but raises key questions: How do my participants envision reward? What kind of rewards are they referring to? I argue that the reward for following God’s mandates, enduring suffering, and making sacrifices is, in essence, the ability to share prosperity with their families and enjoy a liberating form of work called *rebusque*. This kind of work, which became crucial during the pandemic, allowed them to continue providing for their loved ones—a topic I will explore in detail in another chapter (see Chapter 5).

Reward.

In this section, I argue that the reward for hard work and suffering is the opportunity to send remittances and establish *rebusques*—small businesses—thereby creating and sharing opportunities and improving their family's lives. How are *rebusques* linked to remittances? How do these ventures create opportunities? And how are Catholic interpretations woven into this experience?

Remittances.

When I surveyed my informants about what they did with their earnings, the majority mentioned using most of the money for basic needs: rent, food, transportation—nothing surprising. However, a small amount was often set aside, either in cash or in a bank account, with the intention of starting a *rebusque*. Many even sent remittances back to Colombia to fund these ventures.

Typically, sending money involved a variable amount each month—ranging from 50 to 100 Chilean pesos—depending on income fluctuations. During lean months, it could be less; during special occasions, like birthdays or Christmas, it could be more. Most of the recipients were women, usually those caring for the migrant's children, like mothers or sisters.

The remittances often came with loose instructions: a portion would support the children, while the rest contributed to household expenses. If there were no children, the money was usually sent to support the parents. A smaller part would be allocated to the *rebusque*, negotiated between the sender and recipient. However, these arrangements were often vague, with no strict accountability, sometimes leading to future conflicts.

One case that illustrates how remittances worked is that of María and her mother. Before migrating, they had the shared goal of reopening a *miscelánea*—a stationary and general store—which had closed years ago due to financial constraints. When María was planning to

emigrate, she and her mother discussed the matter at length. Initially, María's mother opposed the idea, but as María explained, "One reason she agreed was because I said we could save money to reopen the *miscelánea* (...) She didn't have a pension and was getting too old to work (...) Having our own business meant she could manage her time better, take care of the kids, and I could also use the money when I returned."

I once texted María about what she told her mother when sending money, and her reply was an audio message:

-Julian: What do you tell your mother whenever you send money?

-María: She already knows what to do. She takes a part for the kid—*la niña*—and she's saving the rest to set up *la tienda*—the store. I told her that when we have at least two million pesos, we can start. We only need a second-hand computer and a printer. The rest of the products can be sold through consignment. Now that it's opening, it's like a dream come true. All this struggle is worth something, thanks to God.

By the time of this message, María had been saving for a long time, and the *miscelánea* was finally open. Her mother had a new source of income, and María's sacrifices were bearing fruit, with even her nieces helping occasionally. Though I lost contact with María and don't know what ultimately happened to the business, it likely didn't survive. Nevertheless, while it existed, it felt almost miraculous. María managed to transform her hard work and suffering into a fulfilling venture, creating opportunities for her family and bringing their dream to life.

Rebusques as Rewards.

So far, I have outlined the process and purpose of sending remittances. Next, I will clarify the types of ventures this money is invested in. According to Catholic dogma, suffering leads to redemption (Foley, 1988), and for migrants, suffering is central to both personal and work

lives. Through salaried employment, regardless of legal status or contract type, my informants earn the means—money—that becomes the seed capital for *rebusques*.

While Chapter 5 delves deeply into *rebusques*, I will offer a brief definition here. The verb *rebuscar* refers to the act of seeking opportunities, whether in legal, paralegal, or illegal sectors. For instance, one might find opportunities through the national migration system or in the informal economy. As a noun, however, *rebusque* refers to a small, personal or family-run venture. These ventures often involve family members, are typically short-lived, and serve as side or supplementary jobs. Common *rebusques* include selling empanadas, chorizos, or arepas, making or selling clothing, handicrafts, or offering services such as standing in queues, among others.

My participants often described their salaried jobs as physically exhausting and filled with suffering. By contrast, *rebusques* offered the opposite experience. Marx described artisan work as a source of pleasure and joy (Marx, 2020), and Griffith notes that those who have endured coercive work environments often find greater value in alternative forms of labour (Griffith, 2022). Central to *rebusques* is the sense of freedom and liberation: workers choose when and where to work, what to produce, and they are not subject to another's authority. Above all, *rebusques* create economic opportunities for families and redistribute income, with relatives typically compensated for their efforts as well. In essence, the reward for enduring hard, salaried work is the liberation offered by *rebusque*.

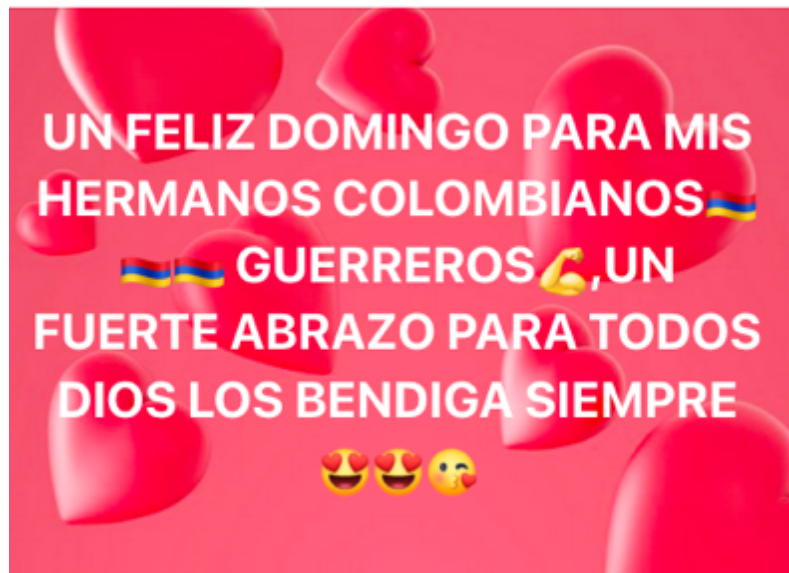


Figure 10: A participant greets other Colombians by calling them warriors.

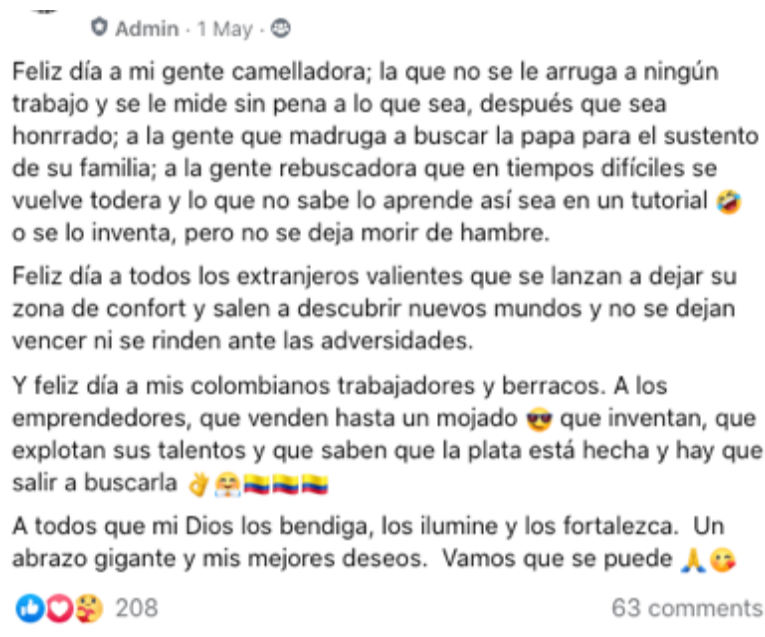


Figure 11: The author of the post hails compatriots calling them "camelladores", another word for hard workers

Catholic Interpretations of Reward.

I will now discuss Catholic interpretations of remittance sending and setting up *rebusques*. In short, these acts are seen as a moral mandate to share opportunities. For my informants, this mandate is clear: when someone in online forums discouraged potential immigrants by

claiming there were no opportunities, they were shunned and accused of being greedy for withholding chances from others.

This moral obligation is often justified through biblical parables, such as the fisherman and the sower. For example, during the *Estallido Social*, someone asked about job opportunities. One blunt response warned against migrating: "Don't come, there's nothing, and if the new law passes, we'll be doomed." Instead of engaging with this, the group vituperated the answer, and one participant cited the parables of the fisherman and the sower as a rebuttal.

Though too long to quote fully here, the gospels of Mark and Matthew recount how Jesus fed the multitude by multiplying fish and loaves of bread. Similarly, in the parable of the sower, seeds scattered across different terrains grow or wither depending on the soil's quality. This imagery resonates with remittance and *rebusques*: when money is sent or earned, it is "seeded" into ventures, with success depending on those who receive and nurture it.

By investing in *rebusques*, participants not only share their income with family in Colombia but also generate opportunities, recreating the biblical act of multiplying fish and loaves. Their families become the "terrains" in the parable of the sower, determining whether the seeds of investment will flourish or fail.

Rebusques are typically short-lived ventures that require continual reinvestment. While brief, they create jobs within the family, offering a temporary economic boost. As Mauss suggested, exchanges between people are reciprocal and symmetrical, even if the return is delayed (Mauss, 2002). However, Julian Pitt-Rivers argued that exchanges with God, such as acts of charity, are gratuitous and key to salvation. He wrote that grace "develops within us as a habitus... to cooperate with the will of God, which involves human will as well" (Pitt-Rivers, 2011, p. 429).

Following Parry and Bloch's ideas, money in this context is not just a representation of value as assumed by capitalist economics. Instead, it has the transformative power to turn suffering into freedom, progress, and well-being.

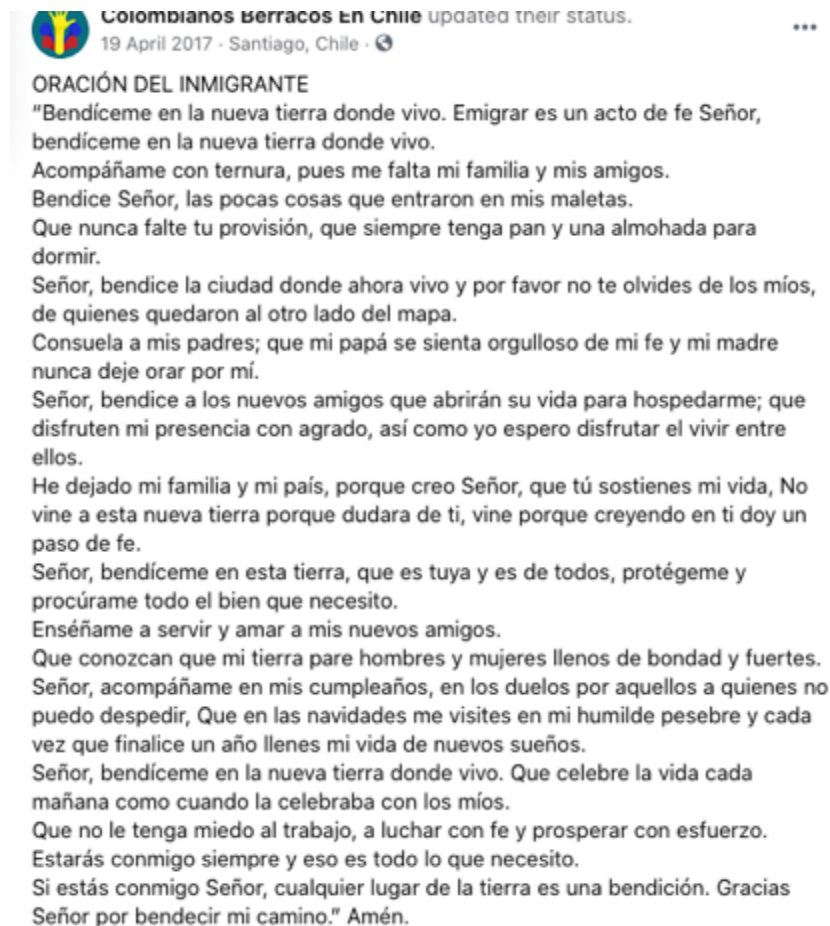


Figure 12: The immigrant's prayer captures the ideas of suffering, reward, hard work, and the blessing of a newly discovered land

Section Conclusion.

The image that best reflects their discourse and behaviour is that of the saint, or even *María* in *Marianismo*, as they face migration hardship with stoic endurance, revealing their pain only on rare occasions. For my informants, hard work is central—it is both a duty and a source of suffering and sacrifice, but ultimately it leads to rewards in the form of opportunities and the more fulfilling work of *rebusques*.

This concept, drawn from their lived experiences, is also filtered through biblical interpretations like the parables, giving their emigration meaning and purpose. As long as the wealth created aligns with God's mandates, it brings prosperity and well-being through shared opportunities. But what happens when these divine mandates are broken? What occurs when people stray from God's path? I will explore these questions in the next section.

Section II: Flesh of Pig: *El Mal Camino*.

In the tale of the *Verraco* I shared in the introduction; the animal was admired for its strength and endurance—qualities my participant's champion. However, pushing these traits too far led to its sacrifice. In this section, I explore how my participants interpret the consequences of overstepping God's mandates in the pursuit of tenacity and success.

Amadeo was killed because he was going down *el mal camino*—the wrong path, morally corrupt and dangerous. Just as *trabajo duro* [hard work] encapsulates everything righteous and aligned with God, *el mal camino* represents everything wrong, immoral, and to be avoided. Here, I will unpack the concept of *el mal camino* in three ways: first, its general moral implications; second, its relationship with God; and third, its connection to politics. I will conclude by addressing the grey areas—topics that sparked more disagreement among my informants.

El Mal Camino

Growing up in Colombia, I frequently heard people describe individuals as being damned because they were "going through *el mal camino*". Initially, I dismissed this expression as nonsensical rather than a serious concept worthy of study. However, my understanding of the term evolved significantly by the end of my first year of fieldwork in the Colombian Caribbean.

My new interpretation of "*el mal camino*" came thanks to Patricia, a social worker whose insights challenged my previous assumptions. Patricia, director of a healthcare charity in Medellín, had interactions with Afro-Colombian communities from the Pacific who travelled to Medellín for advanced medical care. During one conversation, Patricia shared details about the patients' living conditions: "Many stay in dangerous neighbourhoods [*las comunas*, slums] of Medellín with their relatives while they receive treatment". She continued: "These neighbourhoods are very violent. People have been victims of urban violence, and many relatives who had previously emigrated to Medellín have become involved in drugs and gangs, with several being killed in disputes. They—people in general, not just from the Pacific—refer to this as "*ir o estar en malos pasos*" [being or going in bad steps], which is going down the "*mal camino*" [the wrong path]".

While I had heard the phrase "*andar en malos pasos*" before, typically implying immoral or criminal behaviour, Patricia's explanation offered new insights. She revealed that one of her team's key tasks was to steer people "away from *el mal camino*" by strengthening community ties and supporting the life projects of youth and newcomers from the *comunas*. Although her charity focused on health, they adopted a broader approach, creating opportunities for work and study to prevent people from falling into "*el mal camino*".

What was particularly revealing was the contrast between *mal camino* and *trabajo duro* [hard work], and the belief among many participants that idleness, or being *vago* [lazy], would inevitably lead to doom, as illustrated by Amadeo and other examples I will discuss later.

To further explore the concept of *el mal camino*, I probed it within one of my WhatsApp discussion groups. Conversations with members of the Parish of the Holy Saviour in Bogotá provided additional examples and explanations, which I transcribe below:

Julián: Can you provide examples of what it means to fall into *el mal camino*?

What does it entail? Please analyse it a bit.

María: “*Andar en malos pasos* or *andar por mal camino* means associating with bad company that leads you to reprehensible behaviours like stealing, drinking, or drug use, which prevent personal progress. It involves not respecting household or societal norms. Conversely, “*buenos pasos*” involves progressing, studying, working hard, following rules, being respectful and disciplined, and surrounding oneself with like-minded individuals, being judicious, and heeding advice”.

María Teresa: “Taking *un mal camino* is choosing to do what is wrong despite knowing the right course of action. It involves ignoring advice and opting for the wrong path”.

Juana María: “It means making a poor decision due to lack of thought, leading to severe and irrevocable consequences. It means to choose something that you know is wrong, it is choosing things you shouldn’t have picked *a sabiendas* [deliberately or knowingly]”

Betsy: “I understand that not having the knowledge to take a decision can take you to a bad place, but it is worst if you know it and still decide to make a bad decision because there will be disorientation and negativity in your life, and everyday problems will grow. For instance, if I decide to buy a car, brand new from 2024, they would give it to me with a downpayment of 5 million -Colombian pesos—and a monthly payment of 4 million—, but it turns out that my economy is very low and I can’t afford I will default, the bank will repossess the car, my credit scored will be flagged, the same would happen if I bought a house or mess with a married man who has kids, I would be taking a wrong decision and I won’t succeed

in my life, that is why I should seek advice or counsel, for instance with a relative or someone that can help me, an expert, a psychologist, a priest, someone.

I have an example, my son, he is 28 now, single and never had a girlfriend before, then he was introduced to a lady, the person in question turned out to be a mother of 5, she asked my son for money, and he gave away 200.000. My son thought that by lending her money they would start a relationship, he really wanted to date her, but it turns out she is married to her third husband. My son was dumb, he didn't listen to my advice, he made a bad decision lost money and the girl, he said to me "mom I didn't even get to have sex with her [*el webo*], absolutely nothing". She is not a friend, nor a friend with benefits, no nothing, he knew, and he didn't pay attention to what I said".

In Patricia's explanation and in my WhatsApp group's answers many questions arise, what is exactly *el mal camino*? Who can go down by that wrongful path? Why would people follow that cursed way? In the following I will attempt to answer and explore further these questions.

What exactly is *el mal camino*? There is no singular definition of *el mal camino*; rather, it represents a combination of factors where an individual fails to adhere to Catholic moral prescriptions. The terms *mal camino* and *malos pasos*, which I am treating as semantic equivalents, are rarely depicted in literature. They typically appear as side notes or in interviewee accounts, but none of the articles I reviewed treat them as central nodes or categories of analysis.

Nonetheless, some literature sheds light on this notion. In theology, Mellado provides an insightful analysis of biblical phraseology related to *caminos* [paths]. He argues that biblical metaphors view life as a journey, with a righteous path leading ultimately to God

if one lives a good life. The Bible posits that *caminos* can lead to either good or bad states.

Jäkel states that in biblical studies, "living a moral life is walking the path of God, while an immoral life means walking the path of the devil" (Jäkel, 2003, pp. 261-283). This Manichean perspective contrasts the divine path, which is associated with goodness, against the devil's path, which is associated with evil. Blanco emphasises that these paths are diametrically opposed: "the path of God is straight and luminous, while those of evil are crooked, dark, and fraught with unseen threats and obstacles", yet *el mal camino* is notably easier to follow (Blanco, 2020, p. 52).

According to Blanco, biblical narratives contain elements such as "God, and man of God as counsellors, and shepherds and guides" (Blanco, 2020, pp. 62-63), that closely mirror the concept of descending into *el mal camino* as described by my informants. They perceive it as ignoring the advice of wise counsellors like family and righteous friends, who warn against associating with certain people, encourage studying or working, and advise against easy money.

Another relevant source is the transcripts of myths and legends from Colombian folklore, where references to *el mal camino* and *malos pasos* frequently appear. These myths are moralising and cautionary tales in which individuals are punished by supernatural entities for straying onto *el mal camino*. For instance, *la Madremonte*, the mother of the jungles, punishes drunkards by making them lose their way home and also punishes those who "trespass properties or tamper with the fences" (Villa Posse, 1993, p. 150). *La Candileja*, a fireball with flaming tentacles, chases "unfaithful men, womanisers, drunks, and those on *malos pasos*" (Villa Posse, 1993, p. 151). Finally, *la Muelona*, a beautiful woman with horse-like teeth that she uses to mangle her victims, punishes "smugglers, those on *malos pasos*, gamblers, and drunk people". Although the notion of *malos pasos* is not deeply

conceptualised in these legends, it is consistently linked to infidelity, smuggling, drunkenness, and theft.

In academic literature, the concept of *mal camino* often appears as a side note in articles from Colombia and Mexico. Gómez et al. conducted a discourse analysis on child prostitution, noting how women and children are frequently accused of having a *vida fácil* [easy life]—a way of earning money without effort (Gómez-San Luis & Almanza-Avendaño, 2013, p. 650). This is contrasted with other work alternatives, which are seen as demanding significant time and effort. Additionally, addictions to alcohol, drugs, or gambling are identified as factors that lead to *malos pasos*. *Malos pasos* are also described as “wasting one’s life” and a “lost life and youth”.

Another study on Latino immigrants in the US found that, to shield their children from the adverse effects of anti-immigration policies, parents often advise them to avoid *malos pasos*, such as drug use, gang affiliations, or negative peer influences. Parents view their role as guiding their children along a socially desirable path, encouraging them to “study and strive” (Philbin & Ayón, 2016, pp. 131-132).

Meo describes in an investigation on the morality of young people from marginalised neighbourhoods of Buenos Aires, Argentina, how the concept of *el mal camino* appears as the antonym of being “a respectable person” in the case of Meo, *el mal camino* appears associated

with “moving away from socially accepted ways of life such as studying, attending school and obeying adults, who according to their families would lead them to have a better life and worthy of respect” (Meo, 2012, p. 262).

An intriguing study involving focus groups with teenagers convicted of murder in Bogotá, Colombia, also touches on this topic. When asked how to prevent youth from becoming murderers, one participant emphasised the importance of avoiding “bad influences that

could eventually lead to *el mal camino*". Other participant viewed it as a gradual process of breaking small rules until one becomes an outcast and a violent individual, noting that such a person has disregarded parental guidance, concluding that "he who dedicates himself to work or study does not kill" (Escobar-Córdoba et al., 2015, p. 395).

García and Rincón (2012) and Heredia (2019) found that a common concern in deprived areas of Colombia is preventing individuals from following (Escobar-Córdoba et al., 2015) *malos pasos*, such as joining gangs, engaging in criminal activities, drug consumption, or teenage pregnancy (Rincón, 2019). This is similar to Patricia's concerns. Gómez-San Luis, for instance, notes that participants in his research used prostitutes as an example of *malos pasos*, describing them as "failures in life and a loss of youth... instances of *La vida fácil* [an easy life], a demeaning act and unworthy work" (Gómez-San Luis & Almanza-Avendaño, 2013, pp. 651-655). This, however, is a contentious area, which I will discuss further.

Finally, in popular music, particularly in "*corridos prohibidos*", *malos pasos* often refers to individuals who end up smuggling drugs to the US and joining gangs. These songs frequently link such paths to a lack of job opportunities and advise following a righteous path (Ramírez-Pimienta, 1998).

Finally, in popular music, particularly in *corridos prohibidos*, the term "*malos pasos*" is often used to describe individuals who end up smuggling drugs to the US and joining gangs. These songs frequently suggest that such paths result from a lack of job opportunities and advise following a righteous path.

In summary, there is no singular definition for *el mal camino*. It encompasses various interpretations and nuances beyond what I have explored. However, the concept is grounded in Catholic dogma and presented in a Manichean framework, contrasting good and bad paths. In this context, the good path is characterised by hard work and

adherence to sound advice, though it may manifest differently in other scenarios.

Common ideas associated with *el mal camino* include joining gangs, drug use or trafficking, sexual misconduct, or abuses of personal freedom.

Who Can Go Down by *El Mal Camino* and How?

The literature and case studies I reviewed, including those of Samira, Patricia, and Betsy, suggest that *el mal camino* primarily threatens individuals in marginalised areas.

However, this may reflect a bias in the literature or a coincidence in Patricia's story.

Anyone can be at risk, as illustrated by Octavio's perspective. When asked for an example of someone who had fallen into *el mal camino*, Octavio provided a broader view:

“There have been many cases of people ruining their lives by getting involved in the wrong things. To me, the clearest examples come from the world of famous individuals, especially athletes. Take Lance Armstrong, for instance, the cyclist. He strayed off the right path, resorting to doping and making poor choices, which eventually led to his downfall. Jan Ullrich, another cyclist from Germany, faced similar issues, with doping scandals ending his career. But perhaps the most prominent example is Diego Maradona. He was entangled in drugs, a lack of discipline, and wild parties. These choices severely affected his performance and behaviour. He could have achieved much more, but his bad decisions led to a decline.

There are countless other examples—boxers, footballers—many from the 70s. One name that stands out is Paul Gascoigne, Tiger Woods. Manny Pacquiao found himself in controversy, for his political opinions. But it's not just famous people; it happens to ordinary people too. I know of many cases, not people I know directly, but those who fell into drug addiction, joined criminal groups or gangs, and made terrible decisions that led them down a dark path. It's a truly bad choice, a terrible one”.

The hand of God and *El Mal Camino*.

In this section, I will explore how individuals might descend into *el mal camino* and how they interpret this process. In a Facebook forum, a user shared a link to a regional newspaper article from El Colombiano, titled “Five Consequences of the War Between Gangs in Bello, Antioquia” (El Colombiano, 2020)’. The article described ongoing territorial disputes and drug trafficking conflicts between two rival gangs in the Medellín metropolitan area, which had led to the assassination of several relatives of the gang leaders over the past 30 years.

The post generated extensive comments. One woman remarked that the gang leaders should have anticipated their deaths because they were involved in “*malos pasos*”. Many others agreed, saying that the deaths were deserved and that the individuals had “dug their own graves”. However, one comment stood out: “They let go of the hand of God. Consequently, whoever rebels against authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment upon themselves”. This quote, upon further research, is from the Book of Romans in the Old Testament (NIV, 2023 Romans 13:2), which addresses issues of predestination and free will.

The verse in question address themes of predestination and free will. The comments generally suggested that the deaths were inevitable because the individuals had violated divine mandates. It was believed that they had brought their doom upon themselves by knowingly choosing a wrong path—an assumption based on the belief that everyone was aware of their relatives' activities. Therefore, their tragic end was seen as foreseeable.

I have argued that there is no specific action that leads people to fall into *el mal camino*, but a common trait in the narratives of my participants is the act of disobeying or defying established moral norms. This interpretation is linked to the Catholic concept of free will. In all the stories shared by my participants, descending into *el mal camino* involves

personal agency and deliberate choices. For instance, Betsy used the term "*a sabiendas*" to describe how her son knowingly made a wrong decision, and similarly, athletes who choose to dope exercise their own agency. When people make such wrong choices, my participants describe it as "*dejar la mano de Dios*" [letting go of the hand of God].

To fully grasp the concept of free will in this context, it is essential to provide some background from Catholic dogma. The notion of *imago dei* suggests that humans are created in the image of God, "with key features like beatitude, rationality, and freedom being central to moral life. These traits reflect God's likeness most clearly when people experience true happiness and make good choices using their free will" (Volpe, 2015, p. 367).

As Azeem (2024) argues, "freedom is the power, rooted in reason and will, to act or not to act, to do this or that, and thus perform deliberate actions under one's own responsibility". Therefore, all the wrongdoings that lead people to *el mal camino* are acts of personal agency—when an individual, discerning between right and wrong, chooses the wrong path (Azeem, 2024). This aligns with what I confirmed during conversations with members of the Parish of the Holy Saviour, where they explained the meaning of "drifting away from God or letting go of God's hand" [*alejarse de Dios, soltar la mano de Dios*]. One member said: "God does not abandon you or let go of your hand. As long as you trust Him, you will be fine, but you can choose to drift away".

Drifting away from God is understood as a gradual process, not something that happens suddenly. When I spoke with Patricia later, she shared the story of a young man from the *comunas*, likely in his late teens or early twenties, who "first got involved with bad friends, then started using drugs [*hacerle al vicio*], eventually began selling them—micro-trafficking—and finally became entangled with a gang".

The State and *El Mal Camino*: Church and State Cleavage.

Thus far I have analysed the concept of *mal camino* on individual terms, but how does this notion appear in relation to the state? I argue that some of my informants believe the state has descended *el mal camino*. This is evident in the state's perceived amorality and corruption, and this is a problem that started since the state became in a path of secularisation, in some way drifting away from God. I contend that some informants believe that with the separation of the state and the church the country became vulnerable to moral threats. Here, I do not focus on hard facts or history but on how people interpret and make sense of events. Some questions are: What are the consequences of Colombia's secularisation? What can people do about it? How would they like things to be?

Patricia, in one interview, explained that the Colombian health system is broken, with many people simply cut off from health coverage. She saw this as a failure of the state to provide basic services to its population. However, our discussion delved into more historical aspects. She explained: "In the past, in the fifties, there was one big institution, the Institute for Social Security—ISS in Spanish—that oversaw providing health services and managing pensions. The institution was a disaster in terms of management. I'm sure you don't know this, but in the eighties or nineties perhaps, people piled up in hospital halls with open wounds and would die waiting for medical attention. As for the pensions, there were many cases of embezzlement, but as bad as it was, I believe it was the last time the state took an active role and had direct responsibility over people".

She continued, "people in the *comunas* are very wary about their family members who might be *andando en malos pasos*. But as a social worker, I see these neighbourhoods and the kids in them without alternatives, without opportunities in life, making them easy prey for the *bandas criminales* [criminal gangs/Narcos]. The state and the mayor's office have done very little to help. I work in Corporate Responsibility; we try our best with the limited resources we have, but I don't think it's the responsibility of corporations to create well-being and security for people. That's the state's role, which it has abandoned... When you see the embezzlement, the

corruption, and all the tricks' people in high positions in the state use, and their lack of commitment, it's almost as if the state is also descending into *el mal camino*".

Later, I reached out to Patricia to clarify and explore further her views on *el mal camino* and the state. She kindly elaborated: "Of course, it's not the same—a kid getting involved in murky business and the state following the same path. But by not taking responsibility, the state has allowed criminals of all kinds to infiltrate communities, particularly the most vulnerable. Sadly, this may be legal, but it doesn't mean it's ethical".

I followed up on this conversation and asked how the people Patricia works with view this issue. She replied that "this is not a usual topic of conversation", but recalled one occasion when she was visiting one of the participating families in the corporate responsibility programme she runs: "It started as usual—my team and I were conducting the baseline, so this was a long time ago. I asked about their day-to-day activities, and the grandmother of the house [*la mamá*] mentioned going to church on Sundays. This is common and not surprising, so I continued the conversation. She then said she attended mass to pray for her children and grandchildren to be safe and follow *buenos pasos* [the good path]. She also mentioned that they all prayed to the Holy Ghost to guide the government". Patricia paused to reflect before continuing: "I had never stopped to think about this before, but for this lady, it's as if God never stopped guiding... or rather, that God should never have stopped guiding the government".

In line with Patricia's experience, I frequently encountered prayers, memes, and comments related to the Sacred

Heart of Jesus. One post explained the history of the celebration, from which I extract a few lines: "119 years ago, Colombia was consecrated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This consecration in 1902 brought a time of peace and prosperity to our country. However, with the 1991 Constitution, Colombia was declared a secular state, rendering the consecration of

22nd June 1902—made as a holy weapon to end the War of the Thousand Days—useless and illegitimate” (sic).

In the comments section, one remark attracted significant attention. Someone wrote: “As much as they want to deny it, Colombia is consecrated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Despite all their efforts, they won’t prevail, and Jesus will reign over Colombia to purge it of corruption and guide the leaders down the righteous path [*el buen camino*]”. Some replies to this comment discussed the need to reconsecrate the country. One person mentioned: “Even if the state has let go of God’s hand, we must continue praying and consecrating it”. Another commenter added: “The 1991 Constitution left the door open... and that is why everything is as it is—crime, drugs, abortion”.



Figure 13: 'The sacred hearth of jesus saves Colombia.'

Hace 119 años, Colombia fué consagrada al Sagrado Corazón, dicha consagración realizada en 1.902, atrajo para nuestra Patria un tiempo de paz y prosperidad.

Para la Constitución de 1991 se declaró que Colombia sería un estado laico, la consagración que se hizo al Sagrado Corazón de Jesús el 22 de junio de 1.902 como un arma sagrada para derrotar la Guerra de los Mil Días quedó deslegitimada.

En Mayo de 2008 el Presidente le manifestó a John Rick Miller que, por asuntos constitucionales, no podía renovar la Consagración, pero que trataría de ayudar. En el Palacio de Nariño, juntos rezaron el Rosario el cual se transmitió a nivel Nacional. Meses después en presencia del nuncio apostólico en Colombia, monseñor Aldo Cavalli algunas familias se consagraron al Corazón de Jesús y al Inmaculado Corazon de Maria.

Hoy 7 de Junio Celebramos el Sagrado Corazón de Jesús y el 8 de Junio al Inmaculado Corazon de Maria. Cuando celebramos esta fiesta tan solemne, es una ocasión propicia para renovar la consagracion personal y comunitaria al Sagrado Corazón, de quien sigue llegando para todos el perdón, la misericordia y la Paz.

[#OremosPorColombia](#)

[#Oremosporlostrossacerdotes](#)

[#Oremosporloscolombianosyel mundo](#)

Figure 14: Despite the constitution prohibiting it, the text notes that many individuals and families still dedicate themselves and consecrate Colombia to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and also to that of the virgin Mary.

Another video that surfaced later, just as the pre-presidential campaign was beginning, featured a user sharing a diatribe against the then-candidate Gustavo Petro. The video was titled "Petro Will Be Defeated Soon", with the caption, "God will save Colombia because Colombia is the country of the Sacred Heart of Jesus" (sic). The video itself is over six minutes long, so I won't transcribe it in full, but some excerpts are as follows: "You want to harm the health system, and by doing so, you are harming people. You think you are Goliath, looking at us as if we are David—small, feeble. You, sitting on your throne, thinking that we Colombians are idiots (...) The Colombian people are special. We are not Nicaragua, we are not Venezuela, we are not Bolivia, where communism has triumphed. We are not Chile (...) You will end up like the Goliath of the sacred writings, your corpse will be eaten by vultures because Colombia is consecrated to God; it is a country consecrated and blessed by God because God loves this country (...) You want to put homosexuals and corrupt individuals in your government, but this country belongs to God".

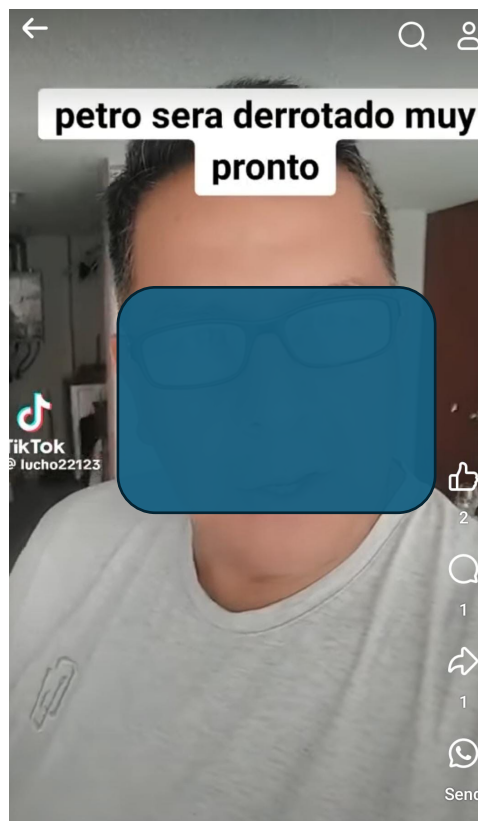


Figure 15: 'Petro will be defeated soon'. a diatribe against the then candidate petro for distancing the country from God and bringing communism.

Both Patricia and my participants in the Facebook group agree on one thing: the state is lacking an ethical and moral framework. For Patricia, this shift was interpreted as a turning point when neoliberalism took hold, and the state ceased to guarantee the well-being of its citizens. For the people on Facebook forums, it was expressed as the government letting go of God's hand, thereby becoming vulnerable to numerous threats, including communism, homosexuality, and abortion, among others.

My informants refer to two key historical points that define the relationship between God, the Church, and the state. The first is the consecration of the nation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which "brought peace." The second is the 1991 Constitution, which reversed this process, turning Colombia from a denominational country into a secular one, thus making it vulnerable to threats and possibly leading it down *el mal camino*. Despite the official separation of Church and state, what I found here—and will further explore in Chapter 4—is that people, while not advocating for a reunification, are still, through their prayers, masses, and Facebook groups, calling for the state to be guided by God and for the nation to remain adherent to Godly mandates.

Largo argues that the secularisation of the Colombian state has been uneven, both geographically and substantively. While legislation and public discourse have moved away from Catholic dogma, the Church has adapted to new trends and rationalities (Largo Vargas, 2018), much like in the Philippines, as Bautista describes. For instance, the Church has acted as a mediator in the peace accords (Santana-Vargas, 2022). Penen, however, highlights the continued influence of traditional Catholic family models in legal definitions, noting that 'fundamentalist Catholics' still push for a confessional state and the evangelisation of civil law (Penen, 2018, p. 129).

Historians agree that Catholicism and political affiliation have been key identity markers for Colombians since independence. The Catholic Church has played varying roles with the state, acting as an adversary during liberal modernisation and as a close ally during conservative

dominance until the mid-20th century. Despite formal separation, Catholic identity remains strong (Largo Vargas, 2018), offering an anchor for migrants and those displaced by violence (Ospina, 2003). Maria Victoria Uribe also notes how Catholic beliefs help survivors of Colombia's conflict regain a sense of self in the face of extreme brutality (Uribe, 2008, p. 183).

In summary, viewing the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Colombian state purely through the lens of secularisation is overly simplistic. Although the 1991 Constitution formally separated Church and state, this division is more nuanced. The Church continues to influence national affairs, and certain laws still reflect Catholic principles. However, many of my informants see this separation as a sign of the state's moral decline, interpreting it as the state having strayed from God and fallen into *el mal camino*. As a result, they do not align with the state's moral positions and have actively campaigned—through postings and prayers—for a reconciliation between the state and God to restore the lost morality.

El Sagrado Corazón de Jesús



Martha Camila kindly shared some pictures of the devotion to el Sagrado Corazón and the Basílica del Voto Nacional.

Figure 16: pictures shared by martha camila

Grey areas.

In this chapter, I have sought to organise and piece together the moral discourses of my participants. However, far from being a homogeneous narrative, this discourse is complex and varied. There is often a gap between the ideal morality people express and what actually happens when they face real-world cases and dilemmas (Mattingly, 2012). In this section, I will briefly highlight these complexities.

Escobar: the Narco and Ethical Drugs.

Although Escobar was taken down years ago, his ghost continues to haunt Colombians abroad, as his figure is often invoked to portray Colombians and immigrants as bringing ruin to a nation (see the chapter on migration). However, there is another perspective to this story. In the 1980s, Escobar redistributed part of his wealth by building entire neighbourhoods for the poor. Some even admired him, viewing him as embodying the traits of a *berraco*—inventive, imaginative, and entrepreneurial. One person remarked: "He was *el patrón* [the boss]; no one compares. The others are *lavaperros* [petty criminals] in comparison. He screwed us for eternity, but at least I recognise that, unlike those paisas who deny it, we have the metro system thanks to him"—a reference to speculation that Escobar contributed to regional finances.

Escobar's legacy lingers, but the focus has shifted to new drugs and cartels. El Guacamayo, whom I will introduce in the chapter on *rebusque*, shared an intriguing insight on this shift. He remarked, "Do you know that *tusi* [B2C] is a big thing now? It's mostly popular in fiestas de *aleteo* [fluttering parties] where they play guaracha [an electronic music genre]. For a while, my friends—punk and anarchist types—thought *tusi* was an ethical drug because its production chain was clean. The manufacturers were like artisans; they got their supplies from regular stores, cooked at home, and sold it to friends and customers, so all the violence was

cut out. But that's changing. I've heard rumours that the *Tren de Aragua* and *los Venecos* [a Venezuelan-led gang] are taking over the small labs".

Prostitution and Webcam Workers.

Prostitution is generally viewed negatively, with some narratives considering it one of the missteps leading to *el mal camino*. This perception contrasts sharply with the ideal of sanctity embodied in *marianismo*. However, even before the pandemic, job advertisements for webcam work—both for men and women—occasionally surfaced, sparking controversy. The debates centred on whether this constituted prostitution or fell into a different category, reflecting the difficulty my participants had in classifying this type of work.

During the pandemic, the conversation evolved as economic desperation grew. People began to view these jobs with more interest, and some argued, "*a job is a job, and if it's the only way to keep your family alive, it's worth the sacrifice*". Despite webcam work generally being frowned upon, others noted that these workers still contribute to the economy in measurable ways.

In summary, the image of Pablo Escobar resembles closely the story of the *Verraco* de Guacas, someone whose characteristics like strength and tenacity were deeply admired but had to be ultimately put down as it was becoming a threat to the whole population.

These are just two examples, but further research could uncover more grey areas of moral contention. What emerges here are conflicting morals and competing values. For instance, there is tension between the concept of making easy money, which leads to *el mal camino*, and the redistribution of wealth, as seen in Escobar's case—a debate notably absent in the context of *Tusi*. Regarding prostitution, I observed a conflict between the image of sanctity traditionally associated with women and the values of entrepreneurship and the duty to work.

Conclusion.

In this chapter, I explored how the morality of my informants revolves around *trabajo duro* as a core element of *berraquera*, which integrates concepts such as suffering, sacrifice, and reward. This moral framework contrasts with *el mal camino*, and together these notions help explain their ideas and behaviours in both migratory and working contexts. I also discussed how Catholic interpretations shape their experiences and morality, with biblical references often used to justify actions and attitudes.

How does this morality relate to development and the role of the state? Despite the formal separation of church and state, God and many Colombians remain intertwined, and Catholic doctrines persist. Some informants presented varying interpretations of this—some more dogmatic, others more secular, like Patricia—viewing the state as deviating down *el mal camino*.

The consequence of descending *el mal camino* is that Colombia, by moving away from God, is increasingly vulnerable to various threats, both real and perceived, such as violence, communism, homosexuality, abortion, and corruption. These issues will be explored further in the following chapters.

By distancing itself from God, the state has also distanced itself from my participants in significant ways. In the subsequent chapters, I will delve deeper into this point through examples such as *rebusques* and the influence of politics and corruption.

In the following chapter, I provide a more historical analysis that helps to understand the influences on *berraquera* from other development notions present in Colombia, while also detailing historical events that remain relevant today.

Chapter 2:

The Dream of Modernisation.

Introduction: *El Progreso*.

"*El Progreso* [Progress] entered through Barranquilla in Colombia, but it went straight on," Edgardo, a Barranquillero, told me. He continued, "This phrase is not mine; it is a popular saying, everyone knows it, and it's all true." I met Edgardo at a neighbour's home in Santa Marta, in the Caribbean region of Colombia, where we would usually gather for beers. He approached me as if we were old friends, and I was struck by the conviction and strength in his voice.

Edgardo was referring to the steamboats that once navigated the Magdalena River, which flows from the Caribbean Sea into the interior of the country. The Magdalena was a vital conduit connecting the nascent nation to the world and passed through towns that are now recognised as Patrimonial Towns of Colombia. These towns experienced their peak almost two hundred years ago. Today, only the memories of the boats, the river, and the dream of modernisation inherent to the republican era remain.

Historically, goods, migrants, capital, labour, and the technologies and techniques that would develop the young nation entered through the Magdalena River into the Viceroyalty of New Granada. This colony, relatively insignificant within the Bourbon Spanish Empire, never held the geopolitical importance of Mexico, Peru, or Cuba. From colonial times until the early twentieth century, the Magdalena River was the lifeline that connected Colombia to the wider world. The river branched out like a capillary system, allowing goods to travel along its tributaries, where muleteers would then transport them to cities across the Andean Cordilleras. Today, my participants refer to these muleteers as their "Abuelos" [forefathers],

proudly recounting their deeds and seeing themselves as the inheritors of the traditions that once linked Colombia to the global system.

Edgardo continued his story and mentioned a book, the title of which he couldn't recall. In a sarcastic tone, he explained that this book describes why Colombia is a "backward country." According to Edgardo, "The author begins by narrating a Spanish Crown edict that prohibited the creation of new technologies in the New World (...) The book explains why nothing has been achieved in this country since colonial times." He went on, "It also tells how people started cutting down the telegraph poles because they believed the cables carried the voice of the devil. The church had to intervene and threaten excommunication for those who tore down the telegraph lines."

As Edgardo spoke, his voice grew increasingly tense. He told me the story from the book, then, with an inquisitive tone, asked a question that seemed to haunt him: "Why is Colombia a backward country? What happened to the riparian towns and cities along the Magdalena, through which progress once passed? What happened to progress itself?" I offered only a sympathetic look and a polite smile to defuse the situation and avoid his pressing tone.

Edgardo also called Colombia a "*platanal*" and "*estado fallido*" [banana plantation and a failed state]. However, his words did not make me think of an answer but made me question: why progress and development are so important for Edgardo, and in extension, to the Colombian state? Why do people and the state alike walk in circles asking what went wrong? asking why is Colombia not counted as developed? What happened with the dream of modernisation? I also wondered why his voice becomes anxious and inquisitive when he asks me for a concrete and definite answer that I cannot provide.

Edgardo's anxious and inquisitive voice echoes that of many of the individuals I am studying, as they try to decipher how to achieve progress and development for themselves and their families. In large part, this thesis examines how the pursuit of modernisation and development

can transform into anxiety, even nightmares while striving for an elusive and poorly defined concept once known as modernisation and progress, now referred to as development. Some actions by the state, such as violence and neglect, particularly vivid during the Covid-19 outbreak, have intensified these anxieties.

The primary aim of this chapter is to contextualise debates about development and modernisation within Colombian history. Certain key events have left an enduring impact, serving as crucial reference points for my participants and shaping their present-day ideas and behaviours. Among these are the liberalisation of the economy, the relationship between the State and the Church, and the history of violence.

The chapter's central argument is that Colombia has shifted from the ideals of *progreso* and modernisation, rooted in European Enlightenment thought, to a focus on development, and more recently, neoliberal development. This shift has left behind a kind of moral framework which, as I will demonstrate in subsequent chapters, continues to affect my informants. While *progreso* in Colombia was once understood as a holistic notion of advancement—encompassing economic growth, morality, and infrastructure, and heavily influenced by Catholic doctrine—by the mid-20th century, development had evolved into a rationalistic project, stripped of the moral considerations it once held.

In this chapter, I explore the discourses of *progreso*, modernisation, and development primarily from the perspective of the Colombian state, which shapes the official narrative and history. Consequently, this chapter is grounded in historical analysis, drawing extensively from Colombian historiography, with some contributions from other historiographical traditions. I also examine a series of state-produced documents outlining state's ideas on development, particularly I briefly analyse the *Plan Nacional de Desarrollo* (PND) of each presidential term, which reflect the state's ambitions and development strategies.

In Section I, I trace how the 19th-century ideas of modernisation and progress evolved into concepts of development and neoliberalism from a historical perspective. I present the history of development, economy, and politics as interconnected, as this narrative reveals certain contradictions.

In section II, I will pay special attention to what historians of Colombia have termed "Conservative modernity", a kind of modernity that is as liberal as it is conservative, which the elites brought about through political violence, wars, democratic consensus and dissents, the current and dominant neoliberal development model. This kind of modernity is relevant because to some extent reflects the ideas of my participants and the discourse of *berraquera*; as a worldview that defends conservative catholic values, but also features a liberal demeanour, particularly in relation to economics.

Section I: *El Progreso*: Development and Modernisation.

In this section, I will examine how the Colombian state transitioned from the holistic ideals of *progreso* and *civilización* to development and neoliberalism. I will begin with a brief overview of the terms development and modernisation, followed by a historical account of Colombia's modernisation process.

I argue that while discourses of modernisation and *progreso* [progress] embodied comprehensive visions of societal transformation and improvement, development and neoliberalism are presented, at least superficially, as apolitical, scientific, and morally neutral. This trajectory taken by the state diverges from that of my informants, who criticise this perceived amorality, as I showed in Chapter 1 on Morality and *Trabajo Duro*, as well as in the chapters on Violence and Fake News. Moreover, the concept of *berraquera* reflects a vision of development deeply rooted in Catholic moral imperatives, contrasting with the perceived moral shortcomings of the state

There is a general consensus that "modernity refers to modes of social life or organisation which emerged in Europe from the seventeenth century onwards and subsequently exerted a more or less worldwide influence" (Giddens, 1991, p. 16). Modernity embodies the ideals of the Enlightenment, aiming to create a better future for humanity. In Weber's view, modernity marked a sharp break from a past that was "metaphysical and deeply religious" (Habermas, 1991, p. 295), paving the way for the rationalisation of the state and its institutions. Habermas also saw modernity as an emancipatory force, freeing society from the constraints of the past and the perceived dominance of nature.

In *The Capital* (Marx, 2020), Marx did not use the term modernity, preferring words with more materialistic connotations, such as capitalism. Marx focused on capitalist development, emphasising the role of technology in driving industrialisation, which transformed European society. He argued that these changes created new social classes, production processes, and forms of labour. Furthermore, through science and technology, humans gained control over nature and redefined the social order.

In summary, there is consensus on the transformative power of modernity. However, while Marx saw the proletariat as the driving force of this change (Marx & Engels, 2020), Weber positioned the state as the central actor. In the case of Colombia, the state and the elites appear to have held the dominant role.

Ulrich Beck argues that modernity is contingent, suggesting that we are now in a period where capitalist modernity reflects on its past actions and confronts the consequences of its so-called glory (Beck, 2000). Yet, as much as modernity liberated people from the constraints of obscurantism, it is also oppressive, as Giddens highlights (Giddens, 1991).

Modernity in Latin America.

According to Mignolo, modernity begins by "celebrating its conquest while simultaneously concealing its darkest side: coloniality" (Mignolo, 2017, p. 2). This dynamic creates a singular

vision of the world, which in the Latin American context, erases *otros-saberes* [the knowledge of others] and the experiences of the 'other.' Lander remarks that “the project of modernity, as formulated by the Enlightenment philosophers in the 18th century, was based on the development of an objective science, a universal morality, and autonomous laws and art, each governed by their own logic” (Lander, 2000, p. 23).

García Canclini interprets Latin American modernity as one shaped by hybrid cultures. Hybridity, in this case, refers to the strong pre-Hispanic foundations and the various combinations that emerged between Africans and Indigenous peoples, resulting in mestizos [mixed-race individuals] (Canclini et al., 1995). De la Cadena further argues that “mestizos cannot be reduced to the notion of empirical hybrids, a mere biological or cultural “mixture” of two previously distinct entities. Rather, they evoke a complex conceptual hybridity that is epistemologically embedded in the very idea of *mestizo*” (de la Cadena, 2005, p. 262).

In this context, the decolonial school identifies hybrid, mestizo, and subaltern populations as repositories of knowledge and praxis, offering potential alternatives to the universalising tendencies of modernity (Escobar et al., 2002). Rojas, in her extensive work on Colombia’s modernisation process, highlights how the elites, through their civilising efforts, sought to eliminate otherness. However, as I will demonstrate throughout this research, my informants—despite occupying subaltern positions and being predominantly mestizo—do not embody the alternative knowledge or radical potential that decolonial scholars might expect. Instead, they often align with more conservative views on development.

Modernity in Colombia and The Criollo Elites.

How was modernity transplanted into Colombia? What were the forces and actors that shaped this process? Most importantly, what have been the consequences of modernisation in Colombia?

According to Edgardo, the *Cachacos* (a derogatory term used to refer to people from the interior of the country, particularly Bogotá) place excessive significance on the “Florero de Llorente” as a precursor to emancipation. The incident of the Llorente jar has become a founding myth in Colombian history. As Edgardo recounted: “The story goes that a Spaniard named Llorente was so obstinate that he refused to lend a flower jar from his home to a group of illustrious *criollos* [Spaniards born in the Americas], who were preparing a grand celebration for the arrival of other distinguished *criollos* from Quito, Ecuador.”

“Of course, the flower jar incident was only a hoax to provoke conflict and take up arms,” concluded Edgardo. Nevertheless, the story of the jar reveals much about the aspirations of the country's elites. After independence, the *criollos* who led the revolts against the Spanish became the bourgeois elites of the interior regions, to which Edgardo refers. His interpretation highlights an important point: the monumental history of Colombia is, in large part, the story of these *criollo* elites from the interior, particularly Bogotá, who shaped the nation and imprinted their vision onto the country's population.

The *criollo* elites spearheaded Colombia's emancipation, with Simón Bolívar as one of their most illustrious representatives. However, the historiography of Colombia remains, to a significant extent, dominated by the narratives of these elites. It is a history largely populated by hagiographies of leaders, focused on the political parties they belonged to, the military struggles they fought, and the political schemes they plotted, all of which built the body and soul of what we now call the Republic of Colombia.

The Morality of Progress and Modernity.

Modernity became the ideological weapon wielded by the *criollo* elites against the Spanish regime. For them, modernity represented the path to achieving a state of superiority that would rise above the antiquated monarchy. According to Rojas, modernisation for the elites was not only a moral duty but almost a commandment—a debt owed to the population (Rojas,

2002). Once the revolutionary elites severed ties with imperial Spain, their zeal to modernise the nation translated into what they saw as the obligation to civilise the so-called "barbarians," referring to the masses inhabiting La Nueva Granada.

This self-appointed and nearly sacred mission of modernisation aimed to dismantle the obsolete Bourbon way of life and suppress the old order, to birth a new nation founded on republican values. Melo notes that this 'new way of life arrived at the end of the eighteenth century, as part of a broader vision of social advancement led by the *criollo* elites' (Melo, 2008, p. 18). In Colombia, the *criollo* elites spearheaded the modernisation process under the banner of *El Progreso*, a concept I will explore further in the following pages.

El Progreso y la Civilización.

What exactly do *Progreso* and *Civilización* mean? While these terms translate literally as "progress" and "civilisation," in this context, they were part of an emancipatory ideology that sought not only a new form of governance—potentially more democratic—but also autonomy in administration and a redefinition of interpersonal relations among inhabitants.

El Progreso and *la civilización* were the two central components of Colombia's modernisation project. The idea of *progreso* [progress] circulated throughout the Americas in the decades preceding the *criollo* revolution. Initially, it served as an impetus to reform the outdated policies of the viceroyalty, with some concrete actions aimed at material improvement, such as the adoption of European technological advances like the locomotive. Later, it became the guiding ideology of the revolutionaries.

El progreso was a comprehensive concept of improvement, encompassing "education, knowledge, political organisation, arts, and production"—principles that, according to Melo, still quietly persist today. For Henderson, *progreso* also carried significant economic connotations: "Colombian leaders always dreamt of the time their country should become rich (...) they had repeatedly told one another that their land was a storehouse of untapped wealth,

a potential cornucopia" (Henderson, 2001, p. 114), wealth that remained inaccessible due to external coercion.

In the years following independence, some significant advancements were made, including the material improvement of infrastructure, the construction of railways and waterways, and the initiation of tentative industrialisation. Efforts were also directed towards reforming the state to become a provider of essential services, such as schools and hospitals, and updating the constitution and legal frameworks to align with modern standards. In this regard, liberal ideas and the influence of the French Revolution were crucial in shaping the epistemic foundation for these endeavours.

On the other hand, *civilización* referred to the perceived moral duty of the state and the elites to cultivate subjects suitable for modernity. Mignolo observes, "This process of civilisation or education should lead countries with colonial relations to look more like Europe; this process may encounter resistance; therefore, violence is justified" (Mignolo, 2017, p. 30). Civilisation involved the eradication of backward customs, the provision of technical education, and the creation of an educated citizenry capable of reading and writing.

If *progreso* was the ultimate goal, *civilización* was the means to achieve it (Rojas, 2002). It is worth noting that the elites embodied what Li Murray describes in *The Will to Improve*, where she asserts, "Many parties share in the will to improve. They occupy the position of trustees, a position defined by the claim to know how others should live, to know what is best for them, to know what they need" (Li, 2007, pp. 4-5). In effect, the elites viewed the general population as "savages" in need of civilising.

By the late seventeenth century, the concept of *El Progreso* began to circulate within the Viceroyalty of Nueva Granada. Following the Florero de Llorente incident, a group of Colombian elites formed the Partido del Progreso [The Party of Progress], articulating strategies aimed at achieving "progress and civilisation." These strategies included the

establishment of universal suffrage, the manumission of slaves, the return of lands to indigenous groups, the separation of church and state, the guarantee of freedom of speech, thought, and religion, the promotion of education—particularly industrial education—and the decentralisation of power to provide greater regional autonomy (Melo, 2008, p. 21).

According to Melo, these ideas were vigorously put into practice, and by 1854, many had already been implemented. Furthermore, intellectuals, journalists, and other prominent societal figures actively promoted these concepts and their associated ideals.

Liberalism and its Tensions with the Church.

Overall, while there appeared to be consensus regarding the importance of progress and material improvement, significant debate and dissent arose concerning the type of education people should receive and the influence of liberal ideas. It was during this period that liberalism, as a doctrine of both individual rights and economic principles, disrupted the established order and began to threaten the status quo. *Progreso* was not immediately perceived as dangerous; it only became contentious when it, in both theory and practice, opened the door to liberalism.

During this time, the Church strongly opposed the state, at times resorting to violent resistance. The Church even aligned itself with the Conservative party in an effort to preserve its influence. Liberals, on the other hand, championed a decentralised, laissez-faire, and secular state, standing in direct contrast to the centralised Catholic state envisioned by the Conservatives. From the years preceding emancipation through to the latter half of the nineteenth century, the Church, with the support of the Conservative party, maintained a dominant position in the debate over liberalism, until the laissez-faire period that emerged near the end of the nineteenth century.

The ideological and political disputes between the Conservatives and the *Partido del Progreso* (which later evolved into the Liberal Party) were so deeply entrenched that they frequently led to civil wars, spearheaded by *a*—the political and military leaders of both factions.

Rojas characterises the post-emancipation era as a period marked by intense disputes aimed at defining the nation's direction, with liberal and conservative tensions shaping the modernisation process in Colombia (Rojas, 2002). Historians largely agree (Palacios, 2009; Pecaut, 2019), that these debates centred on whether the country should integrate into the global economic system or remain isolated. For a significant period, whenever a party came to power, it forcefully implemented its vision, often shifting the country's economic policies. It was only in the latter half of the nineteenth century that the liberal model, advocating for a country integrated into the global economy, was fully established.

However, the young nation lacked the capacity to join the global system on equal terms. Several factors contributed to this, including the absence of industrialisation and the failure to modernise key institutions. Most critically, the elites encountered a major obstacle in their attempts to 'civilise' the population, which consisted largely of illiterates, peasants, and artisans. Despite efforts by the elites to modernise and educate the broader populace, these initiatives were only partially successful.

Amidst the ongoing disagreements and conflicts between the parties, they reached a consensus on the "desire for civilisation," a notion that, according to Rojas, endured well into the late nineteenth century (Rojas, 2002, p. 2). As Rojas observes, this aspiration was mimetic, representing a "desire to be European," rooted in the belief that Europe had attained a certain level of moral, social, economic, political, and technological maturity. Civilisation became the standard by which societies were measured.

In the nineteenth century, the Conservative party encapsulated this aspiration in a newspaper, stating: "We call civilisation the means accumulated by humanity in the search for perfection

and happiness” (Rojas, 2002, p. 5). Quijano adds that this process also aimed to "produce modern subjects, an idea introduced during the Renaissance that became the model for humanity and the standard for racial classification" (Quijano in Mignolo, 2011, p. 12).

Education and Civilisation.

Education became another key battleground for the opposing political forces, centred on how best to impart civilisation to what they deemed a "barbarian" population. The central questions were: who would control this process, and what should the curriculum entail? Liberals advocated for a state-led, secular education system, while conservatives, allied with the Church, sought to maintain ecclesiastical control over education, as it had been prior to independence.

As González Stephan explains, “this civilising process was most often carried out by the Church, which was in charge of education and dealt with three areas: the constitution, the manuals of civility, and the grammars of the language” (González Stephan in Lander, 2000, p. 90). Much of the instruction focused on good manners, etiquette, and discipline—skills necessary for entering salaried positions and preparing for industrial life. However, the Church’s role in education also ensured that it maintained a strong influence over Colombian morality and religious teachings.

While Conservatives staunchly defended traditional values, Liberals advocated for a secular approach to education, modelled after the French system. On the surface, the debates centred on education, but at a deeper level, the real issue was the role of God, the priests, and the retinue of saints not only in state affairs but in the everyday lives of the people (Quezada, 2020). Despite breaking political ties with Spain, it was evident that the revolutionaries could never sever their bond with the Spanish God.

At times, the Conservative hold on power elevated God above all, enshrining religious authority in state matters. However, during the period known as *Radicalismo Liberal*, God was

exiled from the state's institutions, exemplified by the expulsion of certain religious orders from Colombia as part of the secularisation efforts. Despite these clashes, as Daniel Pécaut notes, “the liberals were not less Catholic than the conservatives.” The primary difference was cultural: “the division between the two subcultures is above all cultural since they define different modes of sociability according to the importance attributed to religion in the functioning of local life. The division also stems from the source of political legitimacy: is the will of the people expressed in elections or is it based on conformity with «Catholic doctrine»?” (Pécaut, 2016, p. 9).

These tensions between secular and religious visions of the state would continue to shape Colombia well into the late twentieth century.

One crucial issue during the formation of the new republic was how to understand and incorporate indigenous and African populations into the emerging national identity. Would they be subjects of education and civilisation, or remain marginalised? Uribe and Restrepo describe how Bolívar's emancipatory and republican project envisioned dissolving all inhabitants of the liberated territories into a singular modern category of citizen. This vision sought to eliminate otherness and contradiction by erasing racial, ethnic, and cultural differences, thereby enthroning the myth of Colombia as a mestizo nation (Uribe Alarcón & Restrepo Uribe, 1997, p. Chapter 9).

They also explain that Los Negros [the Blacks, referring to African descendants], despite being racialised as different, were relatively assimilated into the Hispanic hegemony of the criollos. As a result, they were more easily integrated into the national modernisation project. However, the indigenous populations, who presented radical linguistic and cultural otherness, were viewed as alien within their own national borders, making their integration into this modern vision far more complex.

Epilogue of Progress and Civilisation.

In summary, Progreso and civilisation were holistic terms encapsulating the state's aspirations to become more European, transform the population into subjects fit for modernity, develop an industrialised economy, and attain moral superiority. While these were powerful ambitions, they were hampered by a lack of practical means and coherent strategies to achieve them. Although significant efforts were made, such as designing educational curricula, building *Escuelas Normales Superiores* (modelled after the French *École Normale Supérieure*), and dramatically expanding access to education, the tangible results were only partially successful. This was due, in part, to the persistent power struggles between the two main political parties and the material challenges of building a functioning schooling system. Moreover, Colombia's economy was not prepared to integrate into global markets, leaving the country economically marginal and isolated well into the early twentieth century.

One notable outcome of the elites' moral and modernising efforts was, as Cristina Rojas explains, “a place of encounter between the colonial past and the imagined future, as a passage between barbarism and civilisation, [which] was a place of violent encounter” (Rojas, 2002, p. 18). Despite numerous armed clashes between political factions, much of this violence was symbolic. Modernisation, although presented as a universal and universalising force, primarily benefited the elites, marginalising others in the process.

Civilisation brought with it the “suppression of history: native, local, and female histories did not find a place in the civilising project” (Rojas, 2002, p. 18). This suppression mirrors the observation made by Mignolo: “modernity is a complex narrative whose starting point is Europe, a narrative which builds western civilisation by celebrating its conquest whilst hiding its darkest side, coloniality” (Mignolo, 2011, p. 2). In this sense, the modernisation process, along with the elites—heirs to Hispanic values and culture—functioned as endogenous agents of both modernity and coloniality within the newly liberated territories.

In conclusion, while the dream of modernisation was initially revolutionary, offering a vision for the emerging nation's future, it also provided the ideological framework to resist the

monarchical regime. It bestowed the scientific and philosophical foundation for Colombia to seize control of its own destiny. However, the process, led by the elites, was inherently universalising and homogenising, leaving no room for representation or existence of groups other than the *criollo* elite—who resembled the European Enlightenment ideal. Thus, modernisation, while opposing Spanish dominance, simultaneously oppressed local populations. Those who were marginalised—the peasants, *mestizos*, *indios*, *zambos*, *mulatos*, and *negros* who populated the colony—were dismissed by the elites as simply "the crowd."

The Age of Development.

What happened to the ideas of modernisation, progress, and civilisation? How did the modernisation project of the early republic evolve in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries?

I argue that the will to improve and the dream of a better future never disappeared. However, during the twentieth century, the concepts of progress and civilisation were gradually replaced by the more contemporary notions of development and neoliberalism. While the state frames these new ideas as technical, apolitical, amoral, and supremely rational, they are, in fact, ideologically laden. They not only reflect the state's expectations of the population but also signify a divergence from the beliefs of my informants, as explored in subsequent chapters. Many of them continue to perceive and understand development as a moral process that requires divine guidance.

The radical liberals' attempt to separate the church from the state ultimately failed. The 1886 Constitution declared Catholicism as the official religion of Colombia. By 1900, the country was ravaged by *La Guerra de los Mil Días* [The Thousand Days War] of which I spoke in the previous chapter, between the liberals and conservatives. The war only came to an end through what many saw as divine intervention, when, in 1902, the Archbishop of Bogotá consecrated Colombia to *El Sagrado Corazón de Jesús* [The Sacred Heart of Jesus], giving the Conservative party the upper hand in the conflict.

The consecration continues to hold significance today, as many of my informants still refer to Colombia as *El País del Sagrado Corazón* [The Country of the Sacred Heart]. As detailed in Chapters 1 and 4, the debate surrounding the separation of church and state remains a contentious issue among my participants, and it continues to be a subject of academic discussion.

According to Pécaut, the peace lasted until the 1920s. However, by the following decade, forced displacement, politically instigated violence between the two main parties, and electoral fraud were increasingly prevalent (Pécaut, 2019, pp. 34–47). Consequently, the dream of modernisation entered a forced hiatus. Between 1930 and 1946, Colombia experienced what historians refer to as the *Segunda República Liberal* [Second Liberal Republic], a period that contended with the aftermath of the Great Depression.

Although coffee remained the cornerstone of the economy, other industries began to emerge and consolidate. These included the banana plantations on the Caribbean coast, as Edgardo remarked, the oil industry in the Santander department, and the burgeoning textile industries in Antioquia. The rise of these industries initiated a process of proletarianisation, marked by the formation of unions and the occurrence of strikes.

During this time, communist ideas made a tentative entry into Colombia, culminating in the founding of the Colombian Communist Party in 1930. This was a precursor to the anti-communism that would dominate political debates and discourse in the decades to come (see Chapter 3). Moreover, this period witnessed a significant migration of peasants from rural areas to urban centres to meet the demands of the nascent industrial sector. This migration, however, led to disorganised urbanisation, leaving the countryside increasingly neglected.

Agrarian conflicts defined much of this era, driven by “the grabbing of uncultivated land by a layer of privileged individuals with political connections” (Pécaut, 2012, p. 44), one of these episodes is the *Colonización Antioqueña* of which I spoke at the introduction.

Around 1934, Colombia embarked on a series of reforms, some of which were notably socialist in nature, aimed at strengthening the state. Among these reforms was a fiscal overhaul. The Liberal government also sought to “eliminate the reference to the Catholic religion as the national religion, recognise freedom of worship, and strip the Church of its direct control over education” (Pécaut, 2012, p. 49). These reforms were complemented by significant structural changes, including the establishment of universal male suffrage, the creation of the National University, and the proclamation of agrarian reform aimed at redistributing *terrenos baldíos* [vacant lots, wastelands] to landless peasants.

Until 1945, the Colombian state expanded its responsibilities, taking on the role of a guarantor of social welfare, macroeconomic stability, and market regulation. However, the Conservative party, with the support of the Catholic Church, resisted liberal democracy and even expressed sympathies with Spanish Francoist ideologies. According to Pécaut, during this period, Colombia’s economic model followed a Liberal-Keynesian approach, though he emphasises that, as Polanyi suggests, the economy remained relatively disembedded from society. Pécaut also notes that many private organisations were tasked with fulfilling public functions, reflecting the limitations of state capacity.

Palacios further critiques the Colombian state's historical role in agro-exports, stating that it had been “feeble,” constrained by liberal orthodoxy, which limited the state's ability to foster a productive economic structure (Palacios, 2009, p. 413). This dynamic, however, began to shift around 1950, driven partly by internal demands that called for a more active role for the state in both economic and social spheres. As Pécaut highlights, unions demanded greater state intervention not only in economic regulation but also in addressing social needs (Pécaut, 2016, p. 61).

El Bogotazo: the end of *Progreso* and the Birth of Development.

In 1948, Bogotá was set ablaze by hordes of semi-rural workers, intoxicated with *chicha* and *aguardiente* [a corn-based alcoholic drink and the national spirit], following the assassination of the Liberal leader Jorge Eliecer Gaitán. The tramway and trolleybuses, symbols of modernity in the capital, along with the neoclassical buildings in the city centre, designed by Italian and French architects, and several colonial mansions, were burned to the ground.

According to former president Ospina Pérez, “more than a social revolt, it was the result of the subversion of values orchestrated by the Liberal Party” (Pécaut, 2016, p. 64). In response, the government retook control by blood and fire. The revolt, known as *El Bogotazo*, coincided with a speech by Harry Truman proclaiming the Fair Deal. According to Escobar, its central point was the idea that certain regions were underdeveloped and needed assistance to overcome this condition. Through this discursive act, as Escobar explains, “Almost a third of the world's population” was instantly classified as underdeveloped. Thus, the concept of the Third World emerged, along with a set of practices aimed at overcoming this 'illness' (Escobar, 1995).

Experts anticipated that economic growth through industrialisation, particularly in agriculture and industry, would improve incomes and, in turn, enhance social indicators such as “infant mortality, malnourishment, and illiteracy” (Gardner & Lewis, 2015, p. 1).

On the ashes of the old Bogota, and by extension Colombia the new ideology and discourse of *Development*, would gain traction. Poverty was not a matter of concern for the Colombian state before this period because “not much could be done about their poverty because their economic development was pointless” (Escobar, 1995, p. 22). To tackle underdevelopment, the state needed to tackle economic poverty. Later on, authors in the liberal tradition like Sen (Sen, 1999) and Nussbaum (Nussbaum, 2011), would conceptualise poverty beyond economics; as lack of opportunities and lack of human development, however, without escaping liberal paradigms (Hinsch, 2011; Navarro, 2000).

Development was markedly different from *El Progreso*, and even from Keynesian liberalism. Many aspects changed; first, the war on poverty became the focal point of development, and international institutions like the World Bank began to directly intervene in Colombian social and economic policies. Above all, development advocates presented their ideas as rational and scientific, grounded in facts and research. This sharply contrasted with *El Progreso*, where the elites framed the dream of modernisation more as a poetic, almost fictional narrative.

A crucial distinction is that while *El Progreso* sought holistic improvement, development claimed to be rational, focused narrowly on economic matters, and did not consider institutions like the Church as partners. In the decades that followed, and even today, many projects have been executed in the name of development.

Development practices have become so intertwined with the state apparatus that since 1961, every president has presented a National Development Plan. These plans outline the state of affairs, development objectives, and the strategies to achieve them, starting with agricultural development in the 1960s and evolving to address digital economies in recent years. I will explore these documents in more detail in the chapter on *rebusque* (Chapter 5).

Development ideas went largely unchallenged until the early 1970s, when Marxist perspectives influenced dependency theories that disrupted the prevailing narrative. The core argument of these theories was that capitalism relies on extraction to survive, and development is the mechanism by which the system sustains itself. They contended that “rather than being undeveloped, countries in the South have been underdeveloped by imperial and post-imperial exploitation” (Sonntag, 2001).

At the same time as the age of development, Colombia entered a period historians call *La Violencia* [The Violence], which I will explore further in Chapter 3. Unlike the civil wars of the nineteenth century, led by local warlords, these conflicts involved partisan guerrillas—either Conservative or Liberal—fighting in the countryside. Pécaut argues that due to the weakness

of the Colombian state, people identified more with political parties and *caudillos*, which explains the frequency with which they took up arms (Pécaut, 1993). Over time, these guerrillas distanced themselves from their political parties and became autonomous. Some, such as the ELN and FARC-EP, adopted communist ideologies.

Following a swift coup d'état by General Rojas Pinilla, the government introduced the National Front model. This was a power-sharing agreement that alternated leadership between Liberals and Conservatives each term. A plebiscite, in which women voted for the first time, endorsed this pact. Some historians suggest that during this period, the elites made a 'pact of silence', agreeing not to discuss their past actions.

The Neoliberal Turn and the Emergence of la Mano Negra.

In the late 1980s, the Washington Consensus ushered in neoliberalism—a set of measures for Latin America that marked the shift from old liberalism to a new one. In Colombia, the Gaviria administration introduced neoliberalism under the name *Apertura Económica* [Economic Openness] in the 1990s. What happened to the ideas of development and *Progreso* during this time? What transformations did neoliberalism bring about? What changed in Colombia?

I argue that three principal changes took place during this period. First, the state reduced its role, transitioning from a provider of services to a regulator, while the market became more autonomous. As a result, development projects became more narrowly focused, primarily on economic development. Second, the state's focus shifted from producing civilised subjects fit for modernity to producing subjects fit for the market. Finally, during this time, Colombia became a secular state.

According to Martínez and Reyes, the neoliberal agenda for Colombia “included incentives for exports, liberalisation of imports, investment of domestic savings to finance new ventures, and cutting back the role of the state so it could focus exclusively on providing basic public services and creating the conditions for economic improvement” (Martínez Rangel & Soto Reyes

Garmendia, 2012). The state also reduced public spending, such as subsidies, and privatised public services, including healthcare and pensions.

In 1989, Luis Carlos Galán was assassinated while delivering a speech during his presidential campaign. It is believed that a gunman hired by Escobar killed him in the main square of Soacha, a municipality near the capital. By this time, Colombia had reached a turning point. Drug trafficking was at its peak, and just a few years earlier, the M-19 guerrilla group had stormed the *Palacio de Justicia*, taking magistrates hostage. The government responded by sending in tanks, allegedly resulting in the massacre of both the guerrilla members, congress members, and staff. This event led to a prolonged series of authoritarian states of exception, which Michael Taussig explored in detail in *The Nervous System* (Taussig, 1992).

The upheaval of this period, along with the ongoing pressure from new social movements—students, peasants, Afro-descendants, and Indigenous groups—resulted in the 1991 constitution, which replaced the 1886 constitution. This new constitution introduced several key principles, the most notable being the establishment of Colombia as an *Estado Social de Derecho* [Social State of Law], a philosophical blend of the *Rechtsstaat* [Rule of Law] and a welfare state. It enshrined the separation of powers, the separation of church and state, and the guarantee of both fundamental and social rights, such as the right to work, social security, healthcare, and recognition of minorities—groups historically unrecognised by civilisation.

It is worth noting that Colombia's current president was a former member of M-19, a fact that has fuelled accusations against him and contributed to his lack of popularity in some sectors. Former members of the M-19, including current president Gustavo Petro, were part of *la constituyente*, the assembly responsible for drafting the new legislation. Among other reforms, the new constitution officially separated the church from state affairs—at least on paper.

While the constitution championed social rights and protections, the neoliberal turn suggested the opposite. It appears that the state attempted to resolve this contradiction by assuming a

regulatory role, rather than a provider, relying on the market and the 'invisible hand' to manage welfare. This approach had significant consequences, especially in how the state responded to social crises like the pandemic—primarily through credit mechanisms rather than direct aid.

The widespread optimism following the new constitution and the peace accords with the M-19 ended abruptly with the extermination of the *Unión Patriótica* [Patriotic Union], likely orchestrated by a combination of military, paramilitary forces, and drug cartels, collectively and vaguely referred to as *la Mano Negra* (the Black Hand). I will address this further in the chapter on violence.

As Pécaut notes, every president elected before 2002 ran on a platform of peace, but this shifted with the rise of *Seguridad Democrática* [Democratic Security] (Pécaut, 1993), which declared open war on "all the bandits" (Rojas, 2009).

National Development Plans: Techno-development.

Each presidential term, as part of the state's rituals and almost as a sacred obligation, the president must present a *Plan Nacional de Desarrollo* (PND) [National Development Plan]. This document outlines the policies and key issues the administration will focus on, ranging from economic development to social and security matters.

These plans are prime examples of what can be termed "techno-development," as they are presented as technical documents filled with indicators, formulas, and development theories. However, as I will explore in the chapter on *rebusque*, they are also imaginative texts, outlining each administration's dreams of modernisation.

Furthermore, these documents are rife with spurious associations and visionary proclamations, wherein the state presents its modernisation goals and the subjects who will bring these ambitions to life. Escobar refers to this tendency towards the rationalisation and sophistication

of development as "techno-development," marked by the increasing reliance on statistics, economics, and macroeconomic models to justify and explain development plans (*The Invention of the Third World*, Escobar).

Up until the 1990s, most of these plans focused on agribusiness and agricultural development. During this time, major concerns included the redistribution of wealth, public investment, and job creation, with the state still playing an active role in managing the economy and addressing social issues (Lleras Camargo, PND 1961–1970). The plans addressed strategies to combat underdevelopment and promoted investment in social development (Misael Pastrana, PND 1970–1974), massive job creation and industrial protection (Michelsen, PND 1975–1978), communications and infrastructure development (Turbay, PND 1979–1982), economic growth and equity (Betancur Cuartas, PND 1983–1986), and state intervention in public and economic affairs (1987–1990).

The protectionist and interventionist principles outlined in Colombia's National Development Plans underwent a dramatic shift in the 1990s. The development plan for 1990–1994 concluded that "instead of intervening in the economy, the state should correct its distortions and complement it" (Gaviria Trujillo, PND 1991). This marked the exact moment when Colombia fully embraced neoliberalism as its model for economic and social development.

The slogan of the next period was *El salto social* [The Social Leap], which introduced the concepts of sustainable development and human development, heavily influenced by Amartya Sen's ideas. This document discussed "alternative development" to describe public investment and rural and agricultural development, aiming towards "the construction of a new citizen, a new Colombian for the 21st century who speaks out, is politically tolerant, respects human rights, values nature, and takes pride in being Colombian" (Samper, PND 1994). The following National Development Plan, titled *Cambio para la construcción de la paz* [Change for Peacebuilding], advocated for the reconstruction of the social fabric, peacebuilding,

improvements in the coffee production system and its modernisation, and increased exports (Pastrana, PND 1998).

In the next term, Álvaro Uribe Vélez introduced the concept of *Seguridad Democrática* [Democratic Security]. This doctrine stated that “the violence exerted by various criminal organisations is the main challenge for Colombia” and that this violence “is an obstacle to economic growth and a threat to the viability of the nation” (Uribe, PND 2002, p. 19). From this point on, subsequent National Development Plans emphasised the need to align science, technology, and innovation, particularly within the industries of hydrocarbons, biotechnology, and agribusiness, as they were considered “the engines of development” (Uribe, PND 2002, p. 130).

The vision of science and technology as engines of development has been consolidated since this period. This outlook perfectly aligns with what Escobar described as “The Promise of Science and Technology”—the belief that human progress and development depend on applied scientific research, a concept rooted in Enlightenment thought but still influential today.

The two subsequent periods, from 2010 to 2018, focused heavily on the peace accords, a doctrine that openly contradicted the earlier policy of *Seguridad Democrática* [Democratic Security]. However, this contradiction was primarily political, as the focus on economics, development, and technology remained unchanged (Santos, PND 2014, p. 7-8). Perhaps the National Development Plan (PND) that most decisively advocated for innovation and science- and technology-driven development was the one presented by President Duque during my fieldwork.

Titled *Pacto por Colombia, Pacto por la Legalidad* [Pact for Colombia, Pact for Legality], this PND argued that Colombia needed a new type of citizen, one who embraced entrepreneurship as “a mentality and culture.” The document further stated: “An extraordinary resilience is

embedded in the DNA of Colombians, astonishing both locals and foreigners. A vocation for entrepreneurship manifests in both rural and urban areas, where millions wake up early to work, study, and build their futures and those of their families, overcoming hardships. They all deserve a chance to thrive and pursue their dreams in an environment conducive to individual and collective enterprise, which helps build this country” (Duque, PND 2018, p. 6). This new citizen is portrayed as an entrepreneur capable of overcoming any obstacle through hard work and perseverance (I will expand on this in Chapter 5).

This PND also introduced the concept of the *Economía Naranja* [Orange Economy], referring to the economy based on creative and cultural industries, while emphasising the need to prepare the country for the Fourth Industrial Revolution. The document states: “These strategies will power agribusiness and the orange economy, which will become the new oil for Colombia” (Duque, PND 2018, p. 145), with the expectation that these sectors would significantly impact gross production (Parra et al., 2021).

The Orange Economy became the flagship policy of Duque’s government but faced significant backlash for several reasons. Firstly, the state’s messaging around the initiative was unclear, leaving the public confused about how the policy would be implemented. Political opponents seized the opportunity to mock the government, and Duque’s own public statements, often delivered awkwardly, led to a wave of memes and ridicule on social media—even among my informants who supported these ideas (See Chapter 5 on *rebusque*).

Section Conclusion.

What has become of the dream of modernisation from the republican era? After two centuries of striving for modernisation in Colombia, some ruptures have occurred, yet certain aspects have remained unchanged. Among the principal transformations, we can observe that the state has, at least nominally, become secular, though the people themselves have not necessarily followed suit, as I will demonstrate in later chapters.

In terms of continuity, Colombia has been resolutely liberal in economic terms since its foundation, often delegating responsibilities to other institutions, such as the Church, which controlled education until relatively recently. With the neoliberalisation of the economy, many responsibilities once assumed by the state have been transferred to the market and private enterprises. As a result, areas such as healthcare, education, and job creation are now largely the purview of the market, with the state playing only a marginal role as regulator.

One thing that remains constant, however, is the state's enduring dream of achieving a higher state of being, whether labelled *progreso* or development. In this endeavour, preparing the population has always been crucial. Initially, this was pursued by adapting the education system to foster civilisation; today, it is achieved by promoting the supposed entrepreneurial spirit of Colombians and technical expertise suited to neoliberalism.

The most significant transformation in the state's vision of modernisation and *progreso* is its shift from a holistic concept—one that encompassed civilisation, morals, education, politics, economics, technology, and progress, where each sphere was interdependent and aimed at improving both the individual and society, materially and morally.

Now, *progreso* and modernisation have been replaced by development and neoliberal development, which, as Ferguson (Ferguson, 1994) proposed, are presented as depoliticised, perfect, and rational stages. Yet despite all the efforts to achieve *progreso* and development, this desired state has remained elusive, leaving no clear answer to Edgardo's anxious questioning.

Section II: Conservative Modernisation.

Oriel arrived in Bogotá from the department of El Tolima in the 1970s to study psychology at university, later pursuing a master's degree in political science. He has been a long-time acquaintance of my family, and although I have known him for many years, we had never discussed a specific topic like the “modernisation of Colombia” in detail.

One afternoon, when the curfews were starting to ease, we met at the home of another mutual acquaintance. As we sipped *tinto* [black coffee] after lunch, Oriel asked me about my research progress. I spoke at length about my frustration with fieldwork and mentioned that I was *haciendo de tripas corazón* [making the best of a difficult situation]. I also shared that I was investigating *La colonización antioqueña* (see introduction), as it related to the origins of the concept of *Berraquera*.

Additionally, I explained that I was delving into Colombian historiography, which often referred to the country's modernisation as "conservative modernisation." Much of the literature focused on the conflict between the Conservative and Liberal parties—not just as political organisations, but also as ideologies. As in many conversations throughout this research, Oriel responded by drawing on popular wisdom to express his views:

Oriel: "Julito, you know what people say here? They say, "muy liberales en lo económico, pero muy conservadores en lo demás" [very liberal regarding economics, but very conservative in everything else]. It sounds like a contradiction, but people live with it."

Julián: "What do you mean?"

Oriel: "Well, Julito, as you know, I come from a small town, a hamlet. My family descended from Antioquia and migrated into the interior, towards Bogotá. They were peasants and *camanduleros* [rosary carriers, but also a derogatory term for religious conservatives]. Tolima was the last bit of *la colonización paisa*, and I heard people say that phrase all the time.

People took pride in their entrepreneurial spirit. I remember when I was a kid, my grandfather would always boast about his business success, like buying and selling cattle. He and his friends would speak with pride about their hard work—waking up before the rooster crowed, putting up fences, and even patrolling the land against trespassers and thieves.

Everyone would go to church every Sunday, sometimes even on weekdays, and the women would wear veils to cover their hair. *Paisa* families were large, deeply Catholic, and adhered to church dogma, but only on the surface. Most women were single mothers, and although people went to church regularly, everyone gossiped about those who weren't as pious as they appeared. You'd hear that the neighbour's son was the illegitimate child of the mayor, or that people were gambling or visiting brothels, only to show up at mass on Sunday.

It always seemed contradictory to me: people were so conservative and devout, yet so entrepreneurial, even to the point of greed. The same people who moved their fences to gain an extra 30 centimetres of arable land were the ones attending mass every Sunday. I think that's how conservatism and liberalism coexist here."

Julián: "Could you explain more about this dual adherence? What do you think about it in other contexts?"

Oriel: "I believe that both parties—now I'm speaking not of ideologies but of political affiliations—Liberals and Conservatives, were quite similar in some respects. They would attend mass, and after mass, regardless of party, they would go to the fair and conduct business as usual. One commonality they shared—" he emphasised—"was their dislike for government interference. The state virtually didn't exist. There was the mayor, the priest, and the police, and that was about it—there was no real authority. I think that's what people mean when they talk about being conservative and liberal at the same time.

Colombians, it seems, have somehow reconciled this contradiction long ago. It sounds absurd, but that's just how things are here. People are both conservative and liberal. They celebrate when the government cuts taxes but get angry when they -the state- promulgate more individual freedoms."

What historical processes and mechanisms have led people today to identify themselves as conservative or liberal? And what are the implications of this for *berraquera*? I argue that the

continuous historical struggle between conservative and liberal ideologies, as well as their associated political parties, has shaped individuals who defend a conservative worldview, deeply influenced by Catholic values (see chapter on morals), while also being strong adherents to liberal economic practices and values (see chapter on *rebusques*).

Oriel's words astonished me, as the behaviour and attitudes he described were among the most common themes I encountered during my research. For example, in the chapter on *rebusque*, I found that people generally agree with the economic principles promoted by the neoliberal state. However, in the chapter on violence, it became evident that many interpret Colombia's struggles as a consequence of moral decay, attributed to the state's departure from conservative and religious values.

To Oriel, the coexistence of conservative and liberal tendencies seemed contradictory, a perception he found puzzling. However, this duality is not unique to Colombia. Without venturing too far geographically, other Latin American nations appear to have followed a similar path. Alzate argues that both conservatives and liberals shaped national projects across Latin America, sustaining ambivalent relationships with the Church, religion, and secularisation. These dynamics influenced economic, civic, and cultural domains, where "the construction of nations and national subjects was shaped by religion and liberalisation, forming the material and spiritual foundation of post-independence Latin America" (Méndez, 2019, p. 93).

A recent and notable example of the coexistence between liberalism and conservatism can be found in Eastern Europe. Stubbs explain that Croatia, Hungary, and Poland exhibit modes of governmentality characterised by heteronormative familialism, repatriarchalisation, nationalism, ethnicised demographic renewal, and anti-immigrant sentiments while these countries adopt neoliberal economic policies (Stubbs, 2016), Csilla Kiss describes this as an incomplete or partial liberalisation, where communist-era values and earlier traditions coexist with liberal principles (Kiss, 2002)

This situation signals a profound disembedding of the economy from other spheres, which closely resembles the case of Colombia. Historically, the economic sphere was part of a larger project of *progreso*, but over time it has become disembedded, focusing solely on development.

While the first section was more chronological, this section will address the aforementioned topics in a more analytical manner. Historians agree that the modernisation of Colombia, unlike that of Europe, was fundamentally conservative. Pecaut refers to this as “Conservative modernity,” while others have used terms like “Patria Conservadora, república liberal” [Conservative homeland, liberal republic] (Urrego, 1998) or “traditional modernity” (López, 1996), to describe how, despite its adherence to liberal economic ideas, the Colombian state remains deeply conservative. For the broader society, the roles of God, the Church, and Catholic morality continue to serve as reference points for economic, moral, and political ideas. I concur with this definition and argue that my informants—if not the larger population—identify with this perspective.

Furthermore, I will contend, not only in this chapter but throughout the thesis, that *berraquera* is comparable to the ideals of *El Progreso* in that it is similarly all-encompassing, addressing not only economic but also religious, moral, and political worldviews. In this sense, while there is alignment between the ideas of the nineteenth century and those of *berraquera* today regarding neoliberal development, certain frictions exist, which I will explore in this research.

Governmentality and Coffee: Liberal and Conservative Struggle.

It is useful to recall the notion of governmentality, defined as the techniques and procedures for directing human behaviour (Rose et al., 2006). This includes the strategies, technologies, and programmes designed to produce subjects with desired characteristics. In the context of Colombian modernisation, various forces—such as the conservative and liberal parties, the state, the Church, the education system, and the discourses of progress and development,

along with the impact of war—have shaped the political and economic landscape, contributing to the creation of the modern subject that the state sought to cultivate.

Colombian historiography is largely characterised as a struggle between elites within the liberal and conservative parties, both ideologically and militarily, as they attempted to impose their views on the populace. The ideas of Jeremy Bentham circulated among the criollo elites in the early nineteenth century, particularly during the period known as *Liberalismo Radical* [Radical Liberalism] around 1860. This movement, led by the Progreso party, lasted for two decades and established the foundational principles of the Colombian state for the future.

Education and secularisation.

As I mentioned in the first section, since independence throughout the 19th century, education was a battleground. During periods of Liberal hegemony, Catholic doctrines were forbidden, while under Conservative domination, liberal ideas and figures such as Bentham were equally rejected. Catholic schooling opposed the teachings of liberal philosophers, viewing liberalism as the embodiment of all evils for promoting a doctrine centred on the “individual and materiality,” in stark contrast to the doctrine of God.

However, orders like the Jesuits, despite being expelled on numerous occasions, played a crucial role in educating indigenous and African descendant communities outside the major Hispanic cities of Santa Fé de Bogotá, Medellín, Popayán, and Cali. This endeavour aligned with the modernisation efforts of the criollo elites.

Radical Liberalism dominated Colombian politics during the late 19th century, outlining a liberal roadmap that addressed economics, politics, and morality. Economically, the constitution prohibited the state from participating in key economic policy decisions (Correa R., 2009). During this period, the Radicals expelled religious orders, and the constitution declared Colombia a secular state. This expulsion resulted in the secularisation of the schooling

system previously administered by the Church, where Catholic doctrine had been taught—at least for a time.

The practical reason for the expulsion was that the Church had amassed considerable wealth since the colonial period, in the form of properties, tithes, and investments. Additionally, it had accrued significant political power, as many bishops and priests were part of the elite and had familial ties to political leaders. The ideological rationale was that religion was perceived as backward, obstructing the creation of modern subjects.

While Radical Liberalism aimed to separate the state from God, this separation did not extend to society. According to Pécaut, this separation was largely nominal; in practice, the Church and religious influence remained pervasive in all other areas (Pécaut, 2016, p. 8). I am reminded of Oriol's insightful words, which reflect Colombian lore: "Remember, it is a well-known fact, and a saying around here, that the difference between conservatives and liberals is that the former attended mass at seven and the latter at nine." This suggests that, ultimately, there was little distinction in the level of religious observance between the two factions.

Coffee Globalisation.

The Colombian elites debated whether to engage with world commerce. The Radicals emerged victorious in this dispute, but their efforts proved futile due to a lack of material support, except for tobacco exports, which ceased abruptly following a financial crisis in European and American stock markets.

According to Palacios, the era's motto was "export or perish," emphasizing that participation in international markets was essential for civilization to thrive in Colombia. In his comprehensive work, *El Café en Colombia (1850-1970): una historia económica, social y política*, Palacios notes that, paradoxically, while liberals sought to join the global system and adopt laissez-faire

economics, it was the conservatives who ultimately achieved this when they regained power (Palacios, 2009, p. Chapter 1).

In contrast to the Radical period was *La Regeneración* [the Regeneration], an era of conservative hegemony that aimed not only to revive traditional values and restore religious orders from exile but also to capitalize on the economic boom brought about by the growing coffee industry in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Despite their initial reluctance towards an open economy, the influx of capital incentivized full integration into the global market. By the early 20th century, coffee was in high demand in Europe and the United States. The trade revenues, combined with compensation for the loss of Panama and substantial loans from foreign banks, particularly British, fuelled a process known as “la modernización a toda marcha” [full-throttle modernisation].

According to Henderson, “Colombia’s long anticipated bonanza materialised during this time when a tidal wave of dollars rolled into and across the country. The sudden appearance of money in the poor, remote, tradition-bound nation necessarily had profound consequences (...) The majority of the money was generated by coffee grown by yeoman farmers, dispersed over the mountains” (Henderson, 2001, p. 115), during this time, Henderson continues, “money induced Colombians to change their lifestyles and aspirations, and it produced changes in social structures (...) wealthier citizens invested in automobiles imported from the United States and Europe” (Henderson, 2001, pp. 118-119).

Although both factions fought for decades, they reached some agreements. First, Colombia would join the global market, and the economic policy would be liberal second, the church would be close to the government, and parish schools would remain active in parallel with lay schools. This agreement between liberal and conservative ideas is what Pecaut and others called “Conservative modernity in Colombia.”

However, to reach such an understanding, Liberals renounced a liberal modernity project in the broad sense, opting only for modernity centred around material improvement and the liberalisation of the economy. At the same time, the Conservatives accepted a liberal economy but put the church and God at the centre of the political and moral process of the nation.

The coffee boom certainly brought long-craved modernisation. Nonetheless, as money flowed, the state overlooked inflation, the inequalities among rural and urban populations, and the poor condition of workers. For instance, in 1928, the *Masacre de las Bananeras*, depicted in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, occurred when a union influenced by communist ideas struck against the United Fruit Company. In response, the government opened fire, killing many workers.

Coffee fuelled the modernisation project, and the state did not want to stop it, even if it meant going against their own population. While the state favoured material and economic progress, they put civilisation in the background. Following Palacios, the laissez-faire policies contributed little economically. However, they contributed significantly to modernising elements such as the “weakening of peasant superstitions, and of obscurantist ideologies, the prosecution of the racial caste systems as well as the feudal like attitudes and values” (Palacios, 2009, p. 230), in the long term.

Berraquera and the Colombian State.

The ideas associated with *berraquera* closely resemble the foundational concepts upon which the elites established Colombia, reflecting its political and economic development. The attributes of liberalism and conservatism that historians have used to describe Colombia align remarkably with my ethnographic findings. In this sense, *la berraquera* appears to share a genealogy with the modernisation project, identifying with liberal economic practices while simultaneously promoting conservative views regarding the role of God and Catholic traditions in daily life.

Although I cannot trace a direct line between the ideas of the ideas associated with *berraquera* closely resemble the foundational concepts upon which the elites established Colombia, reflecting its political and economic development. The attributes of liberalism and conservatism that historians have used to describe Colombia align remarkably with my ethnographic findings. In this sense, *la berraquera* appears to share a genealogy with the modernisation project, identifying with liberal economic practices while simultaneously promoting conservative views regarding the role of God and Catholic traditions in daily life.

Although I cannot trace a direct line between the ideas of progreso and the perspectives of my participants, it is likely that they have been influenced by these historical tensions. It could be hypothesized that *berraquera* is shaped, if not directly produced, by state efforts to create modern subjects aligned with the national project of progreso. Moreover, it incorporates the ongoing struggles between conservatism and liberalism that I have described. *Berraquera* thus serves as a vernacular term used by my participants to articulate this "imaginary of progress" from the populace's viewpoint rather than from the state's (Lander, 2000, p. 93).

However, as I will demonstrate in this research, the relationship between my informants, the broader population, and the state has not always been harmonious. It has sometimes manifested as citizens being deemed unfit for certain responsibilities, and at other times as obstacles to state development. For instance, some scholars suggest that it is no coincidence that after the eviction of Afro-Colombians, state-sponsored developers quickly took over their lands (Hurtado, 2016). Oslender, however, argues that displacement is not merely a consequence of armed conflict; it is an objective of development itself (Oslender, 2007).

and the perspectives of my participants, it is likely that they have been influenced by these historical tensions. It could be hypothesized that *berraquera* is shaped, if not directly produced, by state efforts to create modern subjects aligned with the national project of *progreso*. Moreover, it incorporates the ongoing struggles between conservatism and liberalism that I have described. *Berraquera* thus serves as a vernacular term used by my

participants to articulate this "imaginary of progress" from the populace's viewpoint rather than from the state's (Lander, 2000, p. 93).

However, as I will show in this research, the relationship between my informants, the broader population, and the state has not always been harmonious. It has sometimes manifested as citizens being deemed unfit for certain responsibilities, and at other times as obstacles to state development. For instance, some scholars suggest that it is no coincidence that after the eviction of Afro-Colombians, state-sponsored developers quickly took over their lands (C. Hurtado, 2016). Oslender, however, argues that displacement is not merely a consequence of armed conflict; it is an objective of development itself (Oslender, 2007).

On the other hand, decolonial thinkers have leveraged the concept of the subaltern to describe those politically excluded from power hierarchies and hegemonic cultural representations (Gramsci et al., 1992). Some authors have identified in subaltern experiences alternatives to modernity (Escobar & Rocheleau, 2008; Quiceno Toro, 2016). A notable example is Buen Vivir from Andean communities, which has found its way into the Ecuadorian constitution (Caria & Domínguez, 2016). However, as De Jong and Mascot caution, "even if intellectuals create such discursive space, the subaltern can still not speak" (De Jong & Mascot, 2010, p. 719). This seems applicable to my informants, who, despite occasionally being victims of development and modernity, share some aspects of the dream of modernisation and progreso, encompassing both its positive and darker facets.

Furthermore, my informants exhibit many contradictions. Historically, they have been allies of the state in the modernisation project, yet they are also treated as hindrances to that very project at times. Despite being marginalized by historiography and positioned at the bottom of the power hierarchy, they do not present radically alternative paths, as suggested by some decolonial thinkers. Instead, they tend to be staunch defenders of the status quo and conservatism.

Moreover, while there is a concordance between the ideas of Progreso and *berraquera*, the state has distanced itself from the notion of God. In contrast, *berraquera* continues to regard God as a central figure in development and progress. I speculate that at some point, the state and my informants diverged, leading to differing paths. Today, *berraquera* reflects Liberal and Catholic Conservative ideas, whereas the state primarily espouses rational and economic proclamations. I explored this divergence further in the chapter on morality, particularly in the section on the state and *el mal camino*.

Conclusion.

I have presented here how the all-encompassing project of modernisation and Progreso gave way to the narrower notion of development and neoliberal development. The most significant difference between these concepts is that, while modernisation and Progreso covered multiple aspects of life—such as politics, economics, morality, and societal issues like education—development is framed, at least on the surface, as a purely rational and economic project, largely detached from other aspects of national life.

In this sense, *berraquera* seems to be a close reflection of the ideas of Progreso, as it envisions development not solely in economic terms, but more comprehensively, encompassing moral, political, and societal dimensions. However, within *berraquera*, one can also observe the tensions between liberal and conservative ideas, which my informants have shared with me.

My participants and the state have a shifting relationship, sometimes antagonistic and at other times cooperative, with many points of agreement—especially regarding liberal values related to economics—while encountering friction and disagreement in other areas, particularly concerning the morality of the state. Several historical points illustrate the moral drift between the people and the state, such as the constitution of 1991 (discussed in the chapter about morality). However, other instances of this separation are more processual, emerging over time rather than being tied to specific events. For example, the recession of welfare

guarantees and the intersections of violence with the political life of the country represent ongoing processes that contribute to this disconnect.

As Appadurai notes, modernity has a utopian aspect: “modernity is an elsewhere” (Appadurai, 1996, p. L20), a place or moment that a society aspires to, perhaps an ideal or fantasy. To some extent, my research explores the negotiation of what this ideal is, and I will delve into this further in the following chapters. The question posed by Edgardo remains relevant, what has happened to development?

In the next chapter I will examine in detail the relationship between violence and politics, and the impact on the idea of *berraquera*.

Chapter 3:

Politics: Violence and Populism.

Introduction: “la Rueda del Fandango.”

In 2021, I was invited by Santiago to stay at his family’s finca [farm], in the department of Córdoba, in the northern savannah. El Tapao is a corregimiento [small village] close to Cereté and Montería, the larger cities, which people believe to be the home of the best kibbes in the region.

Santiago is affable, like most of the people from that region. I met him through a mutual friend a few years ago. He lived in Chile for a while but managed to get a scholarship in France. He enjoys being surrounded by people and enjoys dancing and partying; he says that is his *costeño* [from the coast] heritage. All those years abroad may have changed his accent but could not take his penchant for *bullicio* [noise, partying and drinking] away. He was visiting Colombia only for a few weeks because his family was planning a joint party to celebrate his degree and his grandmother’s birthday.

La Sabana [the savannah] is typically hot; the capital, Montería, has managed to chop down the trees that would otherwise offer refuge against the sun. To reach el corregimiento, we hired several moto-taxis that would carry one or two people depending on their weight. It was located about 40 minutes away from the city centre. Once in the corregimiento, we had to walk for another 20 minutes. It was hot as hell, and although no breeze blew, nature was exuberant, and the trees offered good cover.

The finca was a small plot of land that in the past was used for cultivation. It has a house built and rebuilt over decades as the family expanded and added new members; it was a complex of tiny apartments with a kitchen and some bathrooms, a coop, and a patio to grow some plants.

I was naïve to believe we were the party's only invitees. Santiago told me that they were expecting over two hundred people. They hired a *picó* [sound system] and a DJ; they also hired a *banda Pelayera* (flutes, gaitas, oboe, trombone, cymbals, and drums) that arrived later in the night and cooked *carnero a la leña con yuca*. I am unsure how many people arrived, but the finca was utterly full.

The party took place on the patio, which in the past was arable land. It started around 4 pm. People drank whisky, rum, *aguardiente* and copious amounts of beer. By 9 pm, we were well-fed and intoxicated by the alcohol. Nevertheless, the party was only starting. The *Pelayera* moved to the central stage and frenetically started playing their instruments, one song after another in an endless thread. People grabbed candles and started dancing in a massive circle gravitating towards the band doing *la rueda del fandango* [carousel of fandango, a traditional dance]. Women lifted their skirts with one hand, and men would hold *sombreros vueltiaos* [traditional hats]; with the other hand, they would hold the candles. Finally, someone shouted, “hay que bailar hasta que se acabe la vela, no podemos dejar morir la fiesta” [we must dance until the candles run out; we cannot let the party die].

So, we did. We danced for two hours until the band decided to take a break. The party did not end there; they were only gathering their strength to continue. My ears hurt, and I had tinnitus, but I overheard Santiago asking his uncle about the *vecinos* [neighbours]. I did not pay much attention, but he said he would tell me more about it the next day after the party. The next day we reconvened at the patio to have breakfast; we ate plantain with *suero* [sour cream]. I asked him about the neighbours, and he went silent for a second and told me in a low voice that he would explain later. After we finished, he approached me and pointed towards the coop; of course, I did not notice anything particular about the chicks.

Then he asked me to look further at the banana trees. I was unsure what he meant, but then I realised that the banana trees had planted one next to the other in a row, resembling a fence. He said that behind the banana tree fence was a *cerca eléctrica* [electrified fence] and maybe cameras.

The neighbour in question was none other than a top-level politician from Antioquia, whose lands stretched to other departments and who had been accused of sponsoring paramilitary groups. The hacienda next to the plot belonged to his father; some say the guerrilla killed him. This politician was close to Fedegan, the national association of cattle owners, and had defended the interests of big landowners, some of whom were accused of dispossession and paramilitarism.

In a low voice, Santiago told me the story of his grandfather and their finca. “He—grandfather—was a peasant, addicted to gambling and drinking. At that time, those lands were worth nothing but were the family’s land (...) We cannot say it was violent in itself, but they took *el Viejo* [the old one], got him drunk, and made him sign the deeds (...). Obviously, it was legal and illegal. That episode scared everyone here, and nobody dared to complain, not even to talk about it” or talk about politics.

They did not talk for fear of armed reprisals from paramilitary groups, perhaps commanded by that politician. So, many years after the incident, Santiago only spoke in a low voice or when the engulfing music protected him. Cases such as this, alas, are not an exception but the rule (del Pilar Peña-Huertas et al., 2017; Morris, 2019; Vélez-Torres, 2016). Just in comparison to other instances of dispossession, this was not as overtly violent as others.

The story that I recounted with Santiago in a corregimiento at the margins of Colombia shows how some truth about violence only emerges through intoxication and sways accordingly with the level of the music, from silence to noise. This chapter is about violence—not one violence

but the multiple violences, the facets that violence takes, and how my informants have experienced violence in different ways.

Some questions that I would attempt to answer are: What are the experiences of my participants regarding violence? How are violence and populism related in the practical terms of this case? How does violence relate to *berraquera*?

My argument in this chapter is that violence articulates politics as much as populism does, but ultimately the political actors in Colombia have failed to articulate populist demands and reinvigorate the political scenario, inadvertently perpetuating violence. Of course, I am drawing on the idea of articulation from Laclau which I presented exhaustively at the introduction, but it is worth recalling briefly.

In Laclau's theory, the "articulation of demands" is the process of linking isolated social, political, or economic grievances to form a collective identity or movement. Initially distinct issues are unified into a broader struggle that challenges existing power structures. This articulation is key to creating political identities and hegemonic blocs, aligning diverse demands under a shared narrative. It transforms fragmented grievances into a cohesive political force, driving collective action. The process is fluid, relying on the ability to frame different demands under a common cause (Laclau, 2005).

I will explore how violence, in discourse and in practice, helps agglutinate demands that are ultimately co-opted by local leaders or caudillos. I will not repeat the whole of Laclau's argument, but it will suffice to say that the process of articulation is done by populist leaders through the mobilisation of demands. However, I would say that in this case, the articulation has resorted to violence in many of its forms. Furthermore, I will argue that the articulation is somehow incomplete because it ultimately failed to win hegemony.

I will begin with a brief recount of violence, both in the recent history of Colombia and in the academic literature, attempting to tie it up with some literature from the anthropology of

populism that can help shed some light on my ethnographic findings. Then, in Section I, I will move to present and inspect participants' encounters with violence, trying to understand its facets and consequences. In Section II, I will survey how local leaders used violence to articulate demands via discourses. Finally, I conclude with a balance of violence in Colombia.

Violence: In Theory and Practice.

The Anthropology of Violence:

Violence has a long theoretical tradition and has been a subject of interest for Colombian researchers due to the long arms conflict. Some of the questions put forward by researchers are: what are the causes, consequences, and mechanisms? According to Accomazzo, anthropology was first concerned with the violence present in non-Western societies in remote places. However, they were myopic and failed to see that much of the violence they observed was caused by the very colonial relationships dominated by Western powers and nowadays caused by the inequalities of globalised capitalism (Marazzi, 2011; Žižek, 2008).

Only after World War II, when the violent outcomes of globalisation, colonialism, and capitalism became obvious, did anthropologists start to pay attention to their own violence and its manifestations such as symbolic, structural, and the “violence continuum” (Accomazzo, 2012, p. 545). For instance, the notion of symbolic violence presented by Bourdieu and Wacquant presents some level of connivance between those who exert violence and those who receive it. Close to this idea is structural violence, which comes from the structure; rooted in the institutions and social structure, its existence is silent and deeply internalised (Bourdieu, 2001). In these lines, the work of Paul Farmer is insightful in presenting the interconnections between colonial heritage and structural violence in causing suffering (Farmer, 2004).

Scheper-Hughes finds the state as a source of violence. She defines state violence as “extraordinary violence that is authorised, public, visible, and rewarded” (N. Scheper-Hughes & P. I. Bourgois, 2004, p. 81; Scheper-hughes, 2008), that exists and is exerted by the state.

One example of this could be the violence associated with development; in Colombia's case, Oslender has written that forced "displacement must be understood as a development strategy" (Oslender, 2007, p. 759). Ballvé adds that grassroots development became a conduit for paramilitary-backed state formation (Ballvé, 2013). Many researchers of the Colombian case have reached similar conclusions (Asher, 2009; Escobar & Rocheleau, 2008; Escobar et al., 2002; Quiceno Toro, 2016).

Be that as it may, Colombian scholars have identified landownership as a major cause for the conflict to originate, exist, and perpetuate (Fajardo, 2004). In a broader sense, violence in the form of terror has been an instrument to govern through *estados de excepción* and hidden institutions like the DAS or DIJIN (Taussig, the nervous system). In the form of tanatomo-power, the power to give death is a "governing strategy of the dominant class (...) in which political rivals are not conceived as antagonists but as deviations from the norm" (Rojas & Tubb, 2013, p. 136). Terror does not emerge by happenstance but as a policy.

Violence Continuum and Dis/articulations.

For Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, all violence is intertwined, like what I observed during my research. This is the Violence Continuum, "one capable of linking the 'sensible' violence and right of the state to wage war (even a dirty war) against its enemies with the 'senseless' violence of 'irrational' youth protecting their turf and/or their dignity" (N. Scheper-Hughes & P. I. Bourgois, 2004, p. 79). In fact, in the case of Colombia, Arocha found that structural violence became a reference point for other violences—in the plural. He wrote: "the actions carried out by guerrilla heroes and bandits, the fights in bars, the violent practices related to games, hunting and soccer at school—was the frequent topic of conversations and daily narrations of people" (Arocha Lugo-Vera, 2015, p. 249).

Jimeno situates this continuum in the quotidian, identifying "the frameworks under which people understand and represent certain forms of violence—domestic, common crime—that

go beyond political violence and terrorism (...) Some of these representations also are articulated, albeit tangentially, to forms of representation of violence (...) subversion and paramilitary” (Lugo-Vera, 2015, p. 253), to the point that “the various forms of violence become one Violence” (Jimeno, 1998, p. 312), and people are in a permanent state of helplessness (Jimeno, 2001).

There is one more thing that I need to comment on. I will argue that violence works as the mortar used to articulate populist demands, but how can this occur? In short, populist actors—individuals, parties, and armed bands—have utilised violence in many ways, in their discourses and practices, to attempt to win hegemony. It is worth remembering the words of some anthropologists who warn against the perils of populism and populist leaders, such as those in which facts become mere anecdotes (Stoller, 2018a, 2018b) and antiscientificism, antifeminism, and racism end up undermining democracy (Hervik, 2018, p. 145). But the most hazardous part is when through populist means they manage to create collective political subjects in confrontation, not only people versus the elite, but people versus people, using other collective subjects as scapegoats and enemies of the state—Venezuelans, *guerrilleros*, *paracos*—(Gomberg-Muñoz, 2018, p. 141), and discursively mobilising violence to the point of threatening violations of human rights.

Context: Violence in Colombia.

Talking about the history of violence in detail is essential because it helps us understand some of the ideas and attitudes of my participants regarding violence, particularly political. My objective is not to present an exact chronology but to contextualise and explain how past events reverberate in the ethnographic present. Violence in Colombia is as extensive as the literature devoted to it; sociology, history, political science, and anthropology have all joined the discussions. In general, scholars have made many distinctions of periods, motives, and causes to explain the violence in Colombia. While there is agreement on some episodes during

the 20th century, such as La Violencia of the 50s, some more recent violences, like the one coming from the paramilitaries, remain obscure.

According to Rojas, independence was the origin of violence because the criollo elites elaborated a vision of modernisation and progress for the country in which “the indigenous, the black or the women” (Rojas, 2002, see Chapter 2); the others, had no place as political subjects. During this period, violence was used as a political tool by either political party. This type of partisan violence would have stretched until the beginning of the twentieth century, ending with the War of the Thousand Days, which the Liberals lost, and the ensuing consecration of Colombia to the Holy Spirit as a symbolic way to stop violence.

By the beginning of the 20th century, the insertion of Colombia in global capitalism brought new forms of violence. The expansion of coffee production and exporting was the most notable feature, but bananas, petroleum, and the manufacturing industry were other poles of development (Bushnell (Bushnell, 1993a, p. 155); however, at the same time, rubber in the confines of Colombia and Perú also played a role in inserting the countries into world trade, but was also fuelled by abuses against indigenous communities (Taussig, 1984).

Colombia was at relative peace and experienced relative growth for almost four decades with some minor outbreaks of bipartisan violence between Conservative and Liberal parties. But as Bushnell says: “until the mid of the 20th century the situation was peaceful, but at the end of the liberal hegemony, the Conservatives who were out to settle old scores and grievances that they had been accumulating during the years of Liberal rule” (Bushnell, 1993a, p. 201), set the prelude to a time that historians simply call La Violencia [The violence era]. La Violencia is conceivably the first episode of violence adequately studied. In two volumes, Fals-Borda and others examined the structural causes, geographies, and history of the violence (Guzmán et al., 2019; Valencia Gutiérrez, 2012). First, the book identifies the partisan wars between the Liberal and Conservative parties as the cause, then points to the assassination of Jorge Eliecer Gaitan in 1948, a liberal populist caudillo, as a point of inflection that sparked massive and

open partisan war involving civilians. The study concludes that “the failure to adjust an essentially colonial system to the realities of the twentieth century,” such as centralisation, inappropriate legislation, the weakness of the military and police forces, and “institutional dysfunction” (Martz, 1963, pp. 304-305).

El Frente Nacional [The National Front] in the 60s, was a pact in which either party would alternate each period of government (Valencia Gutiérrez, 2012, p. 217). Despite the agreement helping to stop widespread violence, it did not recognise any responsibility on the part of the parties in peasant violence. The National Front stabilised politics and curbed violence but excluded large masses of people from the political game, like the peasants who were autodefensas [self-defence] against organised violence, who would later be the founders of communist guerrillas, such as the FARC-EP (Leongómez, 1989).

During this period, the United States initiated an anti-Communist campaign, which was fervently embraced in Colombia and integrated into the country’s military doctrine. Almost every act of dissent was interpreted within the framework of the struggle between democracy and communism. Not only did the state play a role in this, but other forces, such as the church, also participated actively. From the pulpits, priests preached against communism using violent rhetoric.

In the 1970s, the *Frente Nacional* came to an end. The Theology of Liberation motivated some individuals of faith to take up arms in the National Liberation Army (ELN), giving rise to another guerrilla movement.

The M-19 gained significant attention for its charismatic nature. Some of their actions, like the Stealing of the Sword of Simon Bolivar, captured public imagination. However, others, such as the Toma del Palacio de Justicia, led to infamy, with military forces allegedly massacring guerrilla members, magistrates, and maids.

During this era, another actor emerged prominently: the narco-traffickers, with Pablo Escobar being the most prominent figure, though not the sole one. Rumours circulated that paramilitary financed either the M-19 or the military to eliminate evidence and those attempting to prosecute them.

By the 1980s, *narcos* became the new warlords, and the terror and violence that pervaded the countryside migrated to the cities. Narcos employed terrorist tactics such as car bombs, mall bombings, and mid-air plane explosions. During this period, the paramilitaries, described by Taussig as "soldiers who are not real soldiers but more like ghosts fleeting between the visible and the invisible," transitioned from self-defence groups in rural areas to becoming the dark arm of the state.

All these elements leveraged states of exception, temporary suspensions of the rule of law, which granted the president additional powers and authority. In fact, between 1970 and 1991, Colombia lived under a state of exception for 206 months, equating to 17 years.

After the 2016 peace accords, the FARC-EP, the largest guerrilla group, laid down arms, followed by the dismantling of the largest paramilitary group, resulting in a reduction in atrocities. However, armed actors like the dissidents continue to operate and perpetrate violence. Political debates have revolved around integrating these actors into formal politics.

Daniel Pécaut argues that the chronology and manifestation of violence and conflict in Colombia are not always clear, a sentiment with which I concur. The perpetrators, facts, and consequences are often obscured, and the history of political violence tends to overshadow other forms of violence.

Despite the chaos, certain constants persist in the conflict, including political exclusion, bipartisan opposition, state action and inaction, institutional distrust, and the emergence of adjacent armed actors like guerrillas and paramilitaries driven by self-defence and ideology.

Victims sometimes become perpetrators, as seen with self-defence groups shifting between victim and victimiser.

Violence has been intertwined with the state's aspirations for modernisation and progress, as well as the notion of *berrquera*. Some violence has been glorified, while others vilified; nonetheless, it has always been a part of the political process and profoundly shaped the life experiences of my interlocutors. In the next section, I will discuss the various forms of violence encountered during my research, ranging from disarticulated and amorphous to hidden and incomplete.

Section I: The Thousand Faces of Violence.

How have my informant's encountered violence, particularly political violence? What has violence engendered? In this section, I will present various cases and testimonies of people encountering violence. I will argue that violence does not manifest in a monumental and monolithic manner but sometimes in subtle and concealed ways. Furthermore, these seemingly disjointed instances of violence are, in fact, integral to the foundation of political rhetoric and discourses that have been mobilised toward political objectives—albeit in a largely unsuccessful manner (see Section II for details). Moreover, all these forms of violence have cultivated silence concerning politics, spawned monsters, and fostered the belief that the system is rigged [*Amañado*] and hardly be fixed.

Massacres and Silence.

What are the consequences of monumental violence? What are the consequences of para-state sanctioned violence? Scholars have explained state political violence in Colombia as a consequence of a weak state (Escobar, 2017, p. 105; Rojas, 2009, p. 231). Pécaut mentioned, “Colombia had a strong Church and weak state” (Pécaut, 2012, p. 98). Elsewhere, he said “the weakness of the authority of the state in general translates into the discredit of the judicial

institution, but also of the forces of order” (Pécaut, 1993, p. 8). This would be the reason that it “required the army’s use of surveillance and state-sanctioned violence” (Sanford, 2004, p. 256), including the use of proxy paramilitary forces, especially at the peripheries of the country.

Violence and its effects do not need to be scandalous to be purported. Margarita is a scholar recently returning to the professional practice of Psychology. We have spoken on several occasions about my ideas and findings; every time we chat, she brings examples, cases, and points of view that have enriched my analysis. Lately, she has been working on “a caregivers care” sponsored by the state, offering psychological consultation to psychologists that work in the places, cities, and villages that had recently been victims of violence.

When I retold my experience at El Tapao in Cordoba and mentioned the surreptitious presence of violence, Margarita recalled a meaningful episode in which she visited El Salado as part of her project. El Salado became infamous because in the year 2000 a group of paramilitaries from the AUC tortured, beheaded, raped and massacred the villagers, all this happened according to testimonies, while paramilitaries were inebriated with liquor stolen from local shops and played loud music, some testimonies said that “paramilitaries took the instruments from la Casa de Cultura and played the drum”, creating a sort of “festive ambience” (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2009, p. 52) of loudspeakers, drums, and killings.

“El Salado - Margarita said - is one of the municipalities that has suffered the most in recent history. People were taken by paramilitaries (Santamaría, 2020), to the main square; they set up some *picós* [Loudspeakers] and started killing the townspeople, on the grounds that they may be collaborating with opposing factions, maybe the communist guerrillas”. As I confirmed during my trip to El Tapao, the Caribbean region is loud, music coming from *picós* is ubiquitous and on occasions deafening. Margarita continued, “El Salado is perhaps the only town in the Caribbean where music does not play, I’d say is the only quiet town in the region.” I remembered the words that I heard at my party at El Tapao, “Don’t let the party die, if the

music stops, the party dies.” That is perhaps what happened at El Salado, music became synonymous with violence, and the result was death, a town that cannot share the joy of music anymore.

Much of these stories were recounted to her by the psychologist that she helped as part of her project, and they in turn collected from the survivors, and then she passed the stories to me. Despite the distance between all the subjects, direct victims, and those who tried to help them, and me who in this case is no more than a passerby have suffered and recoiled in front of this violence, left me astounded and silent in the same way that when I first heard the story on television many years ago.

In summary, one of the first, but not the only way, that political violence has made a way in recent Colombian history is through silence. Silencing the victims and those who, although mediated, have shared the experience of it. The political aspect of this violence also appears concealed under the assumption that villagers were guerrilla members, and the need to purge communism out of the nation. To Dragojlovic, silence signals oppression, but also, it is hard to spot, as it is hidden, even in plain sight (Dragojlovic & Samuels, 2021, p. 417). I will show in other examples that silence is more patent than anticipated regarding politics and violence.

La Mano Negra.

What form does violence assumes? I encountered la Mano Negra on just a couple of occasions during this research. It did not appear in full shape but as hints; nonetheless, it does not make it less relevant. La Mano Negra is a spectre of state violence and is almost an embodied representation of state violence. No one really knows what it is, but it does not make it less potent.

By early 2020, when I started exploring the numerous Facebook groups that constituted my field site for a long time, I encountered a post in which one participant was commenting on a post showing an image accusing the former colonel Maza Marquez of facilitating the

assassination of Carlos Pizarro, a reinsert of the M-19 Guerrilla and popular presidential candidate, whose killing is still subject to debate and speculation (El País, 2023). The image did not only recall this killing but also linked it with the recapture of the Palacio de Justicia, in which the military massacred guerrilla members along civilians. A participant wrote the first comment; “La Mano Negra sigue presente” [the dark hand is still present], unleashing a heated debate between participants. Some argued “it was necessary to restore order,” someone else said: “it was a coup d’etat,” and someone mentioned: “the state is illegitimate and had to resort to terror to keep a grip on power.” These conversations showed many points. Firstly, there is no consensus or unified way in which the participants reacted to these pictures. Some people condemned the military and the state, but some others justified the killings for a greater good. Be that as it may, the idea of la Mano Negra stood as a sign of the violence that comes from the state and exists in a grey zone that made the participants question the limits of legality and illegality, as well as morality and immorality, even if they did not reach a consensus.

During the 1980s in Colombia, La Mano Negra was used to denominate a violence that was indiscernible as no one knows for sure who the perpetrators were, but suspects the Narcos, the Colombian state, or the paramilitaries. Rivera even links them directly to the contemporary political elites (Rivera, 2007, p. 137). A columnist of Semana Magazine said: “La Mano Negra - and all the actors - are part of the same political phenomenon (...) I don’t know of anyone who has been able to explain what it is clearly” (Semana, 2011). Yet, the Mano Negra was the executor of numerous crimes. Some believe they were death squads created to eliminate people allegedly involved in crime, the guerrillas, prostitutes, junkies, gays, and all the people that somehow deviate from their standards (Acevedo, 2022). Gledhill introduces the term “shadow states” to describe a form of state power and governmentality that, as its name implies, is made from the shadows (Gledhill, 1999). In this case, I would argue that La Mano Negra is almost an embodiment of that shadow state, which is hard to see, but its results are loud and public.

My second brief encounter came from Leidy's story. She lives in Chile but comes from Tuluá, an area in the Cauca Valley whipped a few decades ago by the paramilitaries, but also from common criminals. She told me of an occasion where these groups were *boleteando* [giving tickets. Delivering threats and warnings] in her neighbourhood, and people just called it La Mano Negra because they never got to know who the perpetrators were.

Their threats included imposing "curfews on underage people, as well as restricting the mobilisation of motorcycles." By then, her cousin Kevin defied her mother and questioned the curfew because he wanted to go to Cali to party. Leidy's family opposed Kevin going to that party, so he was grounded and locked. However, this led to a heated family argument as one side was in favour of the curfews, and the other opposed it. Those in favour argued that it was necessary to safeguard order and prevent the town from being populated by "vagos y marihuaneros" [tramps and junkies]. The other band pointed at the illegality of the action and state collusion. The subject was not explicitly raised again after this incident that divided the family. No one knows who imposed the curfew; Leidy mentioned that some believed it was the "paras, a gang, maybe a narco, or even a gang working for the narcos." Be that as it may, only discussing the topic within the family led to tensions that, up to today, remain unsolved.

Not Talking About Politics.

The first example shows in a monumental way how silence became a sign of violence, but in the following lines, I will present another facet of silence: not speaking about politics. In very general terms, for reasons relating to security, privacy, and perhaps even fear, in my conversations with participants, episodes of violence only appeared superficially as short-lived incidents, even if they had left a mark on their life stories. Commonly, after having spent considerable time or sessions with them, one example of this is the *Cobra Diarios* [loan sharks], of which I will speak in greater detail in chapter 5 and 6.

As noted by psychoanalysis, silence might signal cases in which people actively avoid a topic that bothers them, which is “not knowing and not wanting to know” (Gutiérrez-Peláez, 2021, p. 350). It is well known to scholars of violence that silence is often a sign of trauma, as described by Fanon’s theory of Colonial Trauma (Dhanvantari, 2020), or as Pillen recounts, “overwhelming events outside of ordinary human experience lead to ‘speechless terror. Such experiences cannot be organised on a linguistic level’” (Pillen, 2016, p. 98).

When I became interested in the then-upcoming elections, I started – in a very delicate manner – asking my participants about their preferred candidates and their ideas, only to be given evasive answers. In fact, only a few people agreed to talk about it in some detail. The first one is Genaro, whom I found on a Facebook group and exchanged voice notes with for a while via messenger.

Genaro, in his 60s, was planning to move abroad after retiring in Colombia “to work a bit longer and make some extra money” that he believed would be necessary to complement his pension. We met a couple of years ago when he was sourcing information about possible destinations. On one occasion, I was asking him about his job, of which he usually complained but never explained in detail before. He said it was “too risky, and his duties were above his pay grade.” He had always worked in sales, and then he worked for one of the biggest retail companies in Colombia, selling frozen goods like processed meats, dairy, and ice creams.

His work consisted of looking for new potential clients, keeping current clients active, increasing sales, and diversifying lines of business. He had carried out his work in different regions of Colombia, but by the time we met, he was assigned to Santander and covered areas of another department called El Cesar. He recalled one occasion in which he was assigned to a town called Aguachica. His duty was quite simple: he needed to retrieve a freezer that belonged to the company from a defaulting client who refused to return it. He was assigned another representative from the region, and instead of using the company’s truck, they used Genaro’s car. When they came into the town, they realised it had a small sticker on the

bumper supporting a presidential candidate from years ago. He went on to say, “I did all the procedures, but when I was ready to give the order, my assistant took me outside and silently asked me to give up because the lady in trouble was, in fact, the lover of a paramilitary chieftain and did not like my sticker. We returned empty-handed but alive.”

Despite his dire episode, he recounted his experiences working in well-known “paramilitary towns” with fondness: “You would visit these towns where the paramilitary were the rulers; you could leave your car open, windows rolled down, and nobody would dare to take anything (...) I know that my company had to pay for a *vacuna* [vaccine. A tax imposed by whoever is in control of a specific zone] so they would allow me to work.” He continued, “the best way to act in those kinds of towns is as if you don’t know what is going on, say nothing, don’t voice your opinion. Just a stop and go.”

Genaro’s encounter was explicit, but there are other instances in which evading discussions about politics emerged in a much subtler way. Andrés, another participant I interviewed on several occasions, mentioned one occasion in Bogotá when he was still a teenager. His father took him to a barbershop where the shopkeeper had a poster of Álvaro Uribe, then a candidate for the presidency whose slogan was “Mano dura, corazón grande” [Firm hand, big heart]. Andrés said, “I don’t remember well, it was many years ago, but the man welcomed us in and invited me to vote for Uribe as I was about to turn 18. I said I did not like him, and then my father stepped in abruptly and changed the conversation topic (...) I did not understand at the time, I was bursting and angry because I wanted to explain my reasons (...) back then I did not understand why my father shunned me, only years later I learned that from my narrow middle-class position living in the capital I hadn’t realised that disagreeing or contradicting people in politics could be a cause of death or stigma (...) I don’t think my father believed the incident would have escalated, but he was protecting me.” In fact, one of Andrés’s conclusions was that his father did not want to harm the community by creating conflict and, at the same time, feared that the neighbours would typecast him as an *izquierdoso* [leftist].

The stories I collected made me reflect on my own upbringing. I remember stories from my grandfather, and before Alzheimer's erased his memory, I decided to collect his testimony. He started telling me about his first presidential election during the 50s; he felt a moral obligation to vote. So, he, along with some fellow followers of the Liberal party, banded together to the polling station as going alone was considered dangerous. He also recalled: "it was a custom to wear gloves because to check if people had voted, officers would dip your finger in ink; blue for *Godos* [Conservatives/Goths] and red for Liberals (...) one had to leave quickly, and without talking much, one also carried a newspaper to cover their hands, because, outside the voting posts, there were partisans that very often became violent (...) how crazy was that".

There is one last but similar story. Don Eustaquio, a nearly 90-year-old from Cali whose nephew recently emigrated, recalled an occasion long ago "when he attended a Sunday morning mass. He was a liberal married to a conservative, and he remembers how from the pulpit the priest said that liberals were the devil," then "when I got home, I immediately shaved my goatee, since the priest had said that the *chiveras* [goatees] were a thing of communists." He then wondered if the man of God that scorned from the pulpit was the devil in disguise and concluded, "for your safety, your political allegiance had to remain hidden." It became obvious that looking a-political is just a part of a survival strategy.

Amaño.

What are the long-lasting consequences of political violence? *Amaño*, like many other words that I came across during the course of this research, is used in the common language of Colombians and appeared very often in social media posts. I did not pay much attention to this word until I had a conversation with Eduardo. The Royal Academy of the Spanish Language defines *amañar* as the act of "preparing or arranging something with deceit or artifice" (RAE, 2024). Thus, *amaño*, as a noun, is a craft or trick. In conclusion, what it means is that the political process is inherently biased and intrinsically rigged. In my observations, *amaño* was used broadly to point at any case of corruption from the state or the ruling classes.

Eduardo remembers his childhood as happy despite being surrounded by what he now considers scarcity. He remembers his upbringing in a poor neighbourhood, "not poor but an *invasión*" [squatted terrain], meaning that they did not have access to basic services such as running water or electricity. He told me that the neighbourhood's terrains were reclaimed by peasants—most likely displaced by violence, but he did not mention this—migrating to the city during the 50s. He was also proud of being the third generation of the original settlers.

In his story, he reinforced several times the fact that he came from a context of poverty and very often politicians would take advantage of the situation. He told me: "When I was a child, the roads were not paved, there was no bus stop because the neighbourhood did not even appear on the official maps (...) the *ediles* [the lowest rank members of local government in a town] from other neighbourhoods would come and talk to the people about the possibility of legalising the neighbourhood. People did not pay much attention to them because some were said to be militants of the *JUCO* -Juventudes Comunistas de Colombia [Communist Youth], so they might have had a double agenda (...) but the worst, in my opinion, was when an important election would come; mayor or presidential, because *gente pesada* [important people] would come to make promises and offerings. Senators, mayors, council men, some more corrupt than others, they would always come during campaign time to secure a vote with promises. Now that I see it in hindsight, the only thing they were doing was taking advantage of us. They are all the same; they are like *chulos* [vultures] feeding on misery." Then he proceeded: "Once a well-known senator came to the neighbourhood with a truck full of cement and sand and promised to exchange it for our votes. That was vile (...) I am not rich or anything, but I have my things, and I won't be bribed for bricks and zinc roofs."

When participating on social media, I found many images and memes warning about the political game. Many of these images would carry the message that the game is rigged from the beginning and exists to perpetuate the status quo. The opinion that circulated online had,

in fact, got some scholarly backing. For instance, Grajales believes that "crime and violence are part of the Colombian political game" (Grajales, 2011).

Beyond thinking of Colombian politics as essentially criminal, there might be another reading as this resembles the ideas of Laclau in many ways. First, what I grasped from my interview and subsequent observations is that my participants felt utilized by the ruling class, effectively creating what Laclau termed as a separation between "us" and "them," the underdogs and the elites (Laclau, 2005). The second point relates to the crisis of representation and the moment of rupture, which Laclau considers essential for populist postulates to win hegemony (Laclau & Howarth, 2015). But again, instead of articulating demands, some of the leaders referred to by Eduardo and the many commenters on social media simply resort to briberies. This signals a double failure: of political leaders in mobilizing demands and the perpetuation of the ideas of rupture and crisis of representation, leaving my informants with the feeling that the system is rigged and cannot be fixed.

Conclusion.

I surmise that the encounters with violence that I recounted here are just a tiny part of the experiences that my informants have had. I do not intend to be exhaustive but to illustrate the manifold ways in which violence surfaced. People told me these stories safeguarded by distance, time, and the mediation of media, but the low voice and secrecy in which we spoke about political violence remained as vivid as ever.

All the examples of violence that I brought do not have the same perpetrators, manifested in different manners, and occurred at different times. Nonetheless, they show the entanglements of violence in the day-to-day lives of people, business, politics, and so on, in forms as diverse as fear, trauma, and silence, sometimes as noise and publicity, and even in semi-corporeal ways like La Mano Negra; something that cannot be reduced to meaning nor

can be symbolized (Evans, 1996). However, all the examples illustrate the power of violence in governing and controlling bodies by force of Tanatomo-power (Rojas & Tubb, 2013).

What provides these dissimilar violences with some sense of unity and purpose is the fact that they have been used to govern individuals and collective subjects with at least partial success. They managed to get support from factions of civil society, they managed to control entire populations for moments, they managed to construct collective subjects to be hated and eliminated, and even gave some momentary meaning to McCarthyistic accusations such as being a communist. It is worthy to recall that “violence is (...) nonlinear, productive, destructive, and reproductive (...) birth to itself a continuum of violence” (N. Scheper-Hughes & P. Bourgois, 2004, p. 1; Scheper-hughes, 2008), and in this case, ultimately failed to win hegemony and establish a lasting rule, relegated only to perpetuating itself ad nauseam.

There is one element missing in this analysis: for violence to be able to win hegemony, extrapolating Laclau’s ideas, at least some discourse should exist to provide order and structure to the otherwise floating signifiers and seemingly random violence.

In the next section, I will focus on how some established and emergent political leaders used violence in many of its forms as part of their discourses, no one specific and particular form of violence, but violence in general, in an attempt to articulate and mobilise people. I should warn that not all the cases that I presented in this first section were utilized by said leaders, but some references and some signifiers are present.

Section II: Violence as the Mortar that Articulates Demands and Mobilises People.

What is the purpose of violence, if any? How do leaders and people use violence in their discourses? How does violence provide coherence to political action? In this section, I will explore how political debates unfolded on Facebook groups. I will propose the idea that part of

the reason why violence exists in a continuum is that populist leaders use violence to articulate their discourses; violence is the mortar that binds everything. Laclau suggested that the role of populist leaders is to articulate demands and mobilize people. I will analyse how violence has a crucial role in this process.

Next to the silences of the violence victims, there is often the voice of those who exert it (Moreno Cardozo, 2013). The leader of the Colectivo de Colombianos Berracos en Chile was quite a character. He did not only create a social media ecosystem, initially comprising an Instagram page, a Facebook group, a YouTube channel, a website, and a non-working application, but later also an X (formerly Twitter) and LinkedIn profile. He also claimed that his organization was a registered charity in Chile, with the mission, as stated on the website, to 'Empower refugees and those displaced by violence in Chile, facilitating access to information, resources, and opportunities.' (Berracos, 2024).

I followed him closely, to the point of developing a parasocial relationship, in which I felt I knew him after a while. The content he produced included general information for immigrants, such as how to collect the necessary documents for migratory processes, and information about recent changes in migratory policy, including the controversial expulsion order during Piñera's term aimed at expelling foreigners convicted of crimes. Sometimes, he would also cover news regarding infractions and illegal acts committed by migrants, particularly Venezuelans - I will get back to this later. However, during the pandemic, the nature and tone of the content he produced became decidedly more political, advocating for the numerous Colombian immigrants stranded in Chile facing the pandemic without any safety net. I will not delve into details, but healthcare coverage and other types of welfare in Chile - where his main audience was located - were managed by private companies, and accessing it required being in a legal or "regular condition," which the vast majority of Colombians were not.

Throughout the pandemic, it was common for him to broadcast simultaneously on Facebook and YouTube what he called *alocuciones* - the polite term for political discourses in Colombian

Spanish - and referred to his posts as “*comunicués*.” During the pandemic, the number of *alocuciones* increased, and he became an unhesitant defender of a particular group of Colombians who became homeless during that time and were forced to camp outside the Colombian embassy in Santiago. His *alocuciones* were videos of around 40 minutes where he ranted against his adversaries. In this regard, although he always defended and even campaigned for Piñera in Chile, and Uribe and Duque in Colombia, all of whom were right-wing neoliberals, they eventually became rivals.

One of the *alocuciones* that attracted the most viewers and was most revealing gave me the opportunity to examine in close detail how he built his leadership and engaged with his audience. The *alocución* in question took place precisely when Colombians were protesting at the Colombian Embassy in support of their fellow compatriots.

The backdrop was a white wall, and his face was placed right at the centre. He was wearing a seemingly cotton shirt with plant prints. He leaned against the wall and then broke the silence with these words: ‘My fellow compatriots, my fellow *Berracos*.’ He then recapitulated the dire circumstances of the Colombians outside the embassy, first mentioning the precariousness to which they had been subjected, saying they were hardworking compatriots who had committed no crime and yet were treated as such. ‘Their only fault was working hard.’ After recounting for about five minutes, he proceeded to enumerate all the actions he had taken in the name of the community. Among these actions were supposedly “meetings with them - members of the government-,” although he never explained or provided more details, hinting that they were high-ranking officers, probably the minister and the mayor of Santiago. He also mentioned meeting two representatives of the ruling party, for whom he had campaigned two years earlier. At this point, his voice started breaking a bit, and almost like a stammer, he repeatedly said, “*Estoy berraco*” [I’m angry], “*Estoy molesto, y estoy emputado*” [I’m upset, and I’m pissed off]. Then he resumed his attempt to recount how his meeting with the government representatives went.

He never provided details of the participants, place, or time, but he set the scene as if he were the star, hinting that he was leading the conversation. For instance, he said: “I asked them for a direct answer, I made yes or no questions,” despite never providing details of these questions. He continued ranting for a while: “I told them to do this, and I told them to do that” - never explaining what *‘this’* and *‘that’* meant – “I got really upset because they weren’t paying enough attention to me. I said they should not charge or forbid them from returning - Chilean authorities said they would pay repatriations in exchange for the promise of no returning. I got really pissed. I told him” - it was not clear who – “it was unacceptable.” He repeated this idea several times and then concluded by saying: “We cannot trust the government, we cannot trust the institutions, we cannot trust in Chile or in Colombia, all our hard work is worth nothing (...) I campaigned for Piñera, and I advocated to reform the migratory law so only trusted people could work here, but now I feel betrayed.”

In his videos, he always portrayed himself as a strongman, giving the impression that he was the one giving orders, defending the common people but being on par with the state’s high ranks. This video had over 500 viewers, and some people in the comments section left messages such as “God bless you”, “tiene los pantalones bien puestos, usted sí es un berraco” [you have real guts, you are really tough], and others simply thanked him for working for the community.

Caudillos and Populism.

Laclau’s theory of populism sees the role of populist leaders as vital in the process of articulating demands that otherwise are incompatible and providing meaning to otherwise empty signifiers through discourses; ‘The leader thus becomes a symbol-maker and his activity, no longer conceived as ‘acting for’ his constituents, becomes identified with effective leadership’ (Laclau, 2005, p. 77), as was the case of the discourse -and many others- that I reconstructed in the previous vignette.

Although a lot of recent literature warns of the perils of emerging right-wing populism as something irrupting the scene, I would argue that politics in Colombia had always had a good dose of populism and the observations that I carried out on social media would indicate that populism does not only occur at the macro level, but also on a smaller scale. Modern populist leaders resemble caudillos; in fact, Eller points out such a simile by comparing “Trump to a Latin American caudillo or political/military strongman” (Eller, 2021, p. 19). Moreover, Fleck argues that Trump resembles a caudillo not only because of his ‘everyman attraction (...) image as pro-working class’, but also because he is ‘not only a political but a military leader who speaks for the common people in revolutionary Latin America’ (Fleck, 2021, p. 133). While Trump built his electorate position on the crisis of the white-American-middle-class men, and antifeminism, anti-scientificism, and anti-migration.

The emergence of Caudillos in Latin America, concretely in Colombia, dates from the independence struggles of which Simón Bolívar is the archetype (Franco-Torres, 2012). Caudillos were criollos, landowners resembling European feudal lords who thrived as regional leaders whose power existed parallel with the state. Scholars like Pecaut and Rivera attribute at least partially the persistence of caudillos to the thesis of the ‘weak state.’ According to Lynch, Caudillos had the particular trait of being extremely charismatic, “whose authority derived from ownership of land, access to men and resources, and achievements that impressed for their value or their valour” (Lynch, 1983, p. 2), that usually formed relations of patronage, and lived both within and at the margins of the state depending on their own convenience. It is important to remark that similar to what happened during the independence war, the pandemic had eroded old leaderships prompting a crisis of legitimacy and institutional crisis opening a window of political opportunity (Meyer & Minkoff, 2004).

The role and figure of caudillos is somehow ambiguous, as they effectively mobilised people and resources in the war of independence and ulterior intestine wars (Atehortúa Cruz, 2010), but sometimes they would also antagonise central powers (Fonseca Mejía, 1962). Caudillos

additionally had the characteristic of existing in geographical spaces far from authorities, meaning that factually, from their haciendas they were the only regional authorities sometimes exerting violence on their own accord (Frega, 2002; Sosa A, 2001).

Presumably, caudillismo and the kind of populist politics that they performed are not simply things from past centuries, but their style still persists; in fact, some authors also believe that recent political leaders in Colombia such as the former president Alvaro Uribe, also fit the description as Sierra mentions: “The president took advantage of all available cracks in the legal system to become the closest thing to a Caudillo (...) utilising a language against terrorism, declaring an open war to the FARC (...) weakening the congress” (Sierra Lopera, 2011, p. 90).

Caudillos in Social Media.

How populist caudillos built their authority and mobilised people on social media? Rivera and Gutiérrez argued that “while the armed conflict has been one of the cruellest manifestations of violence in Colombia’s history, it has not been the only scenario of misrecognition of the other” (Rivera-Largacha & Gutiérrez-Peláez, 2022, p. 105). This seems to be the case; in this part, I will comment on how social media was used by leaders and participants as a scenario of political discussion that frequently featured manifestations of violence. I argue that violence had been utilised as central element of political discourse, particularly but not restricted to right-wing, to articulate a wider political platform.

Eller explains that Twitter truly became a platform of governance for Trump, ‘allowing him to speak directly to America’ (Eller, 2021, p. 20). According to Hodges, Trump developed a new regime of language, comprised of derogatory nouns, gratuitous modifiers, and vacuous intensifiers (Hodges, 2017), to mark a difference between us and them, and to promote his ideas and mobilize people against his detractors.

In the case of Colombia, something similar has happened, the most outstanding case being the one of Alvaro Uribe, former president, whose political trajectory has faced many controversies, including his unprecedented upcoming trial, but has always taken advantage of Twitter to engage with his electors and promote political interest. Copious articles have examined Uribe's tweets; during the peace accords found 'a direct proportion between the number of followers and the percentage of votes for NO' (V. B. Hurtado, J. A. , 2016; Rueda Pineda, 2019), other studies found a strong appeal to emotions, mostly negative ones, and insistence in signalling the FARC, Juan Manuel Santos -former ally- and claimed that the process sought impunity, then positioning himself as defender of victims against a supposedly 'communist' impunity (Rodríguez, 2024).

Other pieces mentioned that during the Great National Strike, as termed by media, of 2021 proved that Uribe was no longer the only politician that could mobilize Twitter, as Gustavo Petro reached comparable numbers, foreshadowing his future election as president (Ramírez Vallejo & Santamaría Velasco, 2022). Santa Maria and Rodríguez point out that beyond Uribe's, right-wing discourse in Colombia has institutionalized hatred, utilizing words such as "guerrillero, *castrochavista*, vándalo," and in contrast *gente de bien* [good people]. The authors also underline how signifiers promoting 'hate, rejection, and discrimination' are mobilized towards exertion of violence (Rodríguez Ortiz & Santamaría-Velasco, 2023). In the following pages, I will show different ways in which local leaders built their leadership theatrically and discursively supported habitually by violent signifiers. I identified diverse forms ranging from managing audiences, meeting people's expectations, the use of violent language, inscription of local debates into broader debates, and the formation of collective subjects.

Getting the job done: Managing media and audiences.

I will argue that to successfully mobilise their audiences, leaders need to create the idea that they get the job done, that they are listened to, and relevant to getting things done. Leaders were incredibly skilled at using social media theatrically to interact, engage, and mobilise their

supporters. On many occasions, they resorted to a communication style in which they gave orders or pretended to do so. For instance, when the leader of Colombianos Berracos said: 'I told them to do this or that', this resonates with Michelutti's idea that bossing is some kind of art, "this art form refers to the violent, criminal, business, and "democratic" tactics (...) deployed to control people and resources to pursue a better life for themselves, their families, and, at times, their communities" (Michelutti et al., 2018, p. 9).

The leader of *Los Colombianos Berracos en Chile* had built a transmedia ecosystem of which he acted as the conductor of an orchestra. He did not only use all the media available strategically but excelled at managing his audience, taking advantage of the affordances of the platforms. I would say that this person exerted what I could call a micro-govern, as it was not as in the case when one established politician talks to many people at once, but he took the time to engage with his audience by answering their questions during his several allocutions or even replying to them on their comments.

A key feature of these leaders is that they can achieve things, or at least they can make their followers believe that they can "*hacer las cosas*" [to get the job done/in opposition to the state]. In this sense, social media is the scenario to show off their prowess. Particularly, the leader of Colombianos Berracos, through live streams and communiqués, features what he achieved or at least what he claimed to have achieved.

Like the video -allocution- that I recounted at the beginning of this section, there were many others with similar content. These videos invariably followed the same structure. Usually, they started with messages of empathy like "my fellow compatriots," and then they would show sensitivity towards the situation of downtrodden members of the community. For instance, they pointed out the precarious situation of Colombians, saying "that they can't believe institutions anymore."

On occasion, he would also recount achievements like when he said he had spoken “to Representatives from the Chilean government.” But the climax came when he situated himself as the protagonist who conducts the meetings and is in a superior position of power, although things may have played differently.

He created an image of himself as a highly influential man. He reviewed his past work on streaming. He boasted of his connections with high-profile Chilean and Colombian politicians and then mentioned how he supposedly influenced the migratory Law as part of the roundtables; he supported his arguments by showing pictures of himself with Chilean politicians, including Sebastián Piñera.

He also claimed to be a crucial stakeholder in getting humanitarian flights for the people camping outside the Colombian embassy. He sent a diatribe against the Colombian state’s silence and shunned the Chilean government’s proposition to pay for the flights of immigrants in exchange for the promise that they would not return. He called it “deportación maquillada” [deportation with makeup]. In the process, he also disqualified the representatives of other organizations, calling them inept and accusing them of collusion. It is impossible to know for sure that he accomplished what he claimed, but his discourse was certainly appealing and echoed in the minds of participants, who usually responded to his post thanking him for the effort. Some people said: “Mil gracias, por todo lo q hace por nosotros los colombianos acá en chile. Dios te bendiga y proteja. (sic)” “Rey gracias por toda la información que nos brindas,” “Gracias por ser la voz de nosotros acá Dios te bendiga siempre,” “Gracias por. Defender nuestros derechos,” “Ud. es un berraco dar. La. Cara. Por. Tanta. Gente. Dios. Lo. Bendiga. (sic).”

The embodiment of this superiority is giving orders, just like Trump who presented himself as “the baddest hombre,” the strong man that bosses around (Eller, 2021, p. 19); the Caudillo would recount the scenes as if he was giving orders, making others do his will. We will never know how these conversations unfolded or if they ever happened. However, these videos

created the idea that the Caudillo was working hard, making things happen, working for the community, and ruling with an iron fist.



Figure 17: The leader of the Colombianos Berracos group, posted a picture of a demonstration in Chile.

Mano Dura: the Promise of Delivering Violence.

How does violence appear in the discourse of leaders, and what is its purpose? A notable way in which leaders articulate demands and mobilise people is using violent rhetoric. I observed on various occasions leaders promising to use *Mano dura* [iron fist] - the same as Uribe did - against those deemed unworthy. In the following, I will present how these local leaders articulated their discourses, often by violence and hate speech.

Violence appears in many ways, sometimes subtle, sometimes explicit, sometimes direct or undirected, but always as an integral part of discourse. A paradox that I observed here, reflecting the historical development of caudillos, is the ambivalent position of working in and out, for and against the state, remains a constant. They mobilized violence against many groups: opposing groups, Venezuelans, *vagos*, or whoever they accused of communism. Perhaps one of the strongest indictments was against the state itself, of which people

promoted the idea of the need to purge it as revenge for the *amaños*; many participants in the Facebook groups demanded punishments against the politicians.

By the time of the curfews, when distrust and hatred towards the states spiked, the president of El Salvador became quite popular among participants of the forums. He was the protagonist of a series of memes that often spawned in many of the Facebook groups I participated in, in which his image was exalted.

His popularity was granted because he openly condemned politicking practices and corruption in his country and, more recently, for his open war with the mafias, which have led to massive incarcerations in El Salvador. As a result, he was first introduced on mainstream media “as the first millennial president” (Iprofesional, 2021), and pictures of him sucking on lollipops with a cap worn backward overflowed TV and all these Facebook groups.

Some scholars have denounced the authoritarian position of the president leveraged on the effective use of social media and the looks of a young man rather than a traditional politician (Moallic, 2021; Ruiz-Alba & Mancinas-Chávez, 2020). He became popular among participants not just because of his laid-back style but because he offered a frontal war against “the enemies of the state” and declared war against La Mara-Salvatrucha, one of the most powerful gangs of Central America international gangs “involved in drug and human smuggling, prostitution, murder, and extortion, among other illegal activities” (Pirtle, 2023).

Many at the forums regarded his ends as legitimate: crushing the Mara, but also exalted and commented how he invoked God before commencing his speeches. Bukele promised to purge corrupt officers from the state, pledging to rule and crush them with an iron fist. He promised to “Gobernar con Mano dura.” He has been accused of authoritarianism, but apparently, it is just a part of his flair. Some people at the forums excused the authoritarian positions as a necessary evil, maybe the only way to pacify the country and combat the encroaching corruption within the state.

On one occasion, one of the persons posted in the group *Colombianos Berracos en Chile* a meme praising the demeanour of Bukele in his purge of the state, to which someone retorted with another meme. This meme featured three Chinese men in suits, allegedly politicians, bowing in front of a man dressed in military clothes. A red line drawn upon their necks signalled their future execution. The image was captioned with a short text: “The Chinese government executed 26 corrupted politicians. Would you like something like this in your country?” To which many people reply: “It would be nice, it is the only way to stop corruption, and they deserve punishment because they steal from the people.” Despite their disdain for Communism, they admire how they allegedly punish the corrupted.

Is it simply a desire for vengeance? Do they want to destroy the state and exterminate politicians? It looks like all the frustration they inherited from centuries of disenfranchisement and violence that they describe as *amaños* - that the pandemic only stirred - channelled against politicians; as representatives of the political process and the state itself.

After participating recurrently in these forums, talking to people, and engaging with their comments, I understood that people do not wish to destroy the state but to purge it like Bukele and the Chinese Executors promised; perhaps they would love to see the government on a good path with its morality revitalized, but to do so, it is necessary to cleanse it. In *Law in a Lawless Land*, Taussig presents the *Diary of a Limpieza* [cleansing] and explains how the necessity of cleansing was the justification for the terror of the paramilitaries who were the proxies of the state (Taussig (Taussig, 2005), 2005). This follows the same logic, just that this time is the state itself which needs to be clean and purified, maybe in preparation for consecration and as penitence.

I was astonished by the legitimization of violence when people demanded punishment against the state and politicians. But I was also puzzled by the contradiction of voting and even campaigning for those corrupt politicians while simultaneously wanting to punish them. One key difference between the leaders that I observed, and a simple politician is that while

amaños are described as asymmetrical relationships in which politicians only take, local leaders give back or at least create the illusion of giving back to the community. For instance, in the form of physical protection, securing food, a place to sleep, political negotiations with governments, as well as divine protection via the invocation of God and his entourage for protection - as all of them did so.

Be that as it may, they felt so allured by President Bukele or the Chinese executors because they showed an iron fist. One of the comments that caught my attention the most about one of these authoritarian memes was one of an anonymous user who wrote: “*tienen mano dura y no les tiembla la mano para castigar*” [they rule with an iron fist and their hands are steady to punish], in other words, they hold power to exert authority even if violently, and they will not hesitate to use it.

Payback and iron fist



Alleged execution of Chinese politicians



Bukele ask for God's help

Figure 18: Iron fist.

of authoritarian leaders resemble both the Christian martyrs and the bandits and Mafiosi: "They are distinguished by the mix of admiration, fear, hatred, and fantasy which they inspire" (Michelutti & Picherit, 2021, p. 4). Furthermore, Michelutti and Picherit wrote: "These myths celebrate bandits, gangsters, and mafia politicians, dead or alive, as effective weapons in the present. At the same time, they project an uncertain posthumous future for the bandit. In these myths, fact and fiction are fused to give birth to powerful fictional realities that exceed the life of these figures, giving them sometimes unexpected post-mortem careers" (Michelutti & Picherit, 2021, p. 9).

Non-violent Mobilisations.

Violence was a common element used to articulate discourse; however, there were other ways to articulate demands that were somehow populist but did not resort to violent rhetoric. Mr. Mina, an African descendant from Cali, came to occupy a leadership role by happenstance. His style was different, but he achieved the same end, resembling Laclau's idea that regardless of position and style, populist discourse can effectively mobilize people. He opened a Salsa Bar in Antofagasta. During the time of Covid-19, his bar became a sanctuary and the headquarters of many immigrants' political activism. He advocated for a quick solution, visited the camps, organized sit-ins, and coordinated food delivery to the campers.



Figure 19: A group of Chileans set fire to the tents of migrant campers.

He used Facebook to broadcast his calls to action, encouraging Colombians, other immigrants, and Chileans to donate. One of his most memorable livestreams happened the day that a good part of those Colombians was repatriated. They celebrated the end of the ordeal. The bar's backdrop showed a group of emigrants violating every social distancing measure (by that time, gatherings were prohibited), jumping, hugging each other, and dancing to the rhythm of *Salsa Choque* and *Cumbias*. Still, the moment of climax came when Colombia Tierra Querida played.

Over the background noise, his voice sounded solemn, but he was thanking all the people that offered a helping hand, exalting “Los negritos decentes” [Decent negritos. Words of endearment] the foreigners, the Chileans, on the same boat,” to which people commented: “A thousand thanks for all the things you do for us here in Chile. May God bless and protect you,” “Thanks for being our voice, God always bless you,” “Thanks for defending our rights,” “You are a Berraco, you are facing them. May God bless you,” “God bless you,” “Thank God we reached our goal, we managed to repatriate 50 of our brothers and sisters, also thanks to the labour of Conexión Migrante,” “Congratulations bro, this is a big gesture of solidarity to my con-nationals. God bless those who do good,” “beautiful energy, mi negro [close friend]. God bless you!” People celebrated with aguardiente and promised to visit his bar once the government lifted the curfews.

Charisma: Meeting Expectations.

Literature describes populist leaders as charismatic, but how did charisma appear in this case? What were the traits that people found appealing in their leaders? The populist leaders that emerged during this time had in common the representation of values and expectations of their audiences. For example, all the leaders that I got to know had some relative success and economic stability, besides having a wealth of social capital, meaning that they were in a comfortable enough position to help others fallen in disgrace, at least more than average. One is the founder of the Colombianos Berracos, but there was also the founder of The Colectivo de Colombianos en Antofagasta - they had a grudge against each other as the former supported Uribe, and the latter Petro - and a third one who owned a bar and was close to the African Colombian community.

During this period, all of them mobilised efforts in different ways and from different political grounds. They were all charismatic, projected a hardworking image, and were committed to the community. They gave the impression of being strong men, capable, reliable, rugged, and

paternalistic, and above all, they sold the idea that the Colombian community could overcome their dire situation through self-management without waiting for external aid from the state.

In particular, the leader of Colombianos Berracos and the owner of the Bar commonly appealed to divine interventions. They often expressed their Catholic belief by invoking God, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the divine baby Jesus, or the Virgin Mary. In addition, during their livestreams, they offered symbolic sacrifices in exchange for political favours; for instance, a leader from Valparaíso promised to stop doing livestreamings on YouTube in exchange for someone from a right-wing party in his county winning the elections. It is worthy to remind the words of Michelutti who argues that a key leadership feature of Hugo Chavez was “Tapping into divinity” (Michelutti, 2017, p. 237) to appeal to deep-rooted values of Catholicism.

Contribution to the Formation of Borders Between Us and Them.

How does the separation between "us" and "them," crowds and elites, occur? What other separations occur? Through discursive acts, these modern caudillos help create separation, not necessarily between "us" the people and "them," the elites (Laclau, 2005), but among various collective subjects not necessarily in a different position of subordination, but in an moral and political scale; categorizing people into "good" and "bad". Violence is critical not only in the act of separation; as separation involve at least verbal violence, but in accusing the other of committing or justifying violence. They achieve this partially by echoing the rhetoric of certain national-level politicians, particularly hate speech.

When the *Estallidos Sociales* broke out in Chile and subsequently in Colombia, an infamous Senator approached a group of protesting students at Plaza de Bolívar in Bogotá and scolded them using the phrase: “¡Trabajen vagos!” [Get a job, tramps!] to refer to the people participating in the demonstrations. Without hesitation, the Leader of Colombianos Berracos adopted the expression and the word *vagos* to designate all the people who had taken part in manifestations just a few weeks before the outbreak of Covid-19.

The use of the word *vagos*, along with other synonyms, was central to his speech as he utilized it to distinguish broadly between two separate groups. On one hand, those who were hard-working and "*gente de bien*," and on the other hand, slackers or criminals. The former was an imaginary group comprised of Colombians, his core audience, who stereotypically would have attributes such as waking up early in the morning, working in any kind of job, among other virtues. In sharp contrast, *vagos* was a term he used to refer to criminals regardless of where they came from, but it was also noticeable how on one occasion he generalized Venezuelans in Latin America as prone to delinquency, hinting - but not elaborating - that the root cause of their slackness had to do with 'coming from a communist country that would have supplied all their demands so they never had to work for anything'. On these grounds, he defended a selective migratory law promoted by Piñera's government to keep Venezuelans from entering the country.

Similarly, in another brief address during the *Estallido Social* in Colombia, he declared on Facebook: "mobilizations bring only poverty. Have you seen the exchange rate?" He also alluded that "those *inadaptados* [misfits-punks. Taking part in protests] were impeding them - the hardworking *gente de bien* - to work and thrive." Then he proceeded to quote another slogan promoted by El Centro Democrático - a right-wing party in Colombia - and the aforementioned Senator, which said, "Yo no paro, yo produzco" [I don't stop, I produce], and closing his address he vindicated the actions of Carabineros, who were accused of aiming for the eyes of demonstrators with rubber bullets (BBC World, 2019).

This reminds of Goulart who describes how Jair Bolsonaro's neoliberal and conservative discourse created a collective subject called *o povo* [the people in Portuguese]. Despite common belief, Bolsonaro's discourse was not based on economic positions appealing to the upper classes of Brazil that would directly benefit from neoliberalism, but on moral grounds 'whose focal point was a contraposition against the Brazilian left, associated with moral and

political corruption’ (da Silva & Rodrigues, 2021, p. 91). It is true that this leader made some economic remarks, but his discourse was decidedly founded on moral concerns.

Paracos y Petro-Ñeros: Inscribe Local discussions into Nation-wide Discussions.

How the small struggles in localised regions relate to nation-wide debates? Leaders and common people actively reproduce and discuss ideas, oftentimes resorting to hate speech. As I pointed out in the brief historical section, partisan violence in Colombia has always been a constant, in which peasants killed and were killed due to these affiliations. Political tension was at its peak during my fieldwork; first, there were the *estallidos sociales* in Chile and Colombia, which caused cleavage between the community; next was the Covid-19 outbreak that caused the trust of my participants in institutions to break down (see chapter about science); moreover, the Colombian national elections were coming, rendering a political landscape of polarization. All of these may have influenced the prevalence of heated political debates. I observed the Colombian community split into two due to their allegiances with either of the opposing nation-level political leaders of the moment; Álvaro Uribe and Gustavo Petro. On top of this, local leaders also played a role by agitating and reproducing the ideas and discourses of the opposing factions. A big part of the way that these discussions unfolded was mediated by the use of hatred speech, disqualifying and even dehumanising both sides of the struggle.

Many of the participants on the Facebook groups, especially those who followed closely the leader of Colombianos Berracos, were very vocal against what they called *inadaptados* [misfits] who took part in protests. I found on many occasions posts and comments defending the forces of order like the Carabineros -police- in Chile and the police forces in Colombia. Disqualifying the claims of those who protested, calling them *vagos* [lazy/tramps]. One statement that resonated at these forums was that said *vagos* wanted to “destroy everything”

and wanted 'to get everything for free.' On the Facebook groups, people discussed both Colombian and Chilean politics simultaneously.

On the other side of the debate, were those who followed Leopoldo, the Leader of the Colectivo de Colombianos, who in turn supported Petro and the Chilean opposition. It was a well-known fact that both leaders hold personal grudges against each other. The debate revolved around those who supported Álvaro Uribe, the former president, and those who supported Gustavo Petro, the then pre-candidate, now president of Colombia. The Leader of Colombianos Berracos was far more vocal and direct, while Leopoldo refrained from making public statements. In a WhatsApp interview that I had with Leopoldo by the end of 2021 he told me: "We can be critical about actions of Colombia and Chile -governments-but we cannot take a side, we cannot breach the confidence and trust of the community. I know openly talking about politics would tear down the community and all our work over these years." But despite his efforts to calm down people, supporters from both sides often clash on social media.

The word debates may not be more than euphemisms; in reality, I saw the exchange of insults, none of the discussions centred upon political ideas but on attacking the leaders and acolytes. During this time, the former president Álvaro Uribe Vélez, was on preventive detention, suspected of manipulation of witnesses -currently indicted and awaiting trial-, and many of his right-wing followers were defending him by attacking Gustavo Petro, calling anyone who dared to say something against Uribe in a way that reminds anti-Communist era, a "Communist and guerrillero [guerrilla member]." Nonetheless, someone who I only had a brief exchange of voice messages told me referring to Uribe: "When I voted him, I voted from the heart no for bricks," signalling that this relationship existed outside the clientele and instrumentalised ways of *políticos amañados* [politicking], maybe this is part of the reason of extreme popularity.

On the other hand, their opponents were accusing the followers of Uribe of being "Paracos" - short for Paramilitaries-. In this confrontation, contenders at the forums coined two new

terms: *Petro-Ñero* to call the followers of Gustavo Petro and *Uri-believers* for Uribe. *Petro-Ñero* is the result of adding the word *ñero* to the politician's surname. In Colombian slang, *ñero* is the contraction of “compañero;” mate or companion, but also a word to name *desechables* [disposables. Homeless. Less than human]. The Dictionary of Americanisms defines it as “I. close friend, II. person from a low strata, marginalized” (ASALE, 2024) It is worthy to recall that Taussig described how the “*Escuadrones de limpieza Social*” purged or cleansed society from these people that were sometimes burned alive (Taussig, 2005). The moniker of ‘paracos’ attributed to the followers of Uribe, also had a semantic dimension that recalled the hardest and darkest days of the paramilitary violence of recent years in Colombia, as if all their followers were being reduced to perpetrators of atrocities. The other title, Uri-believers, was a joke that compared his followers with Justin Bieber’s fans; *Beliebers*, denoting naivety. One comment that I saw on one of these debates explained it as: they ‘are like blind schoolgirls following an idol.’

Ultimately, both sides accused each other of being barbaric and naive. They tended to dehumanize each other and failed to recognize each other as antagonist. It is worth to recall Laclau’s theory is based on the supposition that the populist process occurs in a framework that produced collective subjects mutually recognizable. However, for moments I got the impression that participants failed to acknowledge each other existence as political subjects, calling back what Rojas called a failure to see the other and recognize them as agonistic interlocutors.

In summary, these modern caudillos were capable of mobilizing people towards factual or ethereal objectives through a very complex utilization of material means, such as social media platforms, and discourses that, not exclusively but very often resorted to the use of violence in some way. Sometimes people adopted the violent discourse of political leaders, sometimes they accused the other of committing violence, it is important to mention that through the discourses, these leaders gave meaning or reframed the meaning of signifiers of violence that

existed in Colombian history and the very vivid life experiences of my participants who in one way or another know or experienced first-hand encounters with violence.

Coda: Violence in Politics.

Will silence and violence always be part of the political discussions of Colombians? No one knows; the question exceeds the scope of this work. But many scholars warned that violent right-wing populist discourses not only in Trump's America but in Brazil, El Salvador, Colombia, and of course in Europe; including the UK, Germany, Italy, and Greece have been consolidating for a while, and that somehow their discourses have legitimised discriminatory and violent stances worldwide.

Nonetheless, Leopoldo acknowledged that Colombian society, and the community in Chile, was fragmented by partisan opposition and reluctantly admitted that on occasions he participated in that game. However, he sees 'a positive light in the fact that people are not killing each other, they may have arguments on Social Media, I deal with them daily, but it looks like an improvement to me.' The violent silence imposed on people has timidly lifted, and maybe the power of monsters like La Mano Negra has waned.

Katherine, my colleague and coworker at the NGO for which I volunteered during 2020 to 2021 based in Antofagasta, told me "One is not afraid that something is going to happen, and that is why you can give your opinion now". Before the peace accords, "I didn't dare to voice my opinion that much." Although timidly, some changes are taking place. The leader of the *Colectivo de Colombianos en Antofagasta* believes that people are a bit more open to new ideas and new ways of engaging with institutions; he surmised -like Katherine- that it is an indirect consequence of the Peace Accords signed in 2016 which state that 'speaking the truth is a way to repair the damage and the guarantee of non-repetition (Gobierno Nacional-Farc EP, 2016). I started this research several years ago, looking for alternatives to modernity, development, and some sort of escape to neoliberalism, just like those that post-development

and decolonial authors had raised, but I only found agreements with the state and the perpetuation of conformist ideas.

I realised that I would never find in my fieldwork grandiloquent counter-discourses or practices. I confessed my frustration to Katherine, but she retorted by saying “that environment, gender, and alternative futures were not topics that people considered relevant and do not belong to the realm of politics,” but she also acknowledges that, for instance, some of the women that work with her have been slowly embracing feminism and “little by little they are learning, looking for alternatives. Now they talk, for example, about women’s rights and gender equity.” It seems that little by little -almost imperceptible-, the taboo of silence is being lifted, and other issues and ways of living and doing politics are emerging.

Conclusion.

It seems like violence has permeated the political life and history of Colombians to the point that violence has become an important signifier that leaders use in their political speech that had also cascade into the everyday speech of some of my participants. However, it is not a violence in specific but all of them at the same time as an amorphous mass resembling the description of Scheper-Hughes as a continuum and endless thread that brings all the violence together.

In the political discourses that I analysed in here, violence appears as a vast array: paramilitarism, fear of communism, xenophobia, guerrillas, massacres, justifications of excess from the state, Mano Dura and Mano Negra, revenge against the state and politicians because of *amaños*, and many other ways.

Violence articulates politics as much as populism does, sometimes, violence is the central aspect of the discourse, and sometimes it seems to be mortar that helps to cohere its parts and agglutinate grievances. Some politicians and some local leaders have tapped, and partially mobilised ideas and values associated with *berraquera*, however, none of them seem to be

capable of truly and fully representing these ideas, rendering *berraquera* somehow independent. It is also worthy mentioned that, as I will argue in this document, *berraquera* is a cognate of ideas that emerged at the margins of institutions and central powers, and to exist requires to remain in this liminal space, only touching institutionality tangentially and temporarily.

In the following chapter I will analyse how the mistrust, perceived *amaños* [rig, tricks], and mistrust shaped the relationship between my informants.

Chapter 4:

Covid-19: The Reconfiguration of Trust.

Introduction: Covid-19.

In June 2020, one otherwise uneventful afternoon during the lockdowns, I received a Facebook message from Marco, someone I had briefly met online. He included a short note at the end saying: “What do you think?” It was a low-resolution video over 15 minutes long. The speaker had a very thick Paisa accent, likely from a small town in Antioquia, though he introduced himself as a taxi driver from Medellín. He spoke in a very colloquial and assertive manner, as if he were a seasoned expert. The intonation and modulation of his voice made a strong impression on me.

The person began by addressing his fellow Colombians, reassuring them that everything would be fine as “God would never let all my faithful compatriots fall into misery.” Next, he boldly stated, “I have found a cure for Covid-19,” and proceeded to elaborate a bit about Covid-19. He first called it a *bicho* (bug), then a bacterium, and finally a virus. He rambled a bit about how suspicious the appearance of this *bicho* was without providing more details. Then he said, “I found a way to counter Covid-19. I used it myself and gave it to my family, and the results are wonderful (...) The ingredients, which you can get off the shelf, are inexpensive and within reach of everyone who wants to survive.” He claimed to have seen some recipes on YouTube, but insisted his was better and more complete.

He continued: “You only need to mix acetaminophen, garlic, lemon juice, and Listerine. Combine everything and let it rest for a while. If it is too thick, add some water but be sure not to dilute it too much. Blend everything, then put it in a pan and bring it to a boil (...) the only thing you need to do is gargle with it. This will kill the bug, the bacteria (...) you know, the virus

lingers for three days in the throat before invading the lungs, but if you do this before it reaches the lungs, you will be safe. This remedy cures and prevents Covid-19.” He kept repeating these ideas in different ways for a few minutes.

What caught my attention the most came at the end of the message. After recounting his formula to counter Covid-19, he continued: “We should return to the ways of the past, to how things were in the 19th century when one did not have to depend on the state to survive and receive meagre help. We should not wait to be saved by the government. We should go back to how things were in the past, when each household and family took care of themselves and their families.” At this point, his voice was straining, and the stress in his tone was noticeable, as if his advice had become an order.

He concluded: “If someone dies, it is because they brought that upon themselves, they asked for it. I have already given you the tools to survive, so it’s up to you to save yourself and your family. Listen, nobody is going to save you at a clinic; they will only let you die. The cure is in our homes, in our traditions.” The message closed with the remark that “only by ourselves, with the help of God, will we overcome these tribulations.”

In a separate occasion around the same time, Martha Camila sent me a message with a similar question: “What do you think?” The message was shorter in comparison, only 6 minutes. It was an audio file in which a woman, supposedly from Leticia in the Amazonas department, shared what she claimed was a cure for Covid-19. The message was as follows:

‘Good night from Leticia. I want to tell you how we got cured from Covid. I give you this information so you can share it with whoever you want. Now in Colombia, Covid is replicating and killing a lot of people. My husband and I tested positive. My husband had had *tinto* [black coffee] with a merchant who died of Covid, rest in peace. We started to look at all the messages in our WhatsApp and found the testimony of a family in Italy. We did what they did: we boiled 4 lemons, which is equivalent to 10 ounces. My husband asked me to add 3 pills for

kids, those *Bayers* for kids – probably aspirin. The recipe indicated only 2, but my husband said, ‘put three; either I die or come back stronger.’ We also added two spoons of honey. On the ninth day, he had lost taste and appetite. He took the infusion at 4, and by 6, he got up and told me he felt better. Drink it as hot as possible, as warm as the hand of God.’

Then the audio continued with some further explanations and alternative recipes: ‘In a jar, put the juice of a big red onion, a spoon of ginger; be careful if you suffer from high blood pressure. Ginger is a natural antibiotic but increases blood pressure. The juice of a lemon, 4 garlic cloves, boil it for 15 minutes, and you drink it like water. My husband had 20 jars. We also added some azithromycin, one a day until he finished 30. Also, eucalyptus vaporisations: simmer the eucalyptus; one batch lasts up to 6 boils, and the smell remains. I also rubbed some VapoRub on his nose and stopped feeding him cold food and dry food, only soups and teas. It’s the hand of God that helps you the most. My husband told me, “Please don’t take me to the hospital; if I die, I die at home.”

After this point, the audio changed the topic. It stopped elaborating on the best recipes against Covid-19 and started to talk about the current situation: ‘At the start here in the Amazonas, news reported how many people had caught the virus. At the beginning, there were 2400, but soon they stopped reporting the counts because it is not convenient for them to tell how we got cured. A doctor who doesn’t work with the state gave the same formula to the inmates of the jail in Leticia, and out of 198, only 1 died. The doctor said that the state forbids its doctors from prescribing this medicine. I don’t know what their protocol is or what money and shady interests are there, but in the news, they ask people to avoid self-prescription. However, here in the Amazonas, we have improved thanks to this.’

‘Another thing, a lady died of cirrhosis, so they told the family that if they declared it was Covid, the state would cover the expenses; otherwise, you would need to pay for it and bury her yourself. As bold as brass, he said, ‘tell them it was Covid,’ so they keep reporting everything as Covid. Please take care of yourselves, use this medicine, and save your family.

Don't allow yourselves to get ill. Wear face masks, carry on with your lives as usual, but don't forget to wear the mask. Remember, you don't need to go to a hospital.'

Like these two messages, I received many more and collected over 40, but I suspect that the actual number of messages that circulated during the pandemic was far more than anybody can count or collect. I decided to open this chapter by presenting these two messages. One reason I chose these two is that they not only present the practical advice to endure the pandemic that I received during this time but also highlight two actors relevant to understanding how people engaged with this kind of message: the institutions, including the governments, health and scientific systems, and the Catholic faith.

In this chapter, I will explore how two distinct groups, which I interacted with during the pandemic throughout 2020, engaged with information relating to Covid-19, how they understood, reproduced, and circulated it. I will pay special attention to what people did with the information and how they articulated political and religious fields in making sense of it.

The first group is comprised of the volunteers of the Parish of Holy Saviour in Bogotá, of which Martha Camila is a volunteer. The second group is the people I encountered across the Facebook groups. I do not know if the stories told in the messages are true, and it is not my intention to verify their veracity. Instead, my focus is not on the messages themselves but on understanding how people engage with these messages. As Polleri posits, instead of theorising misinformation, anthropologists should focus on understanding narratives and experiences within those specific issues (Polleri, 17).

Literature has pointed out trust as a key element in the maintenance of a regime of truth, and mistrust as a core element of a post-truth regime and misinformation (references). What was very evident in this case was that the trust in the state and the institutions that had traditionally provided answers to people had, in Laclau's terms, he argues that populism emerges during periods of deep crisis or rupture, when the existing hegemonic order is under

pressure and institutions fail to meet societal demands. This breakdown creates an equivalence among diverse frustrations, uniting them under a common identity, "the people." Populist rupture, therefore, reflects a moment when the ruling discourse no longer provides answers, leading to the rise of a new collective identity against the failing order (Laclau, 2013).

I will argue that trust in this case cannot be explained simply in terms of trust/distrust but in terms of a reconfiguration of trust. While the literature on populism and post-truth helps explain the relationships my informants have with the state, their actions and sentiments are not merely populist expressions. Instead, they are reactions to a pervasive mistrust in institutions and the state, exacerbated by populist leaders, which fundamentally shapes their interactions and responses.

The group of the Holy Saviour relegated all that resembled institutional authority to a secondary place and increasingly relied on the community and their faith for answers, signalling their increased trust in God and community. For the people I will analyse in the second part of this chapter, the answer was less clear. They followed a downward spiral of mistrust and lack of meaning, somehow unresolved, opening the space for conspiracy theories to take over. This chapter thus explores: what happens when the trust between people and institutions breaks? And how do the ideas of *berraquera* mediate people's response to this rupture?

Post-truth and Populism.

During the pandemic, I observed an explosion in the use of concepts such as fake news, post-truth, and conspiracy theories in the news, on social media, in academia, and in everyday speech. Nonetheless, these terms were usually used lightly to address all the information that proliferated during this time whose content was dubious. These concepts had been in vogue for a few years to describe the discourse of populist leaders like the then US President Donald Trump and the Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, as well as campaigns such as Brexit. I believe

that these concepts can help shed some light on this case. However, it is also necessary to refer to and comment on some of the literature on right-wing populism, as it aids in understanding the political intricacies of this case.

The literature relating to fake news and post-truth is scattered across many subfields of anthropology. It is also a subject of interest in many disciplines, including journalism, information studies, and philosophy—disciplines ultimately concerned with broader questions about truth (Graan et al., 2020, p. 82). However, as Lockie points out, ‘there is no consensus on definitions’ (Lockie, 2017, p. 1), beyond simple notions such as the lack of correspondence between the reported and reality, the intrinsic truth value of the information (Bernecker et al., 2021; Lackey, 2021) or the intentionality of using false statements for stylistic purposes (Frank, 2015, p. 316).

Although the literature spreads in many different directions, I consider it pertinent to frame this review using the term post-truth as an umbrella concept. Not only does it appear for some authors as an encompassing concept (Nuzhath et al., 2020) that hinges on other relevant notions such as trust, but it is also created and sustained by the same political leaders who defend and promote right-wing populism worldwide, thus being a concept that bridges the literature on fake news with the literature on populism.

For d’Ancona, the collapse of trust is the origin of the post-truth era, a moment that started in recent decades as trust in institutional order has declined, partly due to the generalised and evident failures of the system in delivering promises and achieving objectives: failures in government, media, and economic and social institutions, promoted and legitimised by anti and pseudo-scientific discourse in which, for populist leaders, narrative prevails over facts. According to him, post-truth regimes would drift towards autocracy, populism, and attacks on rationality, leading to a political zero-sum game, leveraged on a digital infrastructure (d’Ancona, 2017).

Nuzhath (Nuzhath et al., 2020) conceive the age of post-truth as a moment in which long-held truths about the nation's, morality, politics, scientific and previously reputed authorities have come into question. This questioning span multiple dimensions, including the political and scientific. Regarding scientific truth, Luhmann and Behnke (Luhmann & Behnke, 1994) see this as a crisis of scientific realism, a moment when scientific truth ceased to exist, with the aggravating circumstance that the pandemic was unfolding and causing real damage.

The loss of scientific authority is related to a broader political process of the rise of right-wing populist leaders who have incorporated anti-scientific positions as part of their discourses, undermining credibility in scientific institutions to gain traction with their political platforms. A constituent part of these discourses is made up of dubious information, broadly referred to as fake news or misinformation. According to Lockie (2017), the term has been predominant in media narratives, becoming popular during the political campaigns in favour of Brexit, Trump, "El NO" in the Colombia Peace Agreement referendum, and the rise of Macri in Argentina (Mair, 2017). Some authors acknowledge that lying, especially in politics, is not a new phenomenon; however, in the case of "Donald Trump, it is different. (...) His lies, their content, and their context are as important as the work they do" (McGranaham, 2017, p. 243). In this sense, what he did was legitimise an anti-institutional rhetoric that, as McWilliams suggests, was used as a trophy (McWilliams, 2022). Hervik decisively says that the election of Trump challenged not only democracy but the institution of science, as anti-scientific discourse was a constituent part of his speech (Hervik, 2018, p. 145), opening the space for other kinds of diatribes that ended up eroding institutional legitimacy as a whole and not just science.

Fake news is not just an issue because it is not true but is also deemed problematic because of its socially divisive effects. One major preoccupation in Laclau's theory is how, by acts of discourse, political leaders create boundaries between groups, commonly presented as us and them, underdog and elite. In this line, Polleri suggests that normally the 'underdogs' become the target of misinformation and attacks when the supposedly authoritative sources 'fail to

reach' (Polleri, 2019, p. 19) and meet the expectations of specific social segments (who are already sceptical of elite interests?). Graan also makes manifest that trust in the others is influenced by shifting cultural and political contours (Graan et al., 2020), to the point of suggesting that in reality, this is not a post-truth era but a post-trust one in which 'neo-right populism results not simply from a wellspring of White discontent over lost entitlements and heightened precarity.'

Such populism is also mediated, and specifically, it is mediated by practices of publicity that do not merely express discontent and distrust but also produce them (Graan et al., 2020), to the point that people are not attracted by the veracity of the news, but its sensationalism (Winick, 2018, p. 392).

In consequence, as Friedman proposes, this only exacerbates an antagonistic continuum that goes from the cosmopolitanism of the elites to the indigenisation of the working class, this means that the rise of new populism can only be understood within a broader framework, where an emerging cosmopolitan elite sits at one end of the social spectrum, and an increasingly "indigenised" working class at the other. This polarisation is a by-product of globalisation, with elites defining themselves through upward mobility and global connections, while the working class, facing downward mobility, becomes more locally rooted. The extent of this divide is shaped by cycles of political and economic hegemony, with the formation of cosmopolitan elites intensifying as global powers decline (p. 135), a process of decay in which the distance between the two groups only becomes more acute in times of struggle?

It is not entirely clear if fake news is a cause or an effect of populism; regardless, it creates a series of effects such as mistrust in institutions (Rakopoulos, 2018, p. 377), mistrust in information coming from certain sources (Buchanan & Benson, 2019; Melki et al., 2021; Rowe & Alexander, 2017), and on an individual's ability to judge information (Paisana et al., 2020). It also creates the necessity to investigate issues such as how to rebuild trust in a post-truth world (Barzilai & Chinn, 2020), revert impacts in education and scientific knowledge (Peters et

al., 2018), and understand the crisis in liberal media and the public sphere (Jasanoff & Simmet, 2017; Martin & Hassan, 2020; Zaryan, 2017).

The literature on populism and post-truth offers insights into the relationships my informants have formed, particularly with the state. However, rather than cultivating loyal followers, the populist stances and styles of some leaders have intensified a generalised mistrust in institutions. As a result, the sentiments, ideas, and actions of my participants are not merely expressions of populism but rather a response to the deep-seated mistrust that shapes their relationship with institutions specifically and the state more broadly.

In conclusion, despite the common subjects and similar findings of the anthropology of populism and post-truth, it is surprising that both have followed distinct paths. One point that stands out is the role of discourses and populist leaders in creating regimes of post-truth and using misinformation in a way that, replicating Laclau's ideas, creates a sense of rupture and crisis in which trust in institutions is lost. Laclau contends that populism arises during times of crisis when the dominant order fails to meet societal demands. This rupture unifies diverse frustrations under a common identity, "the people," as the ruling discourse loses its ability to provide solutions. Populism thus reflects the breakdown of institutional responses to collective grievances (Laclau, 2006).

Part I: The Parrish of the Holy Saviour.

I was stranded in Bogotá for most of 2020, unable to leave the house except for medical emergencies, walking the dog, or shopping on the days allowed by my gender and the last digit of my national identity document. Violating curfew rules could result in fines, detention, and prosecution. Inadvertently, this situation led me to meet and engage with a group of people I had not planned to interact with before.

My mother introduced me to Martha Camila, a resident of her building. Our interactions until 2022 were exclusively on WhatsApp. My mother put us in contact because, as the pandemic

swiftly unfolded, most services were suddenly digitised, and errands such as paying bills, booking medical appointments, or even ordering food were mediated by digital technology that people like Martha Camila were not used to. She needed to pay some bills, so I helped her out. A few weeks later, she sent me a voice message asking for a similar favour, not for her but for another lady. This situation replicated on many occasions, and I was gradually introduced to many of the volunteers of the Parish of the Holy Saviour.

I helped the group's members run their errands, and in exchange, they would send me and comment on memes, viral videos, and other information as I had told them that I was researching this type of information. This is how I was introduced to the points I want to comment on here: the relationship of self-care and faith, the chains of prayers and the pastoral work, reasons for sharing—even dubious information—and the cult of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and its relationship with the state.

According to Prasad, the misinformation and fake news surrounding the pandemic tended to be framed as anti-science stances; however, not all these positions follow the same logic. In fact, interpretations vary geographically and across different social groups (Prasad, 2022).

In Latin America, it was experienced with fear, panic and uncertainty, which can be understood from two perspectives: first, the effects on individuals, and second, the impact on the healthcare system and the perception of its inability to respond (Gómez-González et al., 2023, p. 396). It is also worth mentioning that some research suggests that in Colombia during the pandemic, self-denominated Catholics intensified their belief (Meza, 2020a, 2020b), and many people resorted to religion as part of their coping strategies (Narváez et al., 2021).

Foley et al. based in a study carried out with Australian women, suggest that in relation to the post-truth era, the need for trust during the pandemic became intertwined with intense emotions, elevating trust considerations to the forefront of people's daily lives—contrary to the prevailing theory that views trust as a background or secondary emotion. 'The turbulent

emotional climates surrounding trust decisions affected both institutional and interpersonal trust, placing strain on both vertical (institutional) and horizontal (interpersonal) relationships' (Foley et al., 2023, p. 244).

How did the Catholic influences of this group mediate their understanding and actions regarding (mis)information? How did their ideas about politics, science, and religion influence their actions during the pandemic? How mistrust mediated their relationships with institutions and the state?

Despite already being lay members of a religious community, the rupture in trust with the state caused by the pandemic led parish members to turn even more strongly to religion for answers. This deepened their connection with the religious community and strengthened their faith in God.

Self-care and Faith

In this short section, I will elaborate on two things: first, the understanding of self-care through the lens of Catholic faith for this group, and second, how they experienced the pandemic accordingly. I would like to underscore the entanglement between trust in God and mistrust in institutions.

Most people I interviewed and had contact with during this research were Catholic and saw God as a guiding force in their lives. Perhaps it was the group from the Parish of the Holy Saviour that invested the most time in explaining to me the role of God in their lives. Within this group, I frequently heard references to God and all his divine entourage, so I tried to ask for definitions of how they understood God. It was not surprising when Ana, a member of the Health Pastoral, pointed out the futility of my question by saying, "God is not to be understood, but you can feel him." Ana referred to the Hand of God in a poetic way, as an: "invisible force that can work miracles, that can move objects and hearts, to which nothing is impossible and can hold you and raise you up when you are down. You cannot see God, but

you do see his hand moving things around, moving the hands of surgeons, and moving the minds of scientists. Not even a single leaf moves without the aid of God." This explanation made me realise the central role of God as an entity beyond comprehension whose work was sensible and palpable, personal but ubiquitous, but above all, a being in whom people can deposit all their trust.

Ana continued with her explanation: "But be careful, it does not mean that God will descend from the skies to help you. No, that is why people say he works in mysterious ways, because you never know which hearts and minds, he will move to work a miracle (...) in this sense, doctors could well be an extension of his hand. You never know. I recommended everybody to follow doctors' advice and wear masks always. I wore one until a few months ago. I also urged people to stay at home... While it is true that for God nothing is impossible, he also said, "Help thyself and I shall help thee." Not everything is God's responsibility; we have our share too (...) I still have my doubts about the Chinese, but if there was a vaccine, the best thing to do was to get the jab." In line with my findings, Plata et al. found strong evidence that in Colombia, regardless of which Christian denomination people belonged to, discourses such as self-care became stronger (Plata et al., 2023, p. 207).

Similarly, Carla, who is a nurse and member of the Health Pastoral, shared her story during the pandemic: "My experience during Covid-19 was sad and overwhelming. Different people lived it in different ways depending on their occupation. For some people, it was a blessing, while others had to reinvent themselves. It really was a time of testing and resilience, a moment in which creativity for survival was crucial. Priests were very concerned and worried because they couldn't open the churches, and this was a critical moment of death, so they tried to open communication channels to listen to the community (...) we had a dog, and I had to walk him to protect my family, because at that time I was the fittest."

"I talked to a friend who is a doctor, and she told me that they did not always have the necessary measures for good self-care; doctors and nurses had died. She told me to take care

of my family. I tried to call the ill and acquaintances. Natural medicine worked wonders during this time; herbs were of great help. If people in need did not have money to buy herbs, I would buy them, such as moringa, a plant that raises defences and has over 300 properties. I took self-care measures. I learnt a lot about herbal medicines, and people who I recommended the remedies to would call to thank me. The mercy of God was key in this process because of the values of God and the faith and love of the Holy Trinity: God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in the unity of family and for helping me to be ready to answer the call whenever someone needed it."

Carla continued, "another story is when I tripped over a broken tube on the street a few years ago and fractured my rib. After a year, that rib punctured a lung-covering muscle, which was detected when I ended up with pneumonia in hospital. My father was also admitted with respiratory syndrome, exacerbated by his hypertension and cardiac issues. They found a mass caused by a thyroid gland alteration. At the hospital, I was referred to the ICU where I contracted an infection. A week later, I was discharged with an oxygen tank. Through therapeutic exercises, I recovered quickly by God's grace. However, my siblings showed my father a picture of me in the ICU. He thought I was ill from visiting him and sadly passed away two days later. We couldn't attend the funeral or perform the last rites."

Carla concluded our short interview with these words: "With the vaccines, they also create a psychological disease, manipulating the population's pain. The vaccines weren't even tested. If I'm not mistaken, one of Colombia's top immunologists, Dr. Manuel Elkin Patarroyo, stated that the vaccines weren't adequately tested due to insufficient trial time, let alone approved and properly verified to determine their safety. He recommended against getting the jab. Anyway, God is our Lord, and all glory is to Him."

The case of La Pastoral de Salud closely resembles Clara Han's findings in Chile. In marginalised areas, people established networks of care to source and redistribute medication, forming these networks to bypass the failings of state programmes. The state's neglect and

abandonment of its responsibilities left individuals and families to find their own ways to overcome hardship (Han, 2012, pp. 203-204). In the case of La Pastoral, the support provided was not only material but also spiritual, serving the same purpose. They stepped in to fill the gap left by a state incapable of offering practical solutions to the pandemic – and even healthcare prior to it – while also providing the spiritual reassurance of having someone care for the wellbeing of the community, a role both the Chilean and Colombian states have withdrawn from.

In conclusion, what stands out from these accounts is that while trust in conventional institutions deteriorates, trust in God and alternative self-care methods strengthens. It may indeed be true, as Arturo and Menéndez suggest, that in Colombia, de facto authority was not wielded by the state but by other groups (Arturo & Menéndez, 2022). In this case, a religious organisation took charge of developing strategies to minimise risks, resorting to alternative medicines alongside allopathic and modern medicine, partly under the divine mandate of "help thyself and I shall help thee."

Chains of Prayer and Pastoral Work.

How did the group organise to provide aid during the pandemic? I argue that they mobilised both spiritual and material aid to compensate for the state's lack of response, increasingly relying on their community and the pastoral work of the church. In this section, I will discuss the Chains of Prayer, a form of spiritual aid that became prominent during the pandemic.

Through Martha Camila, I met several members of the Parish. While not all were retirees, the majority were elderly or nearing retirement. The volunteers held various roles within the community: some collected donations, Martha Camila instructed children in catechesis, and another group I closely interacted with was the Health Pastoral, as explained by Piedad.

Piedad elaborated, "The Health Pastoral did many things, such as visiting the sick, praying, collecting medical supplies, and bringing communion to those unable to attend mass." I

learned that the Health Pastoral also collected medicines, including some high-cost medications, and distributed them to those in need. Many members of the pastoral were healthcare professionals, such as doctors and nurses. Piedad later clarified that visits to the sick were part of structured community health programs led by the Parish. These programs involved creating detailed lists of the needs of the sick and their families, and allocating resources, accordingly, including obtaining donated or leftover medicines and arranging home visits by specialist doctors.

During my visit to Colombia in 2024, I reconnected with some members of the Health Pastoral to reflect on their experiences during the pandemic. Susana recalled spending her days praying for an end to the pandemic and for minimal loss of life. She also expressed a profound sense of helplessness: "I prayed for all the doctors and nurses, but all I could do was pray."

The pastoral work extended beyond mobilising material resources; it also mobilised faith. Before the pandemic, pastoral members routinely visited the sick, providing necessary goods and offering prayers. During the pandemic, like many other aspects of life such as bill payments, prayer also became digitised and mediated through digital technologies. Although they had previously shared religious messages via WhatsApp, the pandemic led to complete digitisation: masses, meetings, and prayers were all conducted digitally. Meza noted that healing masses broadcast on Facebook became a major way for Colombians to cope with the Covid-19 crisis (Meza, 2020b).

In this regard, Ana explained, "The members of the House of Mercies—an appendage of the Parish—conducted reunions on Zoom where we asked for intercession and prayed for the ill person." Noemí added, "During the pandemic, everything related to faith, prayers, and chains of prayers was coordinated from my phone—I was the admin—in WhatsApp." It is worth mentioning that measures against coronavirus heavily restricted religious freedoms in Colombia (Petri, 2023). In response, as happened in many places and religious denominations, communities responded in this way (Taragin-Zeller & Kessler, 2021).

One prominent way prayer became more central was through the Chain of Prayer. Back in 2020, Martha Camila sent me a WhatsApp audio detailing an incident where an unknown member of the Colombian community in Santiago fell ill with Covid-19. The audio mentioned that without a cure or preventive measures available, and with most community members lacking health insurance, their only recourse was to entrust this individual to God's mercy.

Without delving into the specifics of the message, it started with a greeting and then presented the alleged case of the patient. The audio highlighted the virtues of the person using adjectives like "good individual" and "hardworking," also mentioning the distress of their family in Colombia. The audio called for a prayer chain to commence on a specified date, aligning Colombian and Chilean time zones.

I sought clarification from Martha Camila about the prayers. She explained, "In the Catholic rite, it's common to offer masses for the health and well-being of people. Normally, the priest would invoke these names during mass. However, due to the pandemic, we decided to proceed differently." Martha Camila and the group were aware that the message could be fabricated, but they chose to proceed as it posed no harm. After all, praying for the ill was routine for them.

When I questioned the rationale behind proceeding with what seemed to me a potentially fake message (not a scam, as no money was requested but the case appeared contrived), Martha Camila replied, "If it's false, I don't know. Maybe it is, but I've prayed and asked for those who need it, so it hasn't been wasted. I did it because I believe God will intervene for those in need, not just this person, but all who need it."

This parallels the case of Joel Robbins, who examined the recently converted Charismatic Christians in Papua New Guinea through the lens of rupture. In Christian theology, rupture is understood as a radical and conscious break from the past, encompassing one's former self and previous life (Robbins, 2019). However, the most pertinent aspect for my analysis is that

rupture signifies a new regime of truth, grounded in different values and references. While the Pastoral de Salud did not experience a proper rupture, there was instead a reaffirmation of faith that led to a rejection of more scientifically aligned notions of truth. In prioritising their faith and values—such as 'doing good and interceding for others'—they actively challenged conventional ideas of truth and falsehood.

They coordinated with the group to gather on a Friday at 3 pm, chosen for participants' convenience, yet corresponding to "*la hora santa*" [holy time]. Participants set alarms and sent reminders to pause all activities and join in prayer. Each person prayed a mystery of the Rosary simultaneously, from the privacy of their homes, instructed to pray with faith. The significance lay not just in the act itself, but in its immeasurable yet powerful dimension. Martha Camila continued, "A prayer chain is more powerful than an individual prayer because it unites the good intentions of many people. It gains even more strength when we request the intercession of saints and the Virgin Mary." They conducted similar rituals throughout the pandemic.

Through the Chain of Prayer, they sought God's intervention, contributing to the battle against Covid-19. While institutional responses faltered in providing clear answers, their faith provided a means to appeal for the intervention of a higher power, unencumbered by worldly corruption.

Well-Meant Sharing.

During the pandemic, social media companies and some institutions tried to curb the proliferation of messages which they saw as spreading misinformation. Companies like WhatsApp limited the number of messages an individual could send, and Colombian media created fact-checking portals. However, the volunteers of the Parish constantly shared all kinds of messages through digital media, even those they doubted. But why did they share information they doubted? What was the reason behind this action?

Authors on post-truth politics such as Slotta, Lockie, and Mair, has coined the term "echo chambers" to describe the effect of information saturation, both false and true. The analogy refers to an enclosed space where no new information can appear, and messages are repeated ad nauseam. Echo chambers imply that people seek to hear only like-minded opinions in less-than-public spheres (Slotta, 2019). This literature assumes an intention to build structures where only supporting messages of a single idea are shared. Another group of authors have found malevolent intentions behind sharing (mis)information (d'Ancona, 2017; Lockie, 2017; Mair, 2017; McGranahan, 2017). However, in this case, I found that the strongest motivation for sharing information, even dubious ones, was sharing opportunities and ways to survive, even at the risk of sharing misinformation. Plata mentions that 'restrictive measures were not contested partly because protecting the health of others was a Christian duty' (Plata et al., 2023, p. 207).

Martha Camila mentioned it was "as if the media, the establishment - *gobierno o el que sea* -, and even Facebook" had united against people trying to give others a chance because by sharing information, she would give others the possibility of surviving: "the possibility of searching for information and looking for an opportunity." The key point is that recipients of these messages assessed their trust and faith in the information rather than its objective truth. Consequently, sharing misinformation is less about the sender's responsibility and more about whether individuals trust God to guide them in evaluating and acting on the information.

I challenged her argument, to which she retorted: "I am acting in good faith. If I find myself in the position of having information that can save or help others, why wouldn't I share it?"

This, of course, positions her far from the literature that insists behind fake news lies an intention to do premeditated harm (Lockie, 2017). Even before Donald Trump publicly suggested that people should drink Lysol to clean themselves from the inside, Martha Camila had already sent me and others information that, while not as harmful as Trump's statement, was potentially damaging. She explained: "I don't know if the information is false or true, but it

can help, and it would be wrong to deny people access to help. Also, it is one's duty to judge the information." Allowing others to judge a piece of information would enable them to draw their own conclusions and find better ways to fend for themselves.

As d'Ancona warns, anti-scientific stances may have grave public health consequences (d'Ancona, 2017, p. 38),, regardless of good intentions—a similar argument I raised. From that moment on, Martha Camila deliberately chose to use me as a filter before disseminating questionable information, if the information was dubious yet plausible she would send it, if plainly false she would disregard it.

This was not only the case with her but also in many Facebook groups I participated in, where people shared information with the warning: "I'm not sure if this is true, but I'm sharing it just in case."

The Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

In the past, during a time when the country was engulfed in internal conflict on the brink of total annihilation, the intercession of the Sacred Heart saved Colombia. The pandemic reminded some people of that time; therefore, the intervention of God in the form of the Sacred Heart was sought by the members of the Parish which whom I engaged intensively.

The volunteers of the Parish of the Holy Saviour had a special veneration for the Sacred Heart of Jesus, often holding special prayers in his honour. Nevertheless, the outbreak of Covid-19 made their fervour stronger than ever. To be fair, I observed many people beyond this group consecrating and entrusting Colombians to this divinity both on social media and the narrative of my informants.

While the previous section focused on how individuals place their trust in God and religion, this section examines the reasons behind the state's cultivation of an environment of mistrust, portrayed by my informants prone to corruption, criminality, and violence. One way to remedy

this use was reconsecrating the country to the Sacred Heart (I also elaborate on this from another angle in the Chapter about morality).

In this section, I will explore the connections between faith and institutional crisis, and I argue that one way to overcome the crisis is to mobilize efforts towards a new consecration based on the belief that the Sacred Heart could possibly contribute to improving the situation by restoring the morality of the state and regaining the lost trust on the state.

The Basilica of El Voto Nacional of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is located in San Victorino, Bogotá, and is a symbol of Colombia's fidelity to God. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Colombia was on the brink of disaster, and the solution was to request God's intervention against 'social and organic derangement (...) to the most horrible anarchy' (de Hernández, 1989, p. 82). The Archbishop asked the President to consecrate the country to El Sagrado Corazón de Jesús, reaffirming the dominance of the Catholic Church and the Conservative Party (Marquardt, 2011).

Martha Camila stood out among all the volunteers of the Parish, perhaps because she was more talkative and had strong ideas. She described the time of the pandemic as a period of unprecedented chaos that had unfolded in Colombia's recent political landscape. In a follow-up conversation we had in 2023, shortly after Gustavo Petro was elected, she launched a tirade against him: 'he is evil, diabolical, and maybe Satan himself (...) you don't want me to get started. He was a guerrilla member; they committed atrocious crimes' (see chapter about violence). He was indeed a former member of the M-19 Guerrilla, the same guerrilla that stole Bolívar's sword, and the same group that launched an assault on the Supreme Court. It is worth mentioning that when the military attempted to retake power, they unleashed a strike so massive that only a few of the hundreds of hostages survived. To this day, what happened during the episode known as *la toma del Palacio de Justicia* remains unclear; some speculate that there was a coup d'état, or that *narcos* led by Pablo Escobar paid the M-19 to destroy evidence and kill people investigating them.

Martha Camila saw this live on TV. She told me, “Juliancito, you weren’t even born, but it was super scary to see the hostage situation on TV, the tanks breaking into el Palacio knocking down the main gate (...) then the armistice came, and they signed the constitution of 1991, but in this constitution they left the door open for unscrupulous forces.” When I asked for clarification on what she meant by unscrupulous forces, she mentioned that nefarious things such as ‘abortion, euthanasia and drug consumption’ were approved in said constitution.

I must clarify that the 1991 constitution emerged during a time of social and economic crisis (Jaramillo, 2007). From that moment on, the country was declared secular and multicultural, in stark contrast with the previous ‘centralist, conservative and Catholic’ one (Arenas Mendoza, 2021, p. 69). From that time on, several civil, individual and collective rights for minorities were approved (Gulfo, 2018; López Daza & Gómez García, 2014; Pinzón, 2009). While the constitution did not explicitly mention abortions or similar issues, it provided the judicial basis for current laws that address such controversial topics, and this is what she means by “opening the door to unscrupulous forces.”

Most of the members of the Parish are aligned with Pope Francis’ doctrine, which Betsy explains “is very progressive, so much so that other factions do not like him.” However, she revealed to me that in some of their prayers, they start by “asking for an end to abortion in Colombia.” The prayers that most incorporate such political statements are those that invoke the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

To this account, Dolores added: “The Sacred Heart represents our country, and we consecrate the country in times of suffering and pain, praying for our lives, our country, and the whole world. We consecrate the world in our petitions to the mercy of the Sacred Heart to deliver it from disease, pain, loneliness, and all the anguish of human beings, always in prayer and as a family.”

In summary, the small consecrations that the members of the Parish hold are small replicas of the consecration at the beginning of the last century, calling for God's intervention in the social, political, and public health scenarios, a plea to return to a time when the state was guided by God's moral precepts, this is a way to recover the morality that the state lost and possibly reinstate my participant's trust in the state and the institutions.

Part 2: Distrust and Conspiracies on Social Media.

On one occasion, an anonymous user posted a meme that generated massive attention and discussion among the members of the forum. The meme was a low-quality image featuring a cartoonish, red-coloured version of the coronavirus in the centre, with a square and compass—Masonic symbology—surrounded by flames. In one corner stood a man dressed in a top hat and wearing a monocle. The meme had a banner in bright scarlet letters that read: “Los poderosos de mundo” [the powerful of the world]. Below the image was a caption, too long and disorganised to transcribe here in detail, but it elaborated over many lines that the powerful of the world included, among others, governments, the Chinese, the Annunaki, the Reptilians, Bill Gates, Soros, the São Paulo Forum, the Bilderberg club, pharmaceutical companies, and even the Queen of England—a group of dark lords generally referred to as *Los poderosos del mundo* [the Powerful of the World], who had supposedly banded together in an inexplicable way to implement a new world order.

In this section, I will focus on how some participants on social media acted upon misinformation and the generalized chaos caused by the pandemic. This section advances the central argument of this chapter by showing how people position themselves against institutional and state led discourses, not only national but international, based on their mistrust against them, however, this does not mean that they follow right-wing politicians, instead they follow a path of radicalization that does not depend on a central source of authority.

I collected data from both this group and the Parish simultaneously. Despite some similarities between the groups, they followed distinct paths which I will examine here. How did people on social media react? How did some radical actors follow paths that resemble conspiracy theories? How did *amaños* become fertile ground for conspiracy theories?

Inside and outside of the Facebook groups, I observed and heard comments against established science, doubts about vaccines, and mistrust towards the government—and world governments—and other international institutions. However, it was on social media where those ideas and discourses were more obvious and bolder, bordering on real conspiracy theories. As mentioned earlier, it is unclear whether fake news is a cause or effect of populism. However, one of its consequences is the creation of mistrust (Buchanan & Benson, 2019; Melki et al., 2021; Rowe & Alexander, 2017). As Winick suggests, the focus is not on judging the accuracy of the news but on its sensationalism (Winick, 2018). This, as I will demonstrate, seems to be the case with my participants, who, regardless of the source, distrusted all types of information, that coming from states and international institutions like the WHO, thereby deepening their anti-establishment views.

Perhaps one of the most severe consequences of mistrust and the ensuing circulation of misinformation during the pandemic was the development of conspiracy theories. In Latin America, Butter and Knight suggest that authoritarianism from parts of the state and authorities greatly contributed to mistrust. In Colombia and Chile, the state implemented strict curfews and prohibited the free movement of non-essential workers, fearing the collapse of their health systems. Butter and Knight mention, for instance, that in Argentina, people protested the abuse of power “and the lie of confining the population to contain the disease.”

In Argentina, the authors continued, people insisted that it was a plan led by George Soros and Bill Gates, who used the political establishment to dominate the citizens (Butter & Knight, 2023, p. 357). Roniger and Senkan specify that there was 'widespread belief that Covid-19 was manufactured in a Chinese lab with US financial support as a hidden plan to establish a New

World Order' (Roniger & Senkman, 2023, p. 359). Hatzikidi points out that during this time, many rumours targeted communists—China—and so Covid-19 was seen as a plot against the free world (Hatzikidi, 2023). In a study on the imaginaries about the pandemic in Colombia, one person mentioned, “Although I have read about the subject, the idea of a collapse in the Colombian health system scares me because I consider that our system is decadent, corrupt, unstable, insufficient,” thus pointing out a relationship between corruption and the weakness of the health system (Gómez-González et al., 2023, p. 396).

Central to Laclau’s argument is the concept of ‘the other,’ the antagonist to ‘us,’ the people. In populist discourse, the boundaries between these groups become so sharply defined that they often turn into overt antagonists. However, Laclau suggests this process of differentiation typically occurs on a local scale, with conflict arising between local populations and elites. In this case, though, ‘the other’ takes on a more elusive and international form (Friedman, 2018) with participants imagining powerful global figures, including other states like China or the UN, as the cause of their problems, directing their frustrations towards them (Graan et al., 2020; Polleri, 2019).

In the following section, I will present how participants’ negative experiences with their political processes helped deepen mistrust in institutions. Then, I will move on to analyse how a group of participants became adepts and promoted conspiracy theories. The argument I will present here is that the very local and historical experiences that participants had with institutions fuelled the conspiracies put forward by a reduced yet vociferous set of participants.

Distrust: Amaños and Carteles.

By April 2020, Sandro, whom I followed on Facebook, became popular. He was radicalized and was even called by other members of the group a “*conspiranoico*” [conspiracy + paranoid]. In his posts, he expressed bewilderment and distrust because he suspected the interference of

dark forces in the world and claimed that the virus had been created in a laboratory in China. Part of his reasoning was based on the fact that the information they were given *era rara* [was strange, weird]. He once posted, “On television they said it came from Wuhan, but I heard it came from a laboratory (...) first a doctor came out saying that it was deadly, then I saw on another channel that it was not so deadly, and every day they tell me something different, I no longer know what to believe, what can I do?”

This information was called *rara* for various reasons that never got further developed. First, there was an intrinsic suspicion and bias against the Chinese because they are communists; second, because of the sudden changes in information and the apparent contradictions between each new update provided by the government.

For Fassin, biomedical conspiracies “imply that disease is disseminated as a result of human action, either accidentally or voluntarily, and frequently presuppose that certain groups are more specifically targeted (...) Conspiracy theories thus engage the idea of cognitive deviance of science and a moral perversion of medicine (Fassin, 2010, p. 43). Following Fassin, the description of Sandro made one thing clear, Sandro not only feared the communists but also suspected that the information was *amañada* [manipulated] (see chapter 3 for a complete definition), he conjectured a political strategy which, although he was never able to fully assemble, was still clear enough for him to denounce.

Information was not *extraña* or *rara* by happenstance; to Sandro, it was most likely that someone has rigged it perhaps was ‘the caprice of its operational elite’ (d’Ancona, 2017, p. 38). I will argue that in this specific case, the distrust on institutions was based on a long-rooted history of riggings, politicking, and political exclusion, as Friedman suggests, while the elites seem to be cosmopolitans people is more and more indigenized (Friedman), and the stories they refer to articulate their conspiracy theories are rooted in national and sociopolitical history.

In Chapter 3, I described how the political process was *amañado*, leading to a discrediting of institutions. Following Laclau, who argues that populist rupture occurs during times of deep crisis—when existing institutions and hegemonic orders fail to meet societal demands—populism emerges as a response, uniting diverse frustrations into a collective identity, "the people," set against an antagonistic "other," thereby exacerbating the crisis and rupture. Alongside *rara*, *amañado* was commonly used to describe alleged institutional deceit. Initially, the use of the word *amaño* surprised me as it was typically used to describe political manipulation, not scientific information (Reales Utria, 2016). For instance, as shown in Chapter 3, people used it to describe a rigged electoral system; here, they applied it more broadly to a vague, rigged system of global power, which I will discuss later.

One of the most infamous cases that gained the moniker of *amaño* was when the Chilean minister of Public Health declared that: "a dead person is no longer contagious. As such, they were to be counted as recovered" (Deutsche Welle, 2020). People at the forum considered these declarations a joke; some even claimed that the government was trying to cover up that they had made the wrong decisions. In the long run, the minister was removed from office, but the damage to the institutional reputation had already been done; after this mistake, immigrants would massively discredit any information supported by any of the states and even any other international organization. People on Facebook criticised The WHO for "not being strong and sanctioning China for releasing the virus." For its part, rumours began to circulate about China that the outbreak would not have been an accident; as someone put it on Facebook, it was not caused "by the jump it made from bat soup or an armadillo" but by a laboratory virus genetically manipulated, which was probably being turned into a biological weapon (Nemeth Euronews, 2020) to dominate the world.

Media outlets in Colombia uncovered evidence of mishandling of funds, quickly dubbing these scandals the "Carteles del Covid" (BBC News Mundo, 2020; RCN, 2020), a name that resonated on online forums and reminded many of other corruption cases familiar to participants. It's

worth noting that "Cartel" is a common term used to refer to illegal organizations such as drug cartels. Shortly after, media reports revealed that China had withheld information about the virus (Kirby, 2020), which many interpreted as undeniable proof of manipulation.

On one occasion, an article claimed that an Italian team had discovered a treatment for Covid-19. Most participants in the conversation applauded the news. However, one commenter cautioned, "It's too early and too fast to find a treatment." Another participant responded, "Finding a cure is easy. The problem is they won't share the vaccine because they are greedy."

Simultaneously, other publications likened Covid-19 to a plague from the Old Testament, "brought upon us for our sins." One particularly strong opinion suggested that recently approved laws such as same-sex marriage, same-sex adoption, and abortion were a "collection of sins that had brought upon us all this moral and political corruption," describing the situation as reminiscent of Sodom and Gomorrah. In that discussion, one person asserted, "Gender ideology opened Colombian society to sin, and perhaps Covid-19 is God's punishment" anchoring the critique and distrust in the state based on religious grounds.

In summary, participants on Facebook perceived both society and the government as vulnerable due to moral corruption. As a result, these institutions were seen as untrustworthy, with scientific institutions also viewed as being subject to manipulations typical of political processes.

Some participants interpreted the unfolding situation through the lens of Colombia's national history and experiences with allegedly corrupt institutions. They suggested that the corruption evident in Colombia was now playing out on an international scale, reinforcing their belief in an undefined external entity operating in the shadows, which they simply referred to as "the powerful of the world."

Amaños: God and the state



Anticomunist video. Chavez and the New World Order



José Gregorio Hernández.
the doctor of the poor.



"people die at hospitals. Not at home"



"Fucking politicians"

Figure 20: Amaños, God and the State.

Becoming Conspiranoico.

For a small yet vocal group of participants, the response to their distrust was through study.

They actively publicized their ideas and findings, making it their mission to dismantle what

they perceived as a Covid-19 hoax. Importantly, this newfound mission was seen as deeply moral, often grounded in biblical inspiration. These individuals were labeled "*conspiranoicos*" [Conspiranoic] by less radicalized members of their group, leading to heated online debates.

In academic literature, belief in conspiracy theories is attributed to various causes, including political, demographic, and ideological factors (Brooks, 2019; Douglas et al., 2019). Some authors in the anthropology of Christianity suggest that millennialism and apocalyptic thought play a role in fostering conspiracy beliefs within religious communities (Sturm & Albrecht, 2021). In an ethnographic case study from Santander, Colombia, it was found that across Catholic, Protestant, and Pentecostal denominations, interpretations of the pandemic were similar: as a divine instrument, a sign of human dependence on the divine, an exercise of faith amidst crisis, and the normalization of the pandemic as part of human suffering (Plata et al., 2023, p. 197). While I did not specifically inquire about the denomination of this group, it was evident that their views were influenced by Christian beliefs.

However, what I observed here was more of a process, akin to a journey towards enlightenment or becoming a "conspiranoico." The concept of the moral entrepreneur, introduced by Howard Becker, may help understand this phenomenon. A moral crusader is an individual who seeks to change the status quo or enforce certain norms. Becker states: "The existing rules do not satisfy him because there is some evil ... nothing can be right in the world until rules are made to correct it. He operates with an absolute ethic. What he sees is truly and totally evil with no qualification ... The crusader is fervent and righteous, often self-righteous" (Becker, 2008, pp. 147-148).

One member of this community, whom I'll call Marcos, declared his crusade against what he perceived as manipulations (*amaños*). He invoked God's help with a biblical passage: "Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind, but now I see!" (NIV, 2024, John 9:25). Marcos opened his posts with biblical quotes, using this verse to illustrate how his studies and investigations were revealing truths hidden by unknown forces. Just as Jesus gave

sight to a blind man considered a sinner, Marcos saw through deceptions. This mirrored the experience of the parish members, who rebalanced their trust by turning increasingly away from the state and placing their faith in God and biblical teachings.

In Marcos's case, his journey did not begin with clarity but with a revelation. He declared his crusade, stating, "They - the powerful of the world - only fed me what television and the media gave me." After much conscientious thought, he concluded that Covid-19 was a deception orchestrated by the powerful, this also implied a growing mistrust, which became the driving force behind counter-scientific views and alternative interpretations. Through extensive study, which involved hours of scouring blogs, YouTube videos, and obscure corners of Facebook for information and validation, Marcos sought explanations and often echoed similar ideas expressed by others.

During those months, heated debates were commonplace on social media. Marcos responded sharply to challengers, at times dismissing them as "Borregos" (sheep), while others with similar attitudes used terms like "stupid" or "deluded," implying ignorance. One person even remarked, "They - people who did not study - are like cows or sheep guided by the rich and powerful of the world." This suggests that post-trust is a useful framework for understanding my participants' perspectives and relationships.

Studying, in this context, meant adopting an investigative approach towards information presented by the state and mainstream media. It involved piecing together fragmented information, misinformation, and fake news. Marcos also suggested that the scientific process was swift and linear (Kirby, 2003), implying that institutions' failure to share results stemmed from greed rather than lack of knowledge.

Moreover, there was a religious undertone to this endeavour. Like Marcos, others on Facebook sought divine intervention in their studies, citing verses such as "The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing ... Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil."

These psalms appeared as text, memes, images of Jesus, and in various forms. At first, I interpreted this as humility, but in reality, was closer to hubris, as many radical voices portrayed themselves as enlightened unlike the other participants.

While studying was primarily an individual pursuit, some formed "study groups." These were loose subgroups on Facebook, initial messenger chats, and other platforms where participants shared materials to support their hypotheses and found like-minded individuals, thus forming echo chambers (Lackey, 2021; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2020; Quattrociocchi et al., 2016). In conclusion, years later, after the pandemic, these nearly prophetic posts ended and people returned to their normal behaviour, hinting that radicalization was also a way to confront the confusion caused by the pandemic in terms of trust and truth.

Morality and Science.

The demands, understood in Laclau's terminology as the various grievances and frustrations expressed by individuals or groups within society. These demands arise from feelings of exclusion, marginalisation, or dissatisfaction with the existing political and social order that people expressed during the pandemic were more aligned with political and moral considerations, in particular concerning to trust and mistrust regarding the handling of the situation rather than with the merits of science. This leads me to the final point, which is the profound entanglement between science (medicine), religious beliefs, and institutional frameworks that I have not yet explored and would like to briefly discuss.

One of the discussions that resonated deeply within the community was about an alleged vaccine developed by Israel, which started circulating around May 2020. Similar to other cases, this rumour was propagated through a series of memes. Despite variations in appearance, they conveyed a consistent message: "Israel has announced the discovery of a vaccine against the Coronavirus. Israel, the holy land of Jesus, has created this vaccine to bid farewell to the Coronavirus. Once again, God blesses the people of Israel with glory, even those who did not

believe in one almighty God. God will never abandon his children.” As an addendum, the memes urged: “Make this meme go viral; nothing is impossible for God” (Sic). Another person responded with a meme stating: “Say amen if you think Jesus is the best doctor/share!”



Figure 21: "Share if you believe that Jesus is the greatest of all doctors."

Some argued that it was Jesus Christ guiding the hands of the scientists and surgeons: “The hand of God guides the doctor's hand, making the doctor a scalpel of God. Therefore, God is the mind behind it all, with doctors and the health system merely serving as instruments in his divine plans.”

During my interviews, I met Ivo, a doctor specializing in radio-oncology at the time. He attended an Opus Dei University in Bogota and was a practicing Catholic. Due to his busy

schedule, our conversations were brief but insightful. We primarily discussed the role of faith in medical practice. Ivo mentioned that some doctors forbid their patients from using non-allopathic medicine, although he personally allowed it as long as it did not interfere with treatment:

-Ivo: “Cancer is devastating; some people, as a last resort, turn to alternative healers or healing masses ... It may seem futile, but I don’t blame them for trying ... It's like the saying goes: ‘God helps those who help themselves.’”

-Julián: “What do you mean?”

-Ivo: “Mate, one must do everything possible to survive. If one treatment fails, try another. If surgery fails, maybe God can perform a miracle.”

It appeared that while people questioned the efficacy of modern medicine in providing definitive answers, the focus of scrutiny in this context was not science itself, but rather its governance by the government.

A significant finding in the anthropology of misinformation is linking anti-scientism with “the growing conviction that scientism, in league with governments and pharmaceutical corporations, is at odds with nature and the best interests of humanity.” While some populist leaders took an anti-vaccine stance, this was not universally observed in my study. There was a general discontent towards pharmaceutical companies, but this did not equate to blanket rejection of potential treatments. It is possible that the Catholic Church’s positive stance on vaccination influenced this attitude (Plata et al., 2023, p. 208). However, in my case people's attitudes towards Covid-19 and vaccination were shaped more by their relationships of trust and mistrust than by a singular belief in the disease and its treatment.

Like other Christian groups (Tomkins et al., 2015), my informants in both groups were willing beneficiaries of modern science, albeit critical of its politicization. Finally, contrary to some

assertions about the post-truth era being characterized by anti-scientism, in Colombia, which has historically sought to establish a scientific framework meeting European standards (Amat-García (Amat-García & Agudelo-Zamora, 2020; Brown, 2012; Morales, 2005; Wolloch, 2009), there is no practical separation between religious beliefs and science. Instead, this syncretism allows people to maximize opportunities for survival by integrating diverse knowledge and practices to fill the gaps left by scientific and political institutions.

Conclusion.

Despite the differences between both groups, on one hand the members of the Parrish of the Holy Saviour, and on the other hand the people I recruited and interacted at the social media forums, there are some notable parallels that can be drawn. What I found here is that the concepts of trust and mistrust are central to understanding the experiences and attitudes of my informants facing the pandemic.

While terms like "post-truth" and "fake news" presented not only by anonymous users but also figures of authority like Donald Trump, are useful to understand my case —such types of information significantly influenced and were utilised by my informants to shape their perspectives—, these frameworks alone are insufficient for capturing the full picture because rather than simply following this alternate discourses and populist leaders what they did was finding a way to face the pandemic by increasing their trust in God inspired ideas.

By utilising the lens of *trust*, I observed that the trust people once had— or at least appeared to have—in institutions, particularly scientific ones, has been undermined. As people increasingly lost trust in institutional, state, and international sources, they turned to biblical teachings and parables to make sense of their situation. This shift demonstrates that as trust in institutions diminished, trust in God grew, illustrating a profound realignment in their sources.

Additionally, their mistrust in institutions did not translate into a complete rejection of science. Unlike in some other countries, people did not reject vaccination outright; instead, they

demanded institutional reform on moral and political grounds. They looked to models like the supposedly God-like Israeli state as a potential blueprint for this reform. Rather than focusing on discerning what is irrefutably true or scientific, my informants were concerned with how to navigate a context shaped by trust and mistrust. God, the church, and faith presented in popular knowledge and cites to biblical passages provided a reliable foundation for trust, while the state and science were met with suspicion.

Second, underlying their actions was a clear catholic moral inspiration. Whether in sharing (mis)information or delving into study, even risking becoming *conspiranoico*, their motivations were rooted not in ill intent but in a moral mandate to aid their community by sharing survival opportunities, underpinned by Catholic dogma, and this was an expression of their trust in God. (This also resonates with my findings regarding the mandate to share opportunities; see chapter about morality).

Finally, tracing back to the concept of Berraquera, what I found in this chapter is that while their trust in the state and mundane institutions is more pragmatic and weaker, their trust in moral precepts based on catholic ideas seem more robust and enduring, this, however, does not mean that people will not try to navigate institutional frameworks by leveraging them while also attempting to circumvent their constraints, striving to live and survive on the fringes.

In the next chapter I will discuss *rebusque* in detail and analyse the tensions that it produces to Colombian state's development vision.

Chapter 5:

Of Mules and Unicorns: Rebusques and the Informal Economy.

Introduction: Empanadas.

El Guacamayo Albinegro [Black and White Macaw] is the proud owner of Empanadas Albinegras, a small business producing and dispatching empanadas, salsa carbonara, and antipasto from a small apartment in Barrio Santa Fé, Bogotá. Sebastián Guillermo, a history graduate from a prestigious university in Bogotá, has combined his academic career with his ventures. A fan of post-industrial German punk, he became a disc jockey known as El Guacamayo Albinegro and a music curator in Bogotá's alternative scene.

We met at his home in Barrio Santa Fé, one of Bogotá's most infamous districts. According to El Guacamayo, "it used to have the largest number of trans prostitutes and displaced *Embera* indigenous people, but now it has the highest number of Venezuelan refugees." On the way from *Transmilenio*, Bogotá's massive transport system, to his place, a street dweller offered us protection in exchange for spare change. He also offered to take us into *la olla* [the sector where illegal goods are sold] if we fancied some *dulces* [candy, drugs]. However, El Guacamayo insisted on not talking to him or giving him any money, advising instead to say, "no tengo, yo también vivo del diario" ["I also live off the daily"], meaning he sorts his finances day by day.

At home, we started cooking marinara sauce. El Guacamayo told me he began making vegan empanadas to earn extra money as his career as a historian never took off. He started this *rebusque* [side business] about three years ago during the curfews, finding a niche market at the *toques* [music gigs] where many people were vegetarian or vegan. His vegan homemade

empanadas were successful. Although his business is growing, it was still unregistered at the time of our meeting.

He admitted that he now earns more money selling empanadas than playing music, let alone working as a historian. As I defoliated basil leaves, he peeled blanched tomatoes, which were later pressed through a colander. “By next month, I will buy a professional electric oven because I like to flip my empanadas, so they get crunchy and brown on both sides. I must be meticulous about time, so I need a professional oven,” he explained. He emphasized the importance of measuring, controlling time, and using quality ingredients. Despite making a living from empanadas, he admitted it was not enough to thrive, and he still needed some aid from his parents. His father was investing in his business, paying for the new oven and a pulping machine.

We also discussed the quality of his ingredients. He said his empanadas were priced higher because his ingredients were better than the competition. “I get most of my tomatoes and basil fresh from *Corabastos* [farmers market] directly from producers, which is greener, but I need to wake up at 3 am,” he said. He admitted getting some products from the corner store, elaborating, “There’s a D1 (discount store) at Calle 22 con 9. I’m not sure, but it looks like my neighbours steal from that store and resell products like mozzarella here at a lower price. I’m sceptical about buying those products, but they are good quality and half-priced.”

As the night went on, he offered me a new recipe meat empanada to try. After forty minutes in the oven, the empanadas were ready. We moved to the living room and opened a beer. He pointed to the house across the street, saying it was recently featured on CityTV (local television news) as a *casa de pique* [chopper’s house, a house where human bodies were chopped], a place where criminals like the Oficina de Envigado, El Tren de Aragua, or Clan Úsuga dealt with debtors by kidnapping, torturing, and dismembering them. Since 2023, rumours have circulated that criminals in the neighbouring Bronx *barrio* [neighbourhood] used

a crocodile named Pepé to dispose of bodies (El Tiempo, 2023). We enjoyed the empanadas, and then I left.

I followed up with El Guacamayo. He elaborated on his clients' tastes in empanadas. "As they are vegan and vegetarian, they want a hearty, healthy meal free of guilt, something you could eat at 2 am after a night of excess. My empanadas tick all the boxes, respecting animal life and being delicious. My clients have ethical standards that I need to fulfil. The meat empanadas are for other people, like those in this neighbourhood. I've been exploring other markets recently."

Las Empanadas Albinégras, like the *rebusque*, stand at the crossroads of multiple lines: physically, commercially, and morally. They might be partially made from stolen goods and are produced in the heart of Bogotá's most sketchy areas. Despite this, they are praised as vegan and seen as a legitimate way of making a living. Although El Guacamayo has not directly engaged in illegal activities, some of his products might have been sourced through illegal means, while others are eco-friendly and support local producers. His clients include those who adhere to strict ethical frameworks and others who might be involved in crime. As El Guacamayo reflects, "It is better not to know more than necessary."

In this way, *rebusques* like empanadas blur the lines between legality and illegality, formality and informality, morality and immorality. These classifications reflect the perspectives of different actors. For the state, the most important thing is if they are 'formal' so they can pay taxes. For clients, morality is the added value of empanadas. For El Guacamayo, there are some minor concerns about the legality of some raw materials used in making the empanadas. I will discuss in this chapter the different ideas revolving *rebusques*, small businesses typically done at home.

In this chapter, I will discuss *rebusque*, which I conceptualise as the economic aspect of *berraquera*. The term *rebusque*, as I use it here, is a Colombianism. It combines the prefix "Re-"

(same as in English) and the word "*Buscar*" [to find]. Figuratively, it translates to "finding a way for something." Etymologically, the word is related to the English word "busking." According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, the word might be related to the Italian "*buscare*" [to procure, gain, from Spanish "*buscar*"; to look for] (Merriam-Webster, 2023).

Rebusque, as used by my participants, has two meanings. First, as a verb, "*rebuscar*," in the sense of finding or creating opportunities. Second, as a noun, referring to a small venture. In this latter sense, *rebusque* denotes small-scale businesses, side hustles, secondary jobs, economic ventures, or any informal economic activity. It is important to clarify that while many of my descriptions here occurred during the pandemic, *rebusque* existed both before and after it.

In this chapter I focused on a specific group of participants who had *rebusques* on Facebook, and very often used the image of the *mula* [mule] to convey the entrepreneurial spirit. It is worthy to remember that the mules were the animals used by Colonos during the expansion and conquering period of Colonización Antioqueña, and since then became a symbol of hard work and progress.

My objective in this chapter is twofold. First, I will analyse the practices and ideas behind *rebusque* —both as a noun and a verb. Second, I will contrast *rebusque* with the Colombian state's approach to governance, concluding with a synthesis.

I argue that *rebusque*, as used by my participants refer to a certain type of small business, that incorporate liberal values such as entrepreneurship, but equally involved catholic ideas such as creation and sharing of opportunities, that is usually framed as a sign and cause of underdevelopment by the state which dismisses it a simple manifestation of Informality. Furthermore, the act of *rebuscar* contributes to reinscribe my informants to the larger economy, even if the state fails to recognise them. Although most of my participants were physically located in Chile, their dialogue was with the Colombian state.

What can *rebusque* tell us about the participants' relationship with the state's developmental vision? What are the practices and ideas surrounding *rebusque*? How does *rebusque* interact with the larger economy? How does *rebusque* relate to the neoliberal state? How did people survive the precarious conditions of the pandemic? How have they adopted new discourses and practices related to the digitisation of the economy? How do they negotiate the practices of *rebusque* with neoliberal development?

There are two tensions addressed here. First, despite the curfews being arguably the worst time for my participants, it was also a period when their creativity and *berraquera* flourished. Second, despite their broken relationship with the Colombian state, participants, at least discursively, wanted to demonstrate that they could still be part of neoliberal development.

Empanadas "El Guacamayo Albinegro"



Figure 22: Empanadas albinegras and marinara sauce.

Rebusques, Hustlers, and Informality.

Rebusque in Colombian literature appears only marginally in some dissertations, usually dismissed as informality (Ochoa Valencia & Ordoñez, 2004), a set of activities that may lead to illegality (Molano, 2021), or a negative trait of the Colombian economy comparable to mendicity (Castro & Montes, 2013).

In a more positive light, Mendoza understands *rebusque* as a result of disorganised rural-urban migration in Bogotá, adding that *rebuscar* is a way to play along with normativity while bending the rules (Mendoza, 2015). Fonseca, studying street performers, highlights creativity as a value of *rebusque* (Fonseca, 2011). Neira mentions as an aside that the expression “lunes de zapatero,” literally ‘shoemakers’ Monday’ and figuratively meaning skipping shifts, is a coined expression in Colombian argot describing the resistance of artisans to proletarianisation (Neira, 1991).

Perhaps the most enlightening account comes from sociologist Olga González, who studied a group of Colombian immigrants in France. González conceptualises *rebusque* not as an economic category but in a broader sense, referring to how individuals look for opportunities. *rebusque* “refers to a certain type of relationship between the individual and the law, and more generally, to a certain relationship between the individual and the institutions. In the strategy of *rebusque*, the individual is situated outside the sphere of law and possesses a weak notion of his duties. At the same time, they have little awareness of their rights or do not expect much from them” (González, 2008; González, 2010).

In this logic, the individual tries to take advantage of the law and understands the normative framework in a utilitarian or magical fashion but also finds ways to obtain benefits outside the legal and formal structure. According to González, the objective of people who *rebusca* is to expand their repertoire of actions in the face of a structure they do not fully understand; for this reason, they look for formal and non-formal, legal and illegal ways to confront it. In my case, it was true that participants tried to take advantage of opportunities regardless of their legal or formal source, as I will show later.

In this sense, *rebusque* can be compared with the anthropology of hustling, a field gaining traction despite its connotations of criminality and active evasion of control institutions (Caputo-Levine, 2022; Valentine, 1975; Ziv, 2022). This literature commonly conceptualises hustling as inherent to impoverished areas outside state control and formality, where uncertainty prevails, which resembles very much the situations in which *rebusque* occur online, where the state has no virtual control or authority.

Rebusque is also a way of organising familial and individual incomes in short time frames, like El Guacamayo's notion of "*vivir del diario*" [living on a daily basis]. Similar notions can be found in ethnographies of the Americas, like *jornalear* for Guatemalans in the US (Ordóñez, 2015). For instance, "Catch and Kill" in Belize, from an African descendant group, implies that people work on whatever becomes available, usually consuming their earnings as quickly as they are obtained, indicating a way of life adjusted to daily opportunities (Troccoli, 2018). This resonates with Garth (2020), who described how people in Santiago de Cuba organise their daily efforts to obtain "a decent meal", and Mpofu, who mentions that in Zimbabwe, the term "Kukiya-kiya" denotes a "desperate exploitation of whatever resources are at hand just to survive" (Mpofu, 2014, p. 40).

All these economic forms resembled *rebusque* in that they express a form of economic survival in the everyday life, outside of formal institutions with some degree of social legitimacy, but also express the precarity of their conditions.

Anthropology of Informality.

When *rebusque* emerged as a central category for my research, I asked local economists working for universities or government development agencies. Ineffectively, they reduced the notion to 'a manifestation of the informal economy,' a pervasive problem in underdeveloped areas. I will discuss this later. Nonetheless, Keith Hart presented an alternative view on informality which requires some explanation.

Hart studied the Frafra, a low-income group of migrants in Ghana. According to him, ‘the ‘formal’ economy is the epitome of whatever passes for regularity in our contemporary understanding (...) formal economy does not exist in any empirical sense: it is a way of contrasting some phenomena with what we imagine constitutes the orthodox core of our own economy” (Hart, 1985, pp. 56-57). He builds on the Marxist idea that informality is created by capitalist expansion that irremediably produces the labour reserve army (Hart, 1973, 1985).

Another aspect of Hart’s description that resembles *rebusque* has to do with the morals and practicalities of economic practices. He described how these immigrants often take second jobs, mix informal and formal activities, and cultivate crops seasonally. These economic activities, as illustrated by Hart, are heavily influenced by the myth of “the Ashanti spider”, celebrated for its “cunning and deceit” similar to how *rebusque* exalts creativity (Hart, 1973, p. 75).

However, although *rebusque* has resonances with existing work on the informal economy, there are other features of *rebusque* that complicates the picture. Notably *rebusque* seems to operate not as a completely separate sphere, but within a mesh that connects with other sectors of the economy, as illustrated in the story about empanadas. Gudeman, alluding to the substantivist debate (Balan, 2012; Polanyi & Maclver, 1957), explains, studying poor Panamanian and Colombian peasants, that households, through a series of exchanges, are connected to the larger meta-financial sphere (Gudeman, 2016), showing how each of these spheres, as he calls them, are connected and all are subject to rituals, ceremonies, and rationalities that do not fit supposedly rational economic thinking (Musaraj, 2017, pp. 822-823). Other authors have studied how financialisation affects individuals and their households’ daily decisions and relationships (Zaloom, 2012; Zaloom & James, 2023). Just like *rebusque*, these examples show how informal economies indeed contribute to national economies even the state’s narrative disregard them.

Mpofu adds that by engaging in informal work, ‘people insert themselves practically into their daily economic lives in ways that are invisible to, marginalised, and repressed by the dominant, state-driven formal economic institutions and ideologies’ (Mpofu, 2014, p. 19).

In fact, this point has been further explored by Gibson-Graham and other authors, who have expanded the conversation to interrogate the interconnections of big financial hubs and corporations on pressing matters such as ethics relating to the environment and the Anthropocene, feminism, and inequalities in general (Gibson-Graham & Roelvink, 2010). They also push to stop falling into the capitalocentrist pitfall, a kind of analysis that puts capitalism at the centre of every analysis and start seeing the economy in a more plural fashion beyond binaries like human/non-human (see also Gibson-Graham, 2011; Tsing, 2015).

In summary, *rebusque* can be understood as economic practice that stand at the crossroads of formality/informality, legality/illegality, tied with the morals and ideas of *berraquera*. I argue that *rebusque*, as understood by my participants, refers to a form of small business that blends liberal values, like entrepreneurship, with Catholic principles, such as the creation and sharing of opportunities. The state typically portrays *rebusque* as both a symptom and a cause of underdevelopment, dismissing it merely as an example of informality. Nevertheless, the act of *rebuscar* serves to reintegrate my informants into the broader economy, even if the state does not acknowledge their efforts.

Section II: Mules.

I found frequent allusions to *Mulas* [mules] from my informants and in the media. The mule is the symbol of the National Federation of Coffee Growers of Colombia, representing the *colonización Antioqueña*, which I commented in the previous chapter. Above all, it is a symbol ingrained in my informants' minds, reminding them of the Colombian peasants' work during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in developing the country. As I found out, the mule is said to be a symbol of hard work and resilience, values shared by my participants. They evoke

the mule by dancing like muleteers—such as Blanca la Tía Colombia, whom I will discuss later—and hint at the values and tenacity of muleteers in notes and posts. Even some established news portrayed the mule heroically.

Thus, the mule in this chapter symbolizes the efforts of individuals who contribute with their hard work to the development and creation of opportunities. In this section, I will explore my participant's values and ideas regarding economic practices. Some questions to consider are: How have *rebusque* changed? What are the key ideas revolving around *rebusque*? What can *rebusques* tell us about the relationships of my participants with other actors and the development project?

To answer these questions, I will first examine the context and recent digitisation of *rebusque* showing how mules participate in these contemporary *rebusque* activities. Then, I will explore the relationship between *rebusque* and the hegemonic economic system in aspects such as functions, commoditisation, nexus with salaried work, and conclude by analysing the marketplace.



Figure 23: A note from El Colombiano says, that muleteers are the real Rappi in remote places in Colombia.

Rebusque in the Times of Covid-19.

To contextualise *rebusque*, it is important to detail the peculiarities and transformations during the 2020 curfews, particularly in Chile. Covid-19 exacerbated the policing of daily lives and pushed individuals with unstable jobs into dire situations. However, paradoxically, this period also sparked a surge of creativity and resourcefulness among my participants, as they launched new ventures and digitised their *rebusques* [small ventures].

In May 2020, conditions worsened for the Berracos in Chile. By this time, many had lost their jobs; it is important to remember that most were workers who “*vivían del diario*” [lived from day-to-day earnings], with no protection or insurance.

During this period, various Facebook groups saw a flood of posts asking for help. Individuals who once believed hard work would sustain them now appeared desperate. Many posts were pleas for job vacancies. As the situation became more critical, people harshly condemned the Chilean state's handling of the pandemic, arguing that the quarantines and curfews were arbitrary, preventing them from working or earning a living.

Then, someone posted, “Pues que hijueputa, lo que no sirva que no estorbe” [motherfuckers, what does not work/serve should not hinder], symbolically severing ties with the state, which, like the Colombian government, had ignored their pleas. This Facebook conversation acted as a manifesto; from that point on, people began seeking opportunities outside the constraints of the curfews. They invoked the strength of the Berraco legends, leading to an intensification of *rebusque* —small businesses operated from home.

Many reported that their savings had depleted. A minority with private pension funds advocated for withdrawing their savings, but the law protected these funds, only allowing access under retirement conditions. This led to claims of “state robbery.”

Posts became increasingly violent. By early May, many Colombians who had become homeless began camping outside the Colombian consulate in Santiago. Media reports estimated that up to 200 people, including children, were living on the streets. They demanded assistance from the Colombian state, aid that never arrived, leading to lamentations about the disillusionment with the Chilean dream.

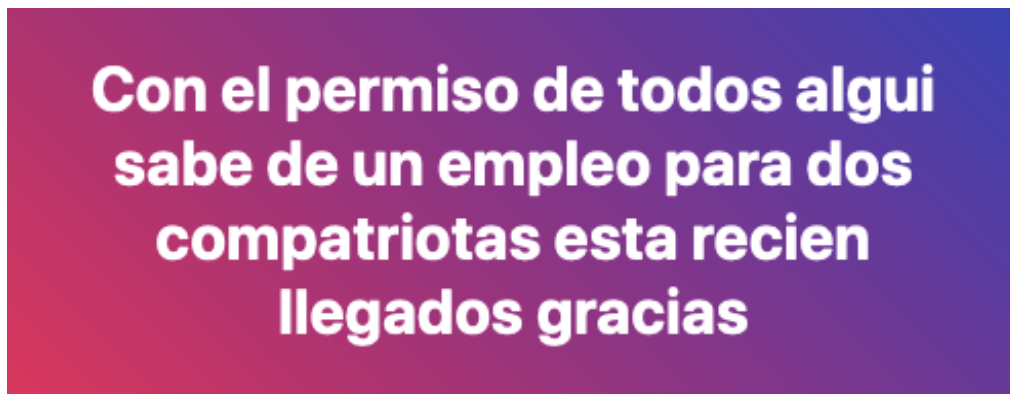


Figure 24: 'Does anyone know about job positions for compatriots?'

Digitisation of Rebusque and Development.

Someone whose name I did not record declared on Facebook: “If the state had forsaken us, only we, with our *berraquera* - strength - and the hand of God, would pull ourselves out of this misery.” They found a way to survive through the digitisation of *rebusque*. Despite the harsh criticisms aimed at Colombian institutions—and some Chilean ones—during this period, they sought to present themselves as active and modern contributors to the economy.

The connection between their survival efforts via digitisation and their desire to be recognised as active participants in the state’s development narrative became evident when a Facebook user began offering homemade morcillas. This person wrote: “Not even this situation will stop us because we are warriors. A pure-bred Colombian never fails (...) that’s why today I am offering you my products, and I hope you will support me, to show that we are modernising and contributing to progress.” Someone playfully responded, “We do more than Rappi and

Uber combined,” and others praised their contributions by producing and selling products on these platforms.

Before the Covid-19 outbreak, my participants had already begun digitising their lives. While no qualitative studies were available, some statistics show that by 2022, 78 out of 100 Colombians had mobile internet, with 99% of active users on WhatsApp (CRC ,2023), and around 89% on Facebook (BranchCo,2024).

During the strictest lockdowns, participants turned Facebook into a marketplace (Werbner, 2001; Wilson & Martin, 1982; Xie & Gough, 2011), as other forms of business outside the home were prohibited due to martial law imposed to curb Covid-19. The pandemic accelerated the digitisation of life for Colombians, and particularly for my informants (Di Virgilio & Perelman, 2022; Grinberg & Verón, 2022; Ramos-Pérez, 2021). What I observed during my fieldwork was a sophisticated ecosystem of free applications forming the digital infrastructure for *rebusque*.

These ecosystems were typically based on Facebook community groups where they advertised and sold, with the Facebook Marketplace used to a lesser extent. Many advertisements led to WhatsApp, where customers and producers arranged details such as prices, delivery options, and other specifics. Instagram was used to a lesser extent. The market primarily targeted the Colombian community but also included Chileans, Venezuelans, and Dominicans who participated in these groups.

What are the consequences of digitising *rebusque*? How does this digitisation relate to state narratives of development? By comparing their informal ventures to Uber or Rappi, participants claim to position themselves as modern contributors to progress, deserving recognition alongside major tech companies.

I argue that through the digitisation of *rebusque*, participants, who had been overlooked by the new Colombian national narratives of development, assert their involvement in the

national development effort. In this sense, *rebusque* were not just a means to survive but a way to reinsert themselves into national plans.

Literature provides some context for understanding these claims. Cara Wallis explored how rural women, once considered backward, used smartphones to integrate into the state's modernisation narrative. Wallis links this narrative to Deng Xiaoping's reforms, which aimed at modernising industry, agriculture, science, technology, and defence.

Wallis introduces the concept of *Suzhi*, which translates to "quality" but encompasses a broader notion of qualities, including bodily, moral, and educational attributes. She argues that *Suzhi* reflects neoliberal governmentality, where self-management and personal development through various forms of education are crucial (Wallis, 2013, pp. 45-46).

Despite my participants' claims, - as I will show in Section II-, the neoliberal state has largely ignored their contributions, leaving their efforts invisible and misaligned with their aspirations. The following sections will delve deeper into the practices and ideas surrounding *rebusque*.



Figure 25: Selling homemade yogurt. The caption mentions the straining circumstances imposed by Covid-19.



Figure 26: A lechona maker offering Colombian style chicken.

LOS VENDEDORES INFORMALES SE MODERNIZAN TAMBIÉN. LOS VENDEDORES DE YUCA Y PLÁTANO EN CARRETILLAS RECIBEN PAGOS ELECTRÓNICOS.



Figure 27: "Informal vendors are also modernising. Vendors selling yuca and plantain from wheelbarrows now accept electronic payments. They use Nequi and Asigital cash apps for transfers."

Lechona: Rebusques as Insurance.

In this section, I explore how *rebusques* function as a form of insurance in contexts where external assistance from state or public institutions is limited. How can *rebusques* provide stability in unpredictable circumstances? I argue that *rebusques* act as a supplementary income source and a buffer against job instability.

In 2023, I met Doña Margarita, a tailor with an alterations studio in Barrio Kennedy, Bogotá. She balances her dressmaking work with her *rebusque* as a cook. *Rebusques* often manifest as side jobs or home-based ventures, this is also a point that contributes to the government understanding and classification as informal, but as noted by Rivera and Gudeman (Rivera & Gudeman, 1990) was a common practice among Colombian peasants.



Figure 28: Street vendor in Bogota. Rebuscando. 2023.

Margarita invited me into her home to observe part of her process and shared insights about running a business from home. She has converted her kitchen to accommodate an industrial

oven, essential for roasting whole pigs weighing between 100 and 200 kilos. Originally costing around eight hundred thousand pesos, this oven now costs nearly ten million pesos (about 2,000 GBP). Margarita commented that “Colombians are *rebuscadores*, as things are always or can become hard” lamenting at the absence of other sources of social security.

Margarita credits the sale of lechonas (suckling pigs) with keeping her family financially stable, enabling her to fund her daughter’s university education. A ‘cushion’ of 30 portions sells for approximately 300,000 COP (53 GBP). Each pig can yield up to 150 servings, depending on its size. To put this in perspective, a large pig can generate an income comparable to a minimum wage in Colombia in 2023 (around 200 GBP).

Raijman’s study of Mexican migrant women in Chicago reveals a similar pattern. These women, often low-qualified and undocumented, work predominantly in informal sectors like cleaning and general services. Although their contributions are frequently overlooked, their income plays a crucial role in supplementing household finances, especially in times of need (Raijman, 2005). For Margarita, the suckling pigs are figuratively substantially her piggy bank. It has kept her solvent all these years.

During the pandemic, Margarita, like many other Colombians, relied solely on her *rebusque* — selling lechonas—to make ends meet. She recounted with a laugh, “Este es mi negocio y nunca he dejado de *rebuscarmela*” [This is my business, and I never stopped looking for opportunities/income]. She explained, “During the pandemic, people only wore pajamas and hardly anyone was interested in uniforms. I only made a few hazmat suits on a small scale, but the pigs... even in the worst crises, people need to eat, especially when it’s a lechona as good as mine.”

Research highlights the crucial role informal jobs play in people’s social security. As Mpofu suggests, these informal ventures often start as side jobs and are subject to seasonality,

serving as a form of insurance; Margarita described them as "como un colchón" [a safety net, literally a mattress] in times of need (Mpofu, 2014).

What could represent a time of need more than a global pandemic? While this situation was extreme, it underscores that Colombia's foundation on liberal ideals (Lozano, 2012; Tarazona, 2010) and recent adoption of neoliberal policies have left social security largely out of the conversation. Consequently, *rebusques* are not just an exception but a prevalent means of coping with uncertainty, providing a form of security without relying on institutional support.

I met Claudio in a Facebook group dedicated to Colombians in Antofagasta. In our brief exchange, Claudio, who is around 50, expressed his uncertainty about the future. He acknowledged that he would never receive a pension since he never made the necessary contributions. He remarked, "One never knows; today you have means of subsistence and food, but tomorrow, only God knows." Claudio shared that he had faced job instability in recent years, with fixed-term contracts ending before he could secure new opportunities.

Lupton sheds some light on Claudio's case, she states that evaluations of risk is context-dependent and subjective, reflecting "its importance on our subjectivity and well-being" (Weiss, 2015). Despite my participants' awareness of their vulnerability, they did not view the state or institutions as their primary sources of stability or safety.

In conclusion, for both Margarita and Claudio, *rebusque* serves not only as a supplementary source of income but also as a crucial financial safety net. They anticipate that in times of need, when their primary sources of income might cease, *rebusque* will become their main financial support. This was particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, which halted all non-essential activities and led many immigrants to lose their jobs. Consequently, *rebusques* emerged as a vital economic lifeline.

The making of Lechona



**1. Cut and prepare the pork.
Fill with rice and peas**



2.Sew the skin



3.Prepare for the oven



Figure 29: The making of Lechona. Credits to Fernanda Barriga for the pictures.

Creating Commodities.

Kopytoff made it clear that from a cultural perspective, producing commodities is a cultural and cognitive process, and "commodities must not only be produced as things, but also culturally marked as a certain kind of thing" (Kopytoff, 1986, p. 64). In this section, I will explore the creativity and resourcefulness of participants in creating *rebusques*. I argue that a crucial value of *rebusques*—and *berraquera* —is creativity, which is expressed in the creation of opportunities, ventures, and products, even commodifying products and services not so obviously commodifiable. What kind of things are subject to commoditisation? How is creativity expressed in commoditisation? What are the morals and social relationships behind commoditisations?

On one Facebook group, there was a video starring a woman; Blanca, the Colombian Aunt, was her stage name. Blanca had a *paisa accent* [from the coffee region], and she was dressed in a white skirt for cumbia, a traditional rhythm from the Caribbean. The ends of the skirt were woven in the colours of the Colombian flag. Blanca appeals to many archetypal figures from diverse regions of Colombia simultaneously, but predominantly, she represented an *arriero paisa*; the muleteers who, during the 17th and 19th centuries, transported goods and colonised wastelands.

Blanca danced and swayed to the rhythm of “Yo me llamo cumbia,” a song that many consider the second national anthem of Colombia; in one hand, she held a machete which she waved as if she was “peeling the bush,” cutting shrubs and chopping trees down, resembling how *arrieros* or muleteers transformed wastelands—bushes into croplands. On the other hand, she held up a Chocolisto, and other Colombian products were exhibited on a small table.

While she was displaying this hyperreal portrayal of Colombianess, she said, “Come on and buy the products that Blanquita, the Colombian aunt, brings you today!” She called this her

rebusque, "My little venture," which consisted of importing products from Colombia and selling them mainly to other Colombians in Chile.

Blanca's business had been going on for over a year, but during this time, it became her only source of income. Like Blanca, many other people proudly showed off their products and crafts on Facebook. The images and posts of homemade products abounded and diversified during the curfews. People offered products such as chorizos and chorizo santarrosano, *morcillas* [black pudding], empanadas, *pelangas* [fried entrails like liver, kidney, lungs, and so forth], lechona, morcillas, and empanadas; clothing like jeans levantacolas (butt-lifters); and services such as offering intermediary services like downloading official documents and certificates, selling tickets and slots for appointments in national bureaus, offering advice on legalisation of status, work permits, and family migration, often without having qualifications.

Due to the remote nature of my work, I could never become a client personally, although I did manage to speak with many of these entrepreneurs. One person revealed to me the importance of creativity by saying, "If there is none of anything, then I will invent it and sell it; that is the magic." Creativity manifests when an individual creates opportunities to thrive, primarily by creating commodities that can be made at home and then sold in the market, no matter what these commodities are.

The production logic of *rebusque* defies proletarianisation, as people become owners of the whole production process. Production is mostly an artisan process, and the household becomes the factory for whatever is produced.

These activities occur under the radar of institutions; thus, they are not subject to taxation or any sort of regulation. In fact, on many occasions, participants complain about institutions being too nosey and see regulations as hindrances that do not allow creativity to flourish, deterring them from making a living. This finding resonates with González (2008), who also

found that for Colombian immigrants, institutional frameworks can be obstacles that must be bypassed.

There are many instances in which bureaucracy creates the demand for a specific service—a need that a *rebusque* can meet. For instance, when someone needs to download a document from Policia de Investigaciones for migratory purposes or complete an electronic payment, someone can offer to intermediate for a fee. These intermediaries are called tramitadores; people who claim to have the know-how and respond to posts offering their services for carrying out trámites (processes/procedures).

On one occasion, in a conversation taking place in a Facebook group called Colombian Warriors in Chile, I found someone monopolising appointment slots to apply for new residence status and work visas. My first reaction was to complain and write that those services were free. However, I received a reprimand from people in the forum who told me that, contrary to what I said, that person was "doing the community a favour."

Someone wrote to him: "We Colombians are so resourceful that if we don't know anything, we would learn with tutorials, and we would never let ourselves starve to death because we struggle; we are fighters. How brave we are to leave our comfort zone to discover new worlds. And what you are doing is invaluable for the community."

By monopolising the appointments, he ensured more quotas for Colombian migrants to access the institution, which he resold for around £20. This small fee, more than a price, was considered a small tip for service to the community.

Some other *rebusques* play with the dreams and projects of the migrants. As I explored in previous chapters, for many of my participants, migration implies sacrifice. Many people aspired to progress materially, as these material improvements would prove their sacrifices were worth it. For this reason, several people I spoke with told me that they wanted to buy a house for their family, especially a "house for their mothers" as compensation for "the care

during childhood." These repayments would require the *privaciones* [deprivation, hardships] their mothers experienced during their upbringing.

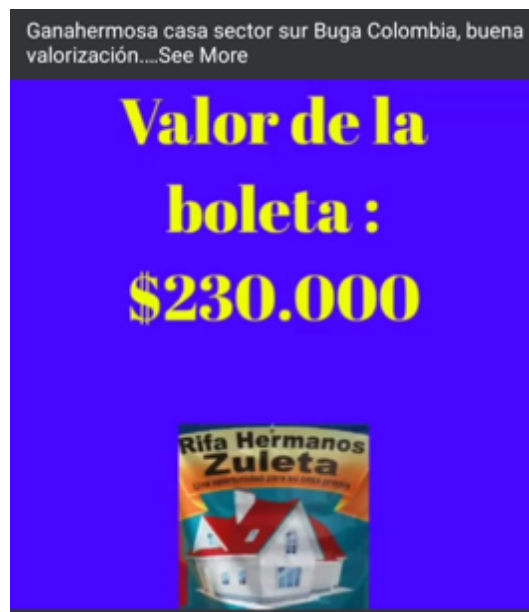


Figure 30: Raffles. the raffle of a house in SOUTHEAST colombia

Raffles were very common in Colombia to raise funds for a person, family, or community. However, I found people based in both Colombia and Chile promoting raffles where the prizes were houses in Colombia, with advertisements such as "do it for her [mothers]." These houses are in small towns that coincide with the areas of origin of a good number of my participants, including Buga, Cartago, Turbaco, and other small cities in Valle del Cauca.

The raffle posts usually start by announcing the location, city, and neighbourhood, along with the stratum (an indicator for taxation and to set public service prices; these are typically low to middle stratum areas), the cost to enter the raffles, and several pictures and videos of the houses, showing them in detail. It caught my attention that the featured houses are comparatively big, with opulent ornaments. Although these raffles might be scams, people regarded them positively, as buying a house was a goal associated with their emigration that the pandemic put at stake. So, entering a raffle, despite the odds, was worth the effort.

People generally advertise their products concisely, as they already know the products well. They usually feature an image accompanied by a short description, with the objective of redirecting people to WhatsApp or Messenger to finalise the purchase. Then, sellers usually provide more details and coordinate deliveries.

Typically, they deliver to the Metropolitan stations close to their or other public places. They do not waste much time in transportation as they could get a fine for violating the curfews. Before the pandemic, payments were made in cash, but as the pandemic progressed, payments via transfer or wallets became popular.

I found new ways in which people commoditised assets that only exist because they happen away from their home country and because of the curfews. I mentioned before that intermediaries and *tramitadores* [intermediaries] were popular and well-regarded occupations. Sending remittances was necessary, and many people did not have bank accounts or sufficient skills to attempt an international transaction. Intermediaries, whose fees can be high and whose money transfer methods are not conventional, have business models in which an individual would receive money from the user in Chilean currency, then using an account in Colombia, would send money to the relatives of the user, sometimes involving a third person in the process.

Posts recruiting webcam models abounded. Many advertisements offered jobs open for men and women. One that caught my attention had a note saying: "If you are not interested, don't give your opinion, but there are people who need and want to work even more in this situation -COVID-19." Someone commented on this post saying: "If you think about it, webcam models are almost whores; if you think about it, that goes against Colombian morality and the ultra-conservative *paisas* [person from the Antioquia region], but they are causing no harm to anyone, so it is a legit business and a legit job."

Those recently recruited models, as some called it the oldest job in the world, found a way to survive during the pandemic, inhabiting a grey area in the eyes of the participants. On one hand, prostitution and related activities are reproachable, but on the other hand, the end goal of sustaining their families is legitimate and "work is not dishonourable," and in doing so, they are not damaging anyone. Somehow, the entrepreneurial spirit and the creativity of incursion into digital business outweighed other moral concerns.

So many things were sold that I do not have enough space to account for them here. However, I also found digital streaming services promising to reconnect those abroad with Colombian soap operas and news usually watched as family events. Others went further, selling the experience of traditional Colombian games for children, offering product handbooks and YouTube videos to teach children how to be Colombian abroad, such as *yermis, coca, or valero*.

Women have also specialised in selling Colombian jeans, based on the idea that Colombian women are curvier and more fashion-forward than Chileans. Many products offer a sense of continuity and connection with the homeland, primarily appealing to the designation of origin, like the Chorizos from Santa Rosa that Blanca, la Tía Colombiana, sold.

In summary, this creativity reflects my earlier discussion on the hardworking ethos associated with the verraco and the mule. It is noteworthy that these migrants adopt similar notions of hard work and creativity as those employed by entrepreneurs in mainstream sectors like finance and high-tech industries. However, in this instance, the production of commodities is rooted in the household. As Kopytoff suggests, commodities are underpinned by relationships. Here, these relationships are mediated by digital frameworks and technologies that many do not fully understand, yet they enable the aspirations of a population seeking better living conditions through migration.

Bending the Norms.

In this section, I will explore how my informants interact with and perceive normativity. What kind of relationship do people have with institutional frameworks and normative structures? How do *rebusques* navigate these norms? I found that my participants constantly seek to exploit available opportunities, whether these are legally sanctioned or not. My argument is that bending the norms and disregarding state laws fit into a broader moral framework in which creating and sharing opportunities (as discussed in previous chapters) often goes unacknowledged by state regulations, rendering them ineffective.

This perspective aligns with González's findings, which suggest that for Colombian immigrants in France, the law was seen more as an option than a strict mandate, making legal bending acceptable (González, 2008).

A prominent example of bending the laws is Alfonso, introduced in Chapter 5. Alfonso is a pioneer among Colombian migrants to Chile. He proudly traced his entrepreneurial spirit back to his great-grandfather, who journeyed from the Middle East to the Colombian Caribbean selling silks. I met Alfonso before the pandemic began, and he even offered me a job at his agency. Starting from modest beginnings, he now owns an agency that "supplies businesses with workers." This is, by far, the most successful business I have observed in terms of longevity, job creation, and opportunity multiplication.

On the surface, this outsourcing company is an established and legal business that pays taxes and adheres to regulations. However, the backstage operations reveal a different story. Although no explicit crime is committed, norms are often bent. For instance, when employees work more hours than legally permitted, the company might increase the hourly rate on official documents rather than reporting the additional hours. In other cases, payments are made "en negro" or "in the Colombian style," meaning they are paid in cash and not reported.

Alfonso hires individuals regardless of their legal status, believing that denying work opportunities would push people into criminality. By providing jobs, he not only creates

opportunities but also aims to keep people away from "*el mal camino*" (the wrong path). I learned that some people rent out their RUTs -tax identification numbers/work permits- a practice Alfonso is likely aware of but chooses to ignore, turning a blind eye to these infractions.

Objectively, there may have been infractions and even creative actions to appear compliant with the law, but Berracos are less concerned with formal legality and more focused on moral correctness. As demonstrated in many cases, what is deemed morally correct is whatever helps people thrive and survive in contexts of scarcity. The precarious nature of the work Alfonso offered, or its occasional contradiction with legal norms, was not questioned. On the contrary, Alfonso was highly respected within the community for ensuring job openings for individuals who, due to their immigration status, could not access other types of employment. In this way, he not only created opportunities but also distributed them within the community. As one person in the forum put it: "He is doing the community a favour and should be allowed to work in peace."

Köln and Siré found that in Cuba, swapping goods via WhatsApp and Telegram to access items usually monopolised by the state was morally acceptable because it served a greater good. Similarly, in my case, creative entrepreneurs who offered delivery services under the radar and black-market vendors who supplied essential goods were viewed positively (Köhn & Siré, 2022).

In summary, the boundary between what is acceptable for a *rebusque* is less about adherence to the law and more about the benefits it brings to the community. Generally, if a *rebusque* creates or distributes opportunities, it is regarded positively.

Salaried Work and Rebusques.

How is salaried work connected to *rebusque*? What are the ideas behind these connections?

As Gibson-Graham, Gudeman, and Zalon, among others, have pointed out, the economies of

the household and financial systems are interconnected, as well as the formal and informal economies. I argue in this section that one such connection is the nexus between salaried work and *rebusque*, which is both practical and moral: practical because one funds the other, and moral because the reward for hard work is work that is emancipating and liberating.

When I surveyed my informants about what they did with their earnings, they explained that the largest portion went towards covering personal expenses. A smaller amount was saved to invest in a *rebusque*, and another part was sent as remittance, sometimes with the instruction for recipients back in Colombia to start their own *rebusques*.

These new rebusques are often referred to as “mi negocito,” “mi *rebusque*,” or “mi trabajito” [my little business, my *rebusque*, my little job]. They always refer to these initiatives with endearment; it is also worth noting that Chileans call these ventures “*pololitos*” [little boyfriends], a term some Colombians have also adopted. Recently, they have started using neoliberal jargon such as “mi emprendimiento” or “mi microempresa” [my start-up, my small business], even though their businesses do not meet the formal regulations to be classified as such.

Participants engage in both regulated and unregulated activities simultaneously (as Hart and others have noted (Hart, 1973; Mpofu, 2014). However, my informants make these activities interdependent. Salaried work, despite its hardships (see the chapter about values), is a crucial source of income that enables people to pursue more liberating activities, which fall under the category of *rebusque*.

Rebusque activities are small, short-lived business ventures that require minimal investment and provide modest returns. They coexist with one or more primary economic activities, generally requiring little training or skill. More importantly, by running these small ventures, some people report feeling that they are actively participating in the capitalist market.

I must clarify that salaried work does not necessarily equate to formal work; however, there is a transitive relationship between salaried work and *rebusques*. This finding aligns with the discussion of how formal and informal economies coexist, as proposed by development economists. They argue that “while the formal economy refers to economic activities subject to governmental accounting, informal economic activities—whether legal or illegal—are hidden from national records. This view implies that without government accounting, there would be no informal economy, only economic activity. Thus, the informal economy could be seen as an epiphenomenon of government” (Henry & Sills, 2006, p. 1).

I found numerous examples of the interconnection between salaried work and *rebusques* in the stories of my participants, both before and after moving to Chile. Many of them worked as employees or owned small but regulated businesses, such as *misceláneas* [stationery shops], *modisterías* [alterations and tailor shops], or *bodegas* [small grocery stores], while also engaging in side jobs.

Raquel, a normalista superior, moved to Chile five years ago as a tourist. Uncertain of how long she would stay, she was simply “*probando suerte*” [trying her luck] and exploring opportunities, with the option of returning to Colombia if things became difficult. In Herveo, a small town in the department of Tolima, Colombia, she worked as a shop assistant, made catalogue sales of beauty products for multiple brands, and at one point, also handcrafted *esqueletos* [obituary cards] and postcards. When she was dismissed from the shop, catalogue sales became her primary occupation.

When I met her through social media, she was working as a maid at a hotel in an affluent area of San-Hattan. Although the pay was modest, the exchange rate allowed her to send a small amount of money monthly. She mentioned that even before migrating, she always preferred to have *rebusques*: “because you never know when you might find yourself jobless, so you must be prepared. My baby depends on me. On top of that, it’s always good to have an extra income.”

Now in Chile, her story remains the same; she continues making catalogue sales of perfumes and occasionally sells other goods like clothing to her network. For instance, she promoted “the Colombian Jean,” or “El levanta cola” [butt-lifter], a denim without pockets designed to enhance the rear part of the body. Additionally, she instructed her sister in Colombia, who cares for her baby boy, to save some money to set up a *rebusque* later.

Another example is el señor Guajiro, who described himself as an *indio* [indigenous] from the north. Before emigrating, he worked for many years as a *cotero* [carrier of bags of produce] at the *abasto*, a large market that sells both retail and wholesale. He and his children would also take on other types of jobs, such as *acarreos* [man and van services], using the same vehicle they used for transporting food, or removals of heavy objects and rubble from construction sites. The money he earned at the *abasto* allowed him to purchase the van.

Once in Chile, he secured a salaried job in construction. Although he no longer had access to his children’s labour or his truck, he continued to work as a freelancer, removing rubble and expressed a desire to establish his own venture. During our conversation, he emphasised that he valued his freedom, the ability to avoid being bossed around, and his autonomy in choosing between jobs.

In conclusion, *rebusques* are connected to the formal sector in ways that mainstream economic frameworks often overlook. This connection is not only practical—since people reinvest their earnings into *rebusques*—but also moral, as the hardships associated with salaried work are counterbalanced by the liberating, though precarious, conditions of *rebusques*. However, the notion of freedom and flexibility often cited in support of the gig economy and labour flexibilisation has been critiqued by Anwar and Graham, who argue that such freedom and flexibility can obscure underlying precarity and vulnerability (Anwar & Graham, 2021).

The Marketplace: God, the Market, and the State.

In this segment, I will analyse in more detail the transformation of the Facebook group into marketplaces. I will argue that the central idea supporting these marketplaces was to eliminate any institutional attempts at control and regulation while simultaneously introducing the concept of God into the market. My aim is to demonstrate the significance of God as a force in my participants' business practices. What are the key interpretations of the marketplace? How is God perceived in relation to the market?

In Colombia, San Andresitos are bazaar-like complexes that can extend for many blocks. In San Andresitos, payments were made in cash, and it was believed that products, such as electronics, came from Maicao, a border town with Venezuela, or were simply contraband. San Andresitos not only sold electronics but also offered services such as electronic repairs, and there were restaurants and street vendors. San Andresitos were frequently raided by DIAN (the tax agency) and the police, operating in plain sight yet under the radar of the state. The San Andresito on Facebook largely mirrors what Clifford Geertz describes regarding the Moroccan Bazaar: "the bazaar is a distinctive system of social relationships centring around the production and consumption of goods and services" (Geertz, 1978, p. 29).

A similar environment was evident in the marketplace established by the participants, where they engaged in *rebusque*. Payments were predominantly made in cash, with only a few transactions processed through digital wallets. Moreover, they were bending curfew rules, subtly undermining the state's authority. The market itself was self-organised and self-regulated. The marketplaces on Facebook are spaces where creativity thrives without adhering to traditional norms. Participants commoditised a range of goods and services, fostering social relationships. However, I am more interested in exploring the broader relationships with the state and God.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the participants' attitude towards state presence was expressed by someone at the bazaar, who said, "lo que no sirva que no estorbe" [what does not serve, should not hinder], indicating that both the Colombian and Chilean states were seen

as obstacles rather than aids in times of need. Consequently, participants felt free to sever ties with state institutions. Facebook became an anarcho-capitalist utopia, a place where free trade, creativity, entrepreneurship, and divine praise reigned.

This scenario mirrors what Vertovec described in Cuba, where people found in entrepreneurship and self-employment a way to reduce their material dependency on the state. As Vertovec noted, 'entrepreneurship in Cuba is driven not just in spite of but also because of restrictive government policies and regulations, and that entrepreneurial strategies can be innovative and flexible forms of state resistance' (Vertovec, 2021, p. 148). This also echoes the arguments of activists in the sharing economy who advocate for re-moralising the economy, emphasising values such as trust, a sense of community, innovation, and creativity, while reducing the role of middlemen and state regulations (Collaborative: et al., 2018).

Whenever a participant offered a product or service, they would start by invoking God, asserting that He, and only He, is the main provider in times of need. One individual remarked: 'Thank God I am alive and have means to survive; He is the one guiding me through this - the pandemic - and as He said, one must labour with his hands so that he will have something to share with those in need,' referencing a passage from the Book of Ephesians in the Catholic Bible. Respondents would reply with "Amen," "Hallelujahs," and then proceed to inquire further about the products. They frequently congratulated the seller for their entrepreneurial spirit and their ability to recognise trends and find innovative digital ways to sell their goods, while also praising them as "people who follow the Lord."

On many occasions, participants also posted pictures asking for divine intervention to save them from material ruin and bring prosperity. These invocations were made directly to God or through intercessory prayers invoking the protection of Angels and even the Virgin Mary. The figure below shows a prayer titled *The Blessing of Sales and Workplace*. This prayer requests the intervention of Angels and God to protect the place from physical or spiritual damage and to multiply the well-earned money. I managed to exchange a few words with the clerk in

charge of the parking lot where the prayer was displayed. He mentioned that the prayer was for wellbeing, the multiplication of money, and protection from any harm. He believed that God 'was always overseeing business, as nothing was done without His blessing.'



Figure 31: "The blessing of the business and sales." bogotá, 2023.

My findings align with those of Ahmed Afzal, who studied the Pakistani ethnic economy in Houston, Texas. He tracked the transformation of this market and, like my case, found that religious messages accompanied transactions. This signalled a divine presence in everyday economic life (Afzal, 2010). Just as in my case, God was ever-present, but the departure from one of the critical actors of development—the state—highlighted that the presence and precepts of religion became more pronounced, not only showing how trust was reconfigured and put in God rather in the state, and that ultimately, according to them there could be some notion of progress without state interference.

My participants were openly and proudly Christian and showed this with pride while conducting business, presenting a stark contrast to the more rational and data-driven approach adopted by the state and academic institutions. I will discuss this contrast further by the end of the chapter.

In summary, the market created by my participants resembles bazaar-like environments where social life took place beyond the effective reach of the state. As trust in state institutions diminished, God took a central role alongside economic transactions.

To conclude this section, it can be argued that *rebusques* have undergone digitisation, altering their form but not their essence. Core values and activities associated with *rebusque*, such as entrepreneurship, modes of production, and product marketing, remain intact, as does the central role of God in business. However, digitisation introduced a new dimension, with my informants viewing it as synonymous with modernisation and an update to their businesses, aligning them with a digital economy. This transformation opens a space to assert that my participants are relevant agents of development, much like the muleteers of the past.

However, as I will demonstrate in the following section, the state continues to largely overlook their contributions.

Section II. Unicorns: Governmental Aspirations and Development.

Digital unicorns, like their mythological counterparts, are rare, elusive, and selective. Despite their rarity, governments worldwide have invested substantial efforts to foster these types of enterprises by relaxing labour regulations, offering tax exemptions, and establishing national innovation bureaus. This trend is also evident in Colombia, where similar strategies are employed to nurture digital start-ups. As noted by Chua (Chua, 2023), governments are actively encouraging citizens to move beyond the security of traditional employment and venture into start-ups with the hope of creating the next unicorn.

In this section, I will examine recent national discourses on digitisation-based development. First, I will analyse the developmental goals associated with this approach. Next, I will discuss the implications for labour, particularly how the evolving digital landscape impacts work and employment. Finally, I will explore the governmentality surrounding the values and behaviours promoted by the state in relation to digitisation.

Some questions guide this analysis: How do the perspectives of individuals and the state on digitisation-based development differ? In what ways does the Colombian government seek to promote development through digitisation?

Economies for Unicorns.

In recent years, the Colombian government has invested significantly in developing digital economies as a cornerstone of its growth strategy. This push for digitization aims to replicate the success of Silicon Valley and foster the rise of so-called unicorns—startups valued at over a billion dollars with rapid expansion potential.

The vision of modernisation through digitization is prominently featured in national development plans, which outline the goals and strategies for each presidential term in Colombia, as well as in various books and speeches.

A notable example of this vision's faltering came during a UNESCO conference, where then-President Iván Duque's presentation on La Economía Naranja [Orange Economy] sparked controversy. Duque stated, "I have seven points to present because seven is a significant number in culture—seven musical notes, seven arts, and seven dwarfs from the tale of Snow White (...) That's how we need to think about the Orange Economy" (Caracol Radio, 2018).

This speech was met with widespread ridicule and criticism, sparking memes and negative reactions regarding the president's approach to development through the commodification of culture and digitization. Nearly every public appearance by Duque faced jeering and derision,

to the extent that the YouTube channel Watch Mojo even featured him in a top ten list of the worst gaffes made by politicians (Conscious Minds Productions, 2021).

The conceptualization of La Economía Naranja was criticized for being poorly structured, dispersed across various sources, and lacking depth. Both the public and experts viewed the idea unfavourably due to the president's false starts and lack of detail. The president proposed that investment in culture, sports, and the arts would bridge gaps, promote equality, and "guarantee sustained growth of 4% by developing a market economy with social consciousness [con sentido social]."

In a book co-authored by the president, the Orange Economy is framed as an alternative to traditional economies, which rely on volatile natural resource extraction. It is described as "an industry based on digital things" (Márquez & Restrepo, 2013, p. 15). The Orange Economy encompasses "intellectual property: architecture, visual arts, scenic arts, crafts, cinema, design, editorial services, research and development, video games, fashion, music, marketing, software, TV, and radio" (Márquez & Restrepo, 2013, pp. 15-17).

The book serves as an imaginative manifesto for Colombia's development, but other national reports have presented significant challenges to this vision. For example, the National Report on Competitiveness 2020-2021 highlights several obstacles: "Colombia has the lowest broadband internet penetration in the OECD (...) only 8% of businesses use IoT, and only 1% use robotics." Despite this, the report noted a positive increase in digital bank transactions during the pandemic.

Another critical issue identified in the report is 'digital skills': "The lack of human capital with adequate digital skills limits opportunities to incorporate technology, accelerate economic growth, and improve productivity" (Competitividad, 2021, p. 2). This observation contrasts sharply with my informants' statements, who view themselves as integral to the development effort.

The report points to low productivity and inadequate human capital as major deterrents. The state has long attempted to address these issues through various initiatives, though often in a neoliberal fashion, by creating short-lived public-private partnerships and delegating capacity-building to the market. Examples include Computers for Education (Rodríguez et al., 2011), One Tablet Per Child (EDUCAR et al., 2015), Vive Digital, and Kioskos Digitales (García et al., 2020), among others.

We face a double-edged paradox: On one hand, people criticise the state for its lack of focus and direction. On the other, the state blames the populace for insufficient human capital. From the neoliberal perspective, people are seen as obstacles to modernisation. Their lack of training and digital skills directly hinders the digital transformation of companies (Dini et al., 2021) and, consequently, impedes the anticipated economic growth (OECD, 2019).

At the time of my research, Colombia had only two unicorns: Rappi, a delivery company based in Bogotá that expanded across Latin America and faced accusations of unfair working conditions, and Nubank, a digital bank owned by a Colombian who is the nephew of a prominent businessman. Unicorns are viewed as symbols of developmental success, yet they are not emerging as the state had hoped.

In the following section, I will examine the neoliberal Colombian state's aspirations to cultivate a specific type of economy and create individuals suited to become successful entrepreneurs in the twenty-first century.

“El Valle de la Silicona”: Flexibilization of Labour.

In another presidential address, Iván Duque proclaimed: “Today we can say, as Steve Wozniak said in Bogotá, Colombia is now the Silicon Valley of Latin America. It may lack many things compared to the Silicon Valley of California, but it is the Silicon Valley of the region.”

The landscape of digital business and tech-based start-ups is rapidly evolving worldwide, and academic research is increasingly exploring diverse geographies. Nonetheless, the allure of replicating Silicon Valley, or what Zukin refers to as “Planetary Silicon Valleys” (Zukin, 2021), remains captivating and has intrigued governments like Colombia’s. Graham notes that attempts to emulate the Silicon Valley model are widespread, with variations such as Silicon Glen, Silicon Savannah, Silicon Cape, Silicon Fjord, Silicon Roundabout, Silicon Prairie, and Silicon Swamp (Graham, 2019, p. 3; Graham & Mann, 2013).

The 2018 National Development Plan is based on three pillars: “Legalidad, emprendimiento, y equidad” [legality, entrepreneurship, and equality] (Zamudio, 2019, p. n.n.). Legality refers to combating the illegal and informal sector, entrepreneurship involves creating new businesses, and equality focuses on the fair distribution of resources. The plan highlights the qualities of twenty-first-century Colombians, particularly their entrepreneurial spirit and resilience. In the following paragraphs, I will explore the concept of entrepreneurship and the new economies the state aspires to develop.

The Colombian government has aimed to establish a framework conducive to digital and flexible economies (gig, digital), even at the expense of social rights. Consequently, the government has allowed digital-based businesses like Uber, Rappi, and others to operate with minimal regulation and state intervention. Some key questions are: What are the cornerstones of digital-based development? What roles do people and the state play in this?

During the strictest lockdowns, many small businesses closed, with the notable exception of restaurants, deemed essential. While restaurants could remain open, people were restricted from the streets, so food purchases had to be made via an application. This situation provided an ideal opportunity for Rappi, the unicorn, to consolidate and expand its services. Initially focused on food delivery, Rappi eventually began offering groceries, credit cards, and even travel packages by the end of the lockdowns.

During the height of the pandemic, I was permitted to leave my house only to walk my dog. On one occasion, I saw a group of “Rappi associates”—the term Rappi used to avoid calling its workers employees—resting on the pavement, hiding from the rain and sharing food. While people sheltered at home, these workers faced their own struggles, exposed to the elements and waiting for their next call.

Many of them were Venezuelans who had fled to Colombia to escape Nicolás Maduro’s totalitarian regime. However, rather than finding opportunities, they saw Rappi as an option where they could work even without proper documentation. All they needed to start was clothing, a bicycle, a delivery box, and a mobile phone with internet access. Despite working throughout the pandemic, I never heard anyone describe them as *berracos*; instead, they were often referred to with pity and collectively regarded with suspicion.

From a legal standpoint, Rappi was compliant because it paid taxes. However, in terms of employment, it occupied a grey area not yet regulated by the state, existing on the borderline between legality and illegality, and between state and market.

By mid-2020, I had become the digital errand boy for a group of retirees in my neighbourhood. They asked me to download apps, order food, and occasionally pay for public services. On one occasion, while assisting Stella, a retired executive assistant, she expressed her sympathy for the Rappi workers. She said, “I feel sorry for those working for Rappi. You see those poor Venezuelans just hanging around the park, without masks, without a place to wash their hands. I wonder how many of them have Covid-19, yet they must work... it’s disgusting to think about it.”

She lamented the harsh conditions they had to endure, with no protection from either the government or the company. Despite the dire circumstances, she acknowledged that at least they were earning a living and possibly some extra money to send home.

Later, I had the opportunity to speak with one of these Rappi workers. He told me, “This gig is terrible, but at least they are giving me a chance, and for that, I am grateful. My wife is pregnant, and when we arrived in Colombia, I had nothing. I know it's a bad situation, but at least I can put food on the table, and I must keep fighting.” His perspective was somewhat resigned; he felt that both the state and the company had neglected them, but at least they were offered a chance. For low-skilled and undocumented workers, these precarious jobs were a lifeline, helping them avoid homelessness and potential involvement in crime.

In 2020, some Rappis campaigned to be officially recognised as workers. However, by 2023, many of them, fearing job loss, protested the new government's labour reform aimed at regulating gig work. Until then, precarity was largely viewed as an issue affecting the poor and migrants. Yet, in 2020, the then Minister of Labour commented: “You don't need a software engineer all day at your office, just a couple of hours (...) this would benefit people because they would get jobs. If we don't change the way of contracting while the rest of the world does, the world won't wait for you” (Pulzo, 2020). This statement sparked significant backlash.

Following the Minister's remarks, social media erupted with mockery. Many claimed that Colombia had truly become the Silicon Valley of South America, with memes suggesting that Medellín's recent reputation as a hub for plastic surgeries and implants, colloquially known as *siliconas* [silicones, silicone implants], was the only real achievement. Critics argued that being called El Valle de la Silicona was the only notable outcome of the state's efforts. Some Facebook groups even joked that “only drug trafficking and webcam models kept the country afloat,” ridiculing the government by suggesting that webcam models were the sole success of the Orange Economy.

Allison's work on Japan's economic decline, where a booming economy and technological advancement led to widespread precarity among the poor, unskilled, and youth, resonates with this situation (Allison, 2013). This decline created a sense of insecurity and a loss of future prospects, echoing Han's concept of Neoliberal Depression in Chile, where individuals

described their experiences of living under uncertain regimes with “bodily pains, racing thoughts, and sleepless nights” (Han, 2012, p. 129).

Woodcock and Graham highlight that the gig economy, with its temporary, precarious, and unpredictable jobs, represents a darker facet of digital economies. They describe gigs as “typically short, temporary, precarious and unpredictable (...) with little possibilities for career advancement” (Woodcock & Graham, 2020, p. 10). A gig economy involves workers spending less time at one job, facing income gaps, juggling multiple jobs simultaneously, and spending unpaid time searching for gigs (Woodcock & Graham, 2020, p. 11)

Surprisingly, gigs mirror the informal economies described by Hart and other decades ago but are now driven by digital technology and endorsed by the state. An unresolved question remains: why are they perceived as different?

Breve resumen sobre lo que significa trabajar para estas empresas



Figure 32: Graffiti in Bogotá. 'Labour violence. No social welfare. Precarity.' 2023.

Citizens that are entrepreneurs.

What values do Colombian citizens need to embody to contribute to development? What skills should they possess? What are the roles of the state, citizens, and markets in Colombia's development project? In this section, I will examine and reflect upon the state's discourses concerning the governmentality of its citizens regarding development.

The National Development Plan (PND) is a manifesto outlining the general ideas that a Colombian government intends to follow during its presidential term. The 2018-2022 PND, titled 'Pact for Colombia, Pact for Equity,' perhaps best illustrates the type of subject envisioned for Colombia's development trajectory. The document presents a series of underdeveloped ideas framed as 'pacts'—agreements between the government, citizens, and markets. It highlights the challenges impeding the country's development and specifies key traits that citizens and markets should possess to achieve the long-sought development (Duque Márquez PND, 2019).

In this manifesto, the government states its role as: 'fostering a culture of creativity, innovation, and competitiveness as engines of development' (Duque Márquez PND, 2019 P.87) and 'becoming a worldwide reference in sustainability, science, technology, innovation, entrepreneurship, and tourism' (Duque Márquez PND, 2019 P.25). In other words, the government sees its role as creating an environment where businesses and citizens can thrive, by providing an appropriate legal framework, reducing business creation taxes, and promoting 'digital transformation'—a largely undefined concept referring to the integration of technology into business and daily life.

The two principal traits sought are creativity and '*emprendimiento*' (entrepreneurship). The document asserts: 'In our Colombian DNA exists a resilience that astonishes both locals and foreigners. The vocation for entrepreneurship manifests daily in the countryside and cities, where millions of citizens rise early to work, study, and build futures for themselves and their

families, overcoming hardship. People deserve opportunities to realise their dreams in a safe environment for personal and collective entrepreneurship, thus helping to build the country' (Duque Márquez PND, 2019 P.6).

Regarding entrepreneurship, the plan states: 'We will eliminate the fear of formality and foster Colombian entrepreneurship' (Duque Márquez PND, 2019 P.34). 'Colombian entrepreneurship faces heavy regulations and lack of access to financing' (Duque Márquez PND, 2019 P.35). 'We aim to increase the culture of investment in ventures and entrepreneurship: only 8% of Colombians currently invest in ventures' (Duque Márquez PND, 2019 P.36).

On creativity, the document notes: 'Colombians will engage in artistic and cultural activities that will foster creativity and, in turn, the development of new productive ventures. Creative ventures will support the orange economy and the creation of quality jobs' (Duque Márquez PND, 2019 P.146).

The citizen-entrepreneur sought by the Colombian state is expected to create enterprises and harness the power of digital transformation in business (Mičić, 2017). In anthropological terms, such a notion emerged early on within structural functionalism, referring to the individual's capacity to shift norms (Stewart, 1992). However, for the Colombian state, entrepreneurship is more narrowly defined, focusing mainly on individual initiative in business creation. These businesses, while an expression of agency, creativity, and personal achievement, are primarily viewed in economic terms. This approach mirrors Lindtner's description of the Chinese experience, where economic liberalisation encouraged citizens to become entrepreneurs with "liberated selves," creating "a new class of entrepreneurs, creative thinkers, and innovators" (Lindtner, 2020, p. 55). In return, the state would provide the environment necessary for these private initiatives to thrive.

In migration studies, the concept of the migrant entrepreneur has a well-established tradition (Dheer, 2018). Portes and Guarnizo, for instance, highlight that some immigrants are seen as

development agents due to their ability to build businesses and commercial networks, creating enclave economies (Portes et al., 1999). Bahar offers a critical analysis of Venezuelan entrepreneurs in Colombia, noting that many of their ventures fail (Bahar et al., 2023). Similarly, Rodrigo et al. demonstrate that in Antofagasta, immigrants with fewer qualifications from economically disadvantaged countries face more barriers and experience lower economic success compared to other immigrants (Rodrigo et al., 2018, p. 465).

The state's vision has two main focuses: fostering entrepreneurial citizens and creating conditions for the emergence of unicorns. However, this vision has faced significant public criticism. While there is some acceptance of the state's neoliberal values and policies, there is regret over the prevailing precariousness and sympathy for the working poor.

Both the Colombian and Chilean states have declared a war on informality. For the Colombian state, informality is a marker of underdevelopment and a precursor to illegality. In contrast, the Chilean state views informality as an unintended consequence of outdated immigration laws. Sebastian Piñera remarked, "Due to the lack of access to adequate visas, migrants have fallen into informality and are subject to mistreatment" (TeleTrece, 2021).

The neoliberal state fetishises technology and technical solutions as the keys to fulfilling its developmental dreams. The Colombian state's enthusiasm for new economies and unicorns contrasts sharply with its disdain for *rebusques* and informal economies. This disparity suggests that the state's issues with informality may be more about taxation and prestige than genuinely addressing job creation or alleviating precarious conditions. This tension reveals that behind the veneer of rationality presented in state documents, bureaucracy, planning, and sophisticated statistics, might lie a realm of magical thinking and aspirational dreams. Taussig aptly highlights this paradox, noting that one of modernity's greatest achievements is the illusion of a state free from magic, anxieties, and irrationality (Taussig, 2013).

In conclusion, the Colombian state's developmental strategy involves creating an environment conducive to the emergence of unicorns, paired with cultivating a specific type of subject who embodies entrepreneurial spirit and possesses the digital skills necessary to build multimillion-pound companies. However, this vision is fraught with contradictions, as evidenced by the discrepancies between state discourse and the lived experiences of my participants. These contradictions will be explored further in the next section.

III. Synthesis: a Mule with a Horn.

In summary, the state dreams of unicorns in a country of mules. It dreams of billion-dollar start-ups in a nation where most citizens lack the means and skills to create such enterprises, despite possessing the right values and mentality. For my participants, the mule symbolises "*el trabajo duro*" (the hard work) that their ancestors invested in developing the country—transporting goods, coffee sacks, and connecting remote areas by muleback. Yet, despite these significant contributions, the state seems more focused on unicorns and tends to overlook or undervalue the entrepreneurial efforts of my participants.

There are notable parallels between the Colombian state's discourse and the practices of my participants regarding development that warrant closer examination. Firstly, the state's role is seen as almost peripheral by my participants, who have demonstrated their ability to do business and survive with minimal state intervention. At times, they even view the state as a hindrance. Conversely, the state positions itself as a mere regulator, tasked with creating a conducive legal and infrastructural environment without taking a more proactive role.

Secondly, there are the values. For my participants, essential traits include entrepreneurship, hard work, creativity, resourcefulness, resilience, and strength. In agreement, the state fosters these same values but envisions an ideal citizen who can leverage digitisation and effectively participate in multimillion companies.

Nonetheless, why does the state fail to recognise the contributions of people like my participants—immigrants and those engaged in *rebusques*—when their objectives, values, and envisioned roles in development seem to align with those of the state? My answer is twofold.

Firstly, there is a difference in scale. While my informants contribute on a small scale, the state's aspirations, as outlined in development plans, competitiveness reports, and various publications, are to foster unicorns—few enterprises individually valued higher than the collective efforts of regular citizens.

Indeed, statistics reveal the significant impact of informal economies: they contribute approximately 35% to 40% of GDP (Portafolio, 2018) and employ over 50% of the workforce. This trend persists despite state efforts to regulate it (Botero-García, 2012 See DANE 2024). Additionally, illegal economies, such as drug trafficking, contributed around 1.88% and 1.66% of GDP in 2018 (Montenegro et al., 2019, p. 39). Although this economic activity fuels various sectors, it remains unrecorded in official statistics and might even be linked to everyday products like empanadas. Remittances, which accounted for 2.7% of Colombia's GDP in 2021, are the second-largest source of foreign currency and have a more redistributive effect compared to the Colombian market and taxation systems (SeeBanrep, 2022) (Bakker, 2007; Khanal & Todorova, 2019; Zapata, 2011). In contrast, creative economies contributed a modest 0.2% to GDP in 2021 (Arbeláez et al., 2021).

The second factor is the issue of informality and its consequent distance from government oversight. In Colombia, the boundary between informal/formal and legal/illegal sectors is a major governmental concern, often highlighted by politicians, media, and academics. These reports frequently cast informality in a negative light, noting issues such as: “around six out of ten job placements are in the informal sector, which could negatively impact pensions and access to health care” (there is no universal health coverage in Colombia) (Galvis–Aponte, 2012, pp. 1-2).

Informality is commonly depicted as a sign of underdevelopment and something that needs to be eradicated. It appears in literature as both a backdrop to and an illicit component of formal economic activity, often associated with fiscal disobedience, where legality and informality blur and intermingle within parts of the productive chain (Parra, 2013). Informal economies are represented as shadow economies integrated into global supply chains (Lerma, 2010; Peters & Murillo S, 2005; Santillana & Bustamante, 2021; Urán, 2013), particularly those linked to narcotics trafficking (Sánchez-Jabba (Díaz, 2018; Jansson, 2006; Sánchez-Jabba, 2011). Additionally, there is growing concern over the integration of Venezuelan migrants into the formal industry, with some linking this to increased criminality (Simanca, 2020).

Nonetheless, the issue with informality seems particularly acute regarding taxes. The state is concerned about the existence of businesses that do not contribute financially in the formal manner. However, it has actively refrained from regulating online platforms like Uber or Rappi, despite the precarious labour conditions and the similar insecurity faced by their workers compared to those involved in informal activities.

Informal economies encompass "the whole range of casual jobs" (Lewis, 1954, p. 2), but are viewed as problematic because they include both regulated and taxed activities and unreported, unrecorded ones, consisting of small entrepreneurs who lack protection and ownership (Portes et al., 1989, p. 12). Informality is seen as a hindrance to economic growth and, consequently, development (Gilbert, 2002; Goldfinch, 2015; Kerekes & Williamson, 2008).

In summary, there is a chronic failure on the part of the state to recognise the efforts and contributions of individuals like my participants to national development. Paradoxically, despite my informants' claims of modernity due to their digitised businesses, this is often dismissed by the state as mere 'informality.'

There is one last incongruity: while the state aims to appear rationalistic and strives to be modern and efficient, its discourses and practices are full of contradictions. Incipient ideas are

presented as truths behind rigorous indicators like competitiveness indices or GDP. For my participants, the value of the economy is more about creating and sharing opportunities and meeting the moral standards of *berraquera*.

Conclusion.

In the first section, I examined the concept of *rebusque* from various perspectives: as practices, ideas, and values, its function in a context of uncertainty, and its connection to broader notions of *berraquera*. I also explored how digitisation, a process that began long ago but accelerated due to the pandemic, led my participants to assert their role in the Colombian national development efforts centred on technology.

In the second part, I analysed National Development Plans, development literature, and presidential discourses to understand how the current Colombian government conceptualises and pursues development. This analysis revealed that the government is heavily invested in digitisation and creative industries, aligning with many of the values and economic ideas of my participants. However, it diverges significantly on key issues, particularly informality, thereby failing to recognise their efforts and substantial contributions to national development.

My participants continued to utilise an array of digital tools, contributing on a small scale but with significant impact to national indicators from the informal sector at the fringes of the state, while the state remained indifferent to these contributions only widening the cleavage between these two actors despite their agreement in regard of values.

In the following, and last chapter, I will analyse the relationship between migration and *berraquera*, and the confrontation of *berraquera* with other notions of development.

Chapter 6:

Berraquera as Development: Colombian Migrations to Chile.

Introduction: Colombia as Barren Land.

In this chapter, I will explore the tensions, contradictions, and negotiations of what the actors think about *berraquera* and development, focusing on a particular group of informants, mainly those in the Facebook groups and others who have experienced migration. I attempt to show different points of view and experiences. Perhaps the best analogy to this attempt is Anna Tsing's use of the term freedom in the Mushroom at the end of the World, which is presented as quintessentially part of American culture, but all the groups that participate in picking have different definitions for freedom. 'The freedom that pushed her -a Vietnamese refugee- toward the United States was the freedom of the market. In contrast, Hmong pickers, an ethnic group descending from Laotian immigrants, were adamant about freedom as anti-communism combined with ethnic autonomy' (Tsing, 2015, p. 102). A similar thing occurs with the notions of development for different groups, whose ideas on development varies, sometimes overlap and sometimes are in contradiction.

I argue that *berraquera* is a key factor in people's decision to migrate in search of opportunities, as they believe the chances lacking in Colombia can be found abroad through resourcefulness and hard work. Furthermore, while my participants justify their migration as the pursuit of places where they can find and create opportunities, Chilean state policies on migration are designed to promote their own vision of neoliberal development, leading to contradictions between these two notions.

Moreover, the fact that they cannot find opportunities in Colombia, - Whether the lack of opportunities is perceived or factual is another discussion beyond my scope-. following Laclau's ideas, only contributes to a sense of crisis and rupture; a break or disruption in the established social order, where existing structures, ideologies, or discourses lose their ability to represent the collective will. In which no political actor or discourse is, or has been, able to provide a clear road to development and creation of opportunities (Laclau, 2005).

Our conversation with Marcela began by the month around January 2021 in Bogotá, with her showing me a picture of her son as a baby. She pointed at his chubby cheeks and remarked that he had always had a temper. Marcela never truly desired to be a mother, at least not at 19, when she accidentally got pregnant. Now in her late thirties, she reflects that her background as a member of an Iglesia Cristiana - Pentecostal church - left her unprepared for such a situation. Nonetheless, her baby boy became the driving force of her life. She would joke about being a "mamá luchona" [struggling mother], a caricatured and iconic image in memes celebrating the strength of single mothers. She also proudly declared, "I am a Berraca, and even though I wasn't happy, I found a way to thrive for me and my son. That is why I decided to leave Colombia. It is sad, but there are no opportunities here."

However, Marcela's story extends back to her grandparents and reaches into the future, emphasizing struggles and lack of opportunities in Colombia:

"My grandfather and grandmother were peasants who emigrated to Bogotá at a young age because they found no opportunities in their towns. My grandmother worked as a maid, and my grandfather in construction. They met at a construction site and later bought a plot in Las Ferias, a dangerous area of the city.

My grandmother did not want my aunts and uncle to mix with the neighbourhood people, mostly gang members, narcotraffickers, and other criminals, but she couldn't afford to move or pay for their higher education. For my mother, the choices were

few: get married or get a job. Fortunately, she found a third way and studied a technical course at SENA [National Technical Studies Institution], thanks to contacts. That was the turning point in her life and mine because we became the more stable and economically better-off branch of the family, opportunities my aunts never had.

My mother formed a family with my father, who was from the same neighbourhood but more affluent. In the end, my father left my mother and us after five years of marriage and stopped providing anything. My mother had to pay taxes, bills, mortgage, food, school allowances, and tuition. Fortunately, she had the opportunity to study and started working at the Banco Nacional. Back then, you could build a career there, and she was promoted to manager, providing a stable job that doesn't exist anymore.

Providing for three, we grew up with limitations on everything. There were times we had no food and couldn't afford a bag of milk. I remember one occasion when my mum, crying, said, 'I don't know what we are going to eat tomorrow.' She would sob, 'I have nothing. I cannot afford food for my children.' To all practical effects, my mother was a single mother. She also had to help my grandparents and my uncle, who was wheelchair-bound after being shot in the neighbourhood. I always wondered; how do I escape this? Opportunities here are null for me.

That marked me, and the situation persisted until university, where I only had money for photocopies, not lunch. I wanted to escape that loop. Why was I condemned to live this way? Why do I have to live like this when there are places where people have a better quality of life? Without the burden of the never-ending loop of waking up, working, and never seeing progress, people get stuck. I see this happening to my generation. They can't study because they don't have the money, and they don't have money because they can't study. I don't want that for me or my son. How can I get the life I want if I have zero opportunities here?"

Marcela also told me that she was planning to leave for Argentina when she got pregnant, having heard that education was free there. Later, she met a man from Canada, and they started a relationship. "He was 23, about to start a master's, while I was stuck here. So, I tried; I applied to a university and got admitted on the condition that I improve my English. But I needed money for the trip, so I applied for a scholarship which I didn't get. Looking back, only people from good universities get funding. I resigned myself to staying here at least until my son was more independent. At some point, I got a job offer in Guatemala. They paid in dollars. I love that country, but I found it extremely racist and sexist. Also, I was providing for two households, one in Colombia and one in Guatemala, so I wasn't making much progress."

"Someone told me I was pessimistic, but please don't bullshit me. Poor people aren't poor because they want to be. The point isn't just to be 'berraco' because this isn't a matter of laziness. In this country, people work harder than is healthy and still have a poor quality of life. It is so sad because to have a good life you need lots of money. Telling people to work hard and be 'berraco' in an environment like this is like telling someone with chronic depression to put in some effort and stop being sad. I want to be *berraca*, I am *berraca*, I prove it every day, but there are simply no opportunities. One breaking point for me was when the pastor said that being poor was a good thing: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 5:3). I despise that. Why do I have to endure a bad life because the Bible says so? I am always on the move, on the lookout for opportunities. If they are abroad, I will go and chase them because there have never been opportunities here—not for my grandmother, not for my mother's generation, not for me, and probably not for my son. That is why I left and would leave again."

Marcela only lasted six months in Chile, as the government changed migratory laws, making it harder to venture there, and the crisis triggered by COVID-19 made access to opportunities unattainable. Nevertheless, she was somehow in a privileged position compared to other

Colombians. “Well, I lived in a good area of Bogotá with my son, but then I found myself sharing with four other people. We had a nice apartment in a good area of the city centre. We were all women and professionals. I know that’s not the case for the majority of people who live in the slums.”

Her story starkly contrasted with those of other people I came across, who ended up in impoverished areas and whose savings—or loans—only allowed them to afford tiny rooms for a few weeks. After consuming her savings, she found a good position in Colombia and returned.

Marcela considers herself and the women in her family as true *Berracas* as they are strong and found ways to get ahead despite their material conditions, yet she acknowledges that there are limits to what they can achieve if their country fails to provide opportunities. She portrays Colombia as a land where, despite one’s best efforts, very little can be accomplished. Although she admits she is “in a good position now,” this is not the case for those around her, and she believes the only way to remedy this is through emigration -as she did in various occasions in the past- to find suitable places where she can take advantage of opportunities.

The concept of *berraquera* as a sense of personal and familial progress is strongly reflected in the decision to emigrate, not only as a means of seizing opportunities but also as a search for a place where individuals can demonstrate qualities and values such as entrepreneurship and initiative, which are central to *berraquera*.

While not all my participants may share Marcela's pessimism, many of them agree that opportunities to improve their own and their families' circumstances are more likely to be found *afuera* [abroad], making migration an alternative not just for survival but for potential success. *Berraquera* in this regard is crucial, as it implies that if opportunities are not available and individual must find the way to obtain them, even if that implies emigrating.

I do not intend to present an exhaustive explanation of emigration, but rather to explore the role of discourses of development and *berraquera* in the migratory process of a group of Colombians. I will examine *berraquera* in terms of development, improvement, and progress, and its relationship with seeking opportunities abroad.

I will analyse *berraquera* vis-à-vis migration in two ways: first, by examining the experiences of participants who have sought or are willing to seek opportunities abroad, and second, by contrasting these experiences with the expectations of the host country, in this case, Chile.

Some questions I aim to address are: what can the juxtaposition of *berraquera*, and the Chilean state's development model tell us about *berraquera*? What is the role of *berraquera* in the emigration process? What are the frictions between the Chilean development model and *berraquera*?

In the first section, I present the need to survive as a cause of emigration, then I explore the Chilean Dream in contrast with *berraquera*. Afterwards, I introduce El Barrio Latino as a symbol, then I discuss otherness, and the definition of a good immigrant, and conclude by examining Chilean governmentality.

Development and migration.

The nexus between development and migration has been explored since the 1970s. The conversation revolved around whether migration was beneficial or detrimental to development, understood as capitalist development. Modernisation theory focused on the positive aspects, examining if immigrants contributed to developing their origin and host areas via remittances, work, and entrepreneurship (Dheer, 2018; Guarnizo & Díaz, 2003; Kloosterman & Rath, 2001; Portes & Guarnizo, 2019; Ratha et al., 2016), and the transfer of knowledge (Kearney, 1994, p. 133). In contrast, dependency theory tended to view migration negatively (Horevitz, 2009).

Other theories viewed the migration-development link as demographic transformation and urbanisation (Lee, 1966; Zelinsky, 1971), and modernisation (Mabogunje, 1970). These theories have been criticised for being mechanistic (de Haas (Burawoy, 1976; de Haas, 2010; Douglas, 1999; Kirk, 2017; Massey, 2016; Michelutti & Picherit, 2021).

My approach here demands a more ethnographic perspective that deviates from macroeconomics and large societal views. One example is Quinceno, who introduced the term *Vivir Sabroso*. This term reflects a notion of future and the possibility of resurgence after the trauma of violence in the Colombian Pacific, showing how displacement and migration were part of a survival strategy to ensure the existence of the community (Quiceno Toro, 2016).

Another example is the term *suzhi*. Wallis explains that modern China has encouraged its citizens to be more “cultured and civilised,” and the word *suzhi* expresses the necessity for people to improve. One way of improvement is through migration to urban areas and the adoption of modern values such as self-entrepreneurship (Wallis, 2013, p. 34).

Faier studies Filipino immigrants in Japan, analysing how the discourses of care, love, and hope emerged in practices such as remittance sending and migration itself. Faier shows how ‘affective investments’ are negotiated within capitalist frameworks (Faier, 2013). Bulloch, studies how narratives of development guide people's actions and imaginaries, thus migration involves not only dreams of a better future but the possibility of achieving this future through emigration to places like Japan or America, seen as lands of opportunity (Bulloch, 2017).

In summary, a minor but recent part of the literature has researched how development, in its multiple versions and subjective narratives, has become, through emigration, a way of procuring a better future. This can be seen as physical survival strategies, material progress, self-improvement, or constructing imagined places where opportunities can be found.

Survival, Lack of Opportunities and Migration.

In this section, I explore some of the reasons that lead people to emigrate. I argue that Colombia is perceived as a place that no longer offers opportunities, understood as future, even for the tenacious, diligent, and *berracos*. Emigrating is seen as a response to this situation. I will discuss this briefly by presenting the story of Damaris and commenting on Marcela's story -which opened this chapter-. How is migration s? How is *berraquera* a response to the lack of opportunities and violence?

I met Damaris long before starting this research, around 2015, in the town of Guadas, about 90 kilometres from Bogotá. I was introduced to her by a mutual friend. At that time, she had just finished a technical degree in accounting but was trying to pursue her real passion, playing wind instruments, particularly the oboe. She had been admitted to a music degree at a well-reputed public university in Bogotá. Her passion for wind instruments began in her town, where she and my friend were senior members of the town's band and participated in several national band competitions.

When I met her again in 2020, she seemed a bit gloomy. We promenaded through the town square eating raspado (ice shavings and syrup). We were not close, but she opened to me. She complained, saying, "My life is a bit messy because my mother is leaving the country—Colombia." She also mentioned that she was moving in with her aunt in a neighbouring town while she started studying and planned to move permanently to Bogotá. She thought of living with her aunt with contempt, not because they had a bad relationship, but because the circumstances were pressing.

She said in an interview, with some sadness in her voice, "All of a sudden, I was forced to grow up five years in just one year." She not only went to live with her aunt but also found herself in charge of raising her little brother, who was starting secondary school at the time. She needed to balance her studies with new responsibilities, such as domestic chores and contributing economically, as her mother was facing financial difficulties.

Diana, our mutual friend, told me, "Her mother, Marta, is a hairdresser. She was friends with my mother, so we basically grew up together, and everybody in the neighbourhood knew her. Damaris is my friend from the band, and I've known her for as long as I can remember, but I think ever since Marta left the country, we have become more distant." She continued, "When we were young, Marta had a big beauty salon in a big house. The ground floor was the salon; she, her mum, and her little brother lived on the first floor. To me, it was almost like a landmark, and everybody in the town knew the salon. I think I was too naive to understand what was going on in her life. It was only recently that my mother told me she was fleeing from *cobra diarios* (loan sharks) who had loaned her some money. As she couldn't keep up with the payments, they were chasing her with violent threats. So, leaving the country and sending her kids to another town was a way to keep them safe, but she was also trying her luck abroad to repay the loans and get rid of the problem—if you can actually get rid of *cobra diarios*."

Damaris also told me: "as I grew up, the spaces shrunk little by little. The house I used to live... we couldn't afford it anymore, my mother had to shut down the saloon, and then she found a job at another saloon, so now she was not the owner but a mere employee. We were not living in a house, we had to move to a room, the three of us, it was a small room." By 2020 when we reactivated our contact, she was actively looking for a *tramitador* [a middleman that intermediates and solves bureaucratic issues] she enquired me for information on how to obtain a visa for the US and how to fast-track said visa. At first, I thought it was for her, but soon I learned it was for her mother.

Diana told me, "Her mother, Marta, had kept a lot to herself and never told Damaris the truth as she was growing up, maybe to protect them. Marta had to resort to 'cobra diarios' as the bills and expenses piled up. She needed the money to follow her dream of opening her own salon and becoming independent. She divorced Damaris' father and since then tried to find some stability, so opening the salon was her dream. I don't know, and Damaris has never given

me the details—perhaps she doesn’t know either—of how the events unfolded. What I learned from my own mother was that Marta needed money for refurbishments and to buy equipment for the salon. She applied to a local bank, but since she couldn’t demonstrate a stable income, her Datacredito score was too low to qualify for a loan. No one knows how or when she met the *cobra diarios*, but rumour has it they charge an interest rate of 50% daily. One day, they saw a ‘moto’ (hitmen) waiting outside their home. They were all in fear, as threatening people is how they get their money—they might just kill you.”

In all this mess, moving abroad was truly part of a survival strategy (de Haas, 2010b), resembling what Quiceno mentioned about the Pacificqueño communities whose physical survival depended on abandoning their homes. Rivera et al. have studied the connection between forced displacement and ‘Gota a Gota’ loans. They explain that one of the main causes leading people to resort to loan sharks is their exclusion from the formal financial system, which makes them dependent on criminals in a futile attempt to escape poverty (Pérez-Rivera, 2021).

The metaphor used by Damaris, “of a shrinking house,” reflects precisely how opportunities had exhausted and needed to be found elsewhere. Only a few weeks after that encounter in 2020, Marta moved to Chile, as she had not obtained a US visa. For Damaris, her “mum had taken a step back. She moved from owning a business to becoming a maid in Santiago; she wasn’t even working as a hairdresser.” Nevertheless, she saw this as a safety net; after all, it was positive, as her mother finally had some peace and found a place to settle down.

Damaris ended her account, saying, “I feel her absence, but now, as a grown-up, I understand why everything happened. There were no opportunities here, and our lives were in peril. In hindsight, I admire my mother’s tenacity; she kept us afloat.” While Damaris remains in Colombia as a member of the philharmonic, she has had no further contact with Diana.

In summary, what is clear from the stories of Damaris, Marta, and Marcela, who opened this chapter, is that migration is an answer to both the lack of opportunities and a context of violence that exacerbates the situation. Perhaps Marcela has put it more clearly, but Damaris and Marta's case follows the same vein: being strong and tenacious—being 'berracas'—will not yield enough results if the context does not allow for it. For this reason, finding opportunities abroad becomes the only way to keep envisioning a future.

Berraquera and the Chilean Dream.

What is the contrast between *berraquera* and the Chilean Dream? How do people perceive the idea of the Chilean Dream? In this section, I compare *berraquera* as a concept of development with the Chilean Dream—a term coined in media to describe Chilean development. Firstly, I argue that contrary to some perceptions, Colombians do not emigrate to Chile to pursue the Chilean Dream but rather to achieve a state of development aligned with *berraquera* ideals, after finding that Colombia no longer offers opportunities. I then delve into an explanation of the Chilean Dream.

I encountered Pablo Emilio in one of the Facebook groups in 2020. He caught my attention because he was not only active in one group but in many simultaneously. He copied and posted the same message several times: "Hi all, how are things over there for someone to move, and what do I need to do?" The question was vague, lacking sufficient detail, making it difficult to discern his intentions. Surprisingly, the question garnered attention from many group members across various groups. People responded with their opinions on the economic situation for Colombians, as well as other nationalities, in Chile.

During this period, the responses were highly pessimistic and contradictory. Some individuals highlighted impending changes in legislation affecting immigrant rights, along with the social and economic fallout from Covid-19. Some encouraged him to travel as soon as restrictions eased, suggesting, "Come and try your luck once the borders reopen." At that time, many

believed restrictions would last only a few months, not an entire year. While most responses were vague, they reflected the uncertainty of the times.

While volunteering for the Jesuit Migrants Service (JMS), I responded to one of Pablo Emilio's posts by directing him to the website for more information and suggesting he arrange a video call with advisors. Additionally, I provided him with several websites offering verified information. He later contacted me via direct messages, expressing disinterest in official information and instead seeking insights into my personal experience and that of other Colombians in Chile.

We exchanged voice messages extensively, and I got to know Pablo Emilio well. In his late 40s, originally from Sincelejo, Sucre, in the Colombian Caribbean, he explained that he was "looking for opportunities." "Listen, I am looking to go anywhere. I must seek opportunities, maybe start my own business. I am a Berraco, but things here are messed up." He worked as a *todero* (handyman) in construction. At the time of our conversation, he was selling his belongings—a small plot, a truck, and some savings—to fund his future travels. He was also receiving financial support from friends and family, promising to repay once he was settled.

When I asked why he chose Chile, he revealed that Chile wasn't his specific choice. He chuckled as he explained, "I'm waiting for an invitation from my friend—she's a female. She said she would send me an invitation, but her boyfriend is jealous and suspicious of our relationship. We're just friends, but I think that's why I haven't received the invitation yet. So, my plan is to stay with her for a few weeks until I find something. I'm trying to see how things play out." He described his friend as "an angel sent by God to guide him."

Initially, he had considered the United States as a viable option but never applied for a visa due to uncertainty about the process and hearing stories of many denials. He also contemplated "el hueco"—crossing through Mexico—but deemed it too risky and costly. He then turned to

Ecuador, where wages were lower compared to the US and Chile, but the country's dollarization was attractive given the devaluation of the Colombian Peso.

Chile became a serious consideration when another friend mentioned it as a potential destination. "Chile was booming, and the Chilean Peso was strong, but I had no idea about the necessary paperwork or what life was like there... if there were any jobs available for me, if things were affordable, and if people missed their homeland."

For Pablo Emilio, Chile was not a destination that appeared by happenstance. He had meticulously researched potential destinations, weighed latent advantages and drawbacks, and gathered information from various sources. While it wasn't his first choice or the optimal one, Chile seemed good enough. His approach echoes the experiences of Marcela and Marta, who similarly didn't initially consider Chile but found it through research and networking.

When I asked why they moved to Chile, everyone I interviewed gave a similar response—they were seeking opportunities that their homeland could no longer provide. I also came across numerous posts and replies encouraging others to move to Chile, often outlining the types of opportunities available. These included jobs such as berry picking, meatpacking, domestic work, and construction. However, following the toughening of immigration laws, some people began to warn that employers were becoming more selective regarding work permits, however, as one post said, "there are plenty of opportunities here regardless of how restrictive they are now, if you are Berraco enough you can come and seize the opportunities."

Migration is not merely a mechanical movement from deprivation to development; it involves extensive networking and information sourcing that shapes people's destination choices (Portes, 1998; Portes & Landolt, 2000), in this regard Chile was an appealing option, once to try and get a piece of what Chileans called 'The Chilean dream'.

What is the Chilean Dream?

I vividly recall Elizabeth, one of my Chilean informants, describing Chile as "a conspiracy and an experiment."

Elizabeth: Chile is an experiment that had to be closed to the world while they experimented with it.

Julián: Who experimented?

Elizabeth: Well, the Chicago Boys, mate. Along with *Pinocchio* [Pinochet], to see if neoliberalism worked. Now it can be opened. The price of development was the dictatorship, but Chile is developed now.

The term "Chilean miracle," as coined by some neoliberal scholars (Castiglioni, 2019), gave rise to the concept of the Chilean Dream. It propagated the notion that Chile was a safe haven for workers across the continent fleeing poverty and persecution (Ryburn, 2016). The epistemological foundation of this dream is rooted in neoliberalism (Han, 2012, p. 6). Similar to the American Dream, it revolves around the belief that individuals can achieve success and moral excellence through diligent effort (Hochschild, 1996, p. Chapter 1).

In essence, the Chilean Dream celebrates Chile's transformation from poverty to affluence (Richards, 1997; Salinas, 2021), positioning it as a successful model for other nations to emulate (Richards, 2013).

Chile was presented as 'the southern miracle,' an emergent economy that overcame the backwardness so characteristic and persisting of Latin American countries. Only recently, the discourse in media has changed, presenting 'the other side or the end of the Chilean Dream' (El Colombiano, 2018; BBC News Mundo, 2021). As explained by Urriola, the Chilean Dream is an institutionalised discourse used by the elites - of European descent (El Mostrado, 2015), to promote themselves, while omitting the high price in terms of social rights and equity, and human rights violations.

Is it that Chile falls short of expectations, or do people never have those high hopes to begin with? My informants regarded Chile as a far more developed country than Colombia in economic terms, however, none of my interviewees had heard before moving to Chile about the 'Chilean Dream.' Chile was regarded as a good place to find opportunities but not as a dreamland as it was the case of the United States, and in lesser proportion Spain.

What I have found is that migration to Chile isn't about chasing some grand dream – it's about finding the only space left where they can continue living through the familiar practices of *berraquera*. These practices might not promise a world of possibilities, but they still offer a way to carve out a future in a context where choices are limited.

To conclude, the idea of Chile as a destination is one of the main points where contradictions emerge because it signals a juxtaposition with what my Colombian participants thought about their destination; as 'a good enough' place, and what some Chileans think about their newly found status of 'developed country.'

As I will explain in the following pages, the material conditions of existence of Colombian and other immigrants in Chile seriously challenge the developmental aspirations of some Chilean sectors, furthermore they challenge the very idea of 'Chile as a developed country.'

El Barrio Latino and the Financial District.

In this section, I will present two contrasting places: the first is Barrio Latino, neighbourhood inhabited by Colombian and other immigrants, generally described as an impoverished area, and the second is the financial district of Santiago, known as San-Hattan. I will conclude with an examination of how these places contradict each other in terms of development. My intention is not to describe the cities or the neighbourhoods in detail, but rather to explain what they represent in terms of development for the people I spoke to.

The statistics about migration and the composition of the barrios in Antofagasta are somewhat inadequate, partly because many areas or entire districts are not legalised—not only Barrio Latino, meaning that they do not exist in the actual records. Additionally, people coming through illegal crossings are not accounted for. As of this date, the barrio remains uncharted in Google Maps, as if it does not exist.

However, some general statistics indicate that 6.6% of the current population of Chile is immigrant. By 2022, ‘the immigrant population in Chile was 32.8% Venezuelans, followed by Peruvians with 15.4%, and Colombians with 11.7%’ (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas, 2023 p. 8), with a total of 107,223 people living in irregular situations. As for Antofagasta, from 2021 to 2022, the foreign population increased by 3.5%, with Bolivians accounting for 38.2% and Colombians 30% (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas, 2023 p. 18). According to the Jesuit Migrant Service, by 2022, 3,800 Colombians and 40,089 Venezuelans had entered the country through pasos ilegales (unregulated crossings) (SJM, 2022).

The first time I learnt about Barrio Latino was through the stories of Zoila, a Chilean friend of mine who became one of my closest informants in Chile. She helped me contact people and was also keen to contrast my perspectives, sharing information and points of view with me. Zoila is from Santiago, comes from a middle-class background, and attended a prestigious university in Santiago. When I first mentioned that I intended to carry out my research in Antofagasta and was sourcing contacts, she agreed to share some of her thoughts:

“Mate, I’ve only been to Antofagasta for work, and that is the only reason anyone would like to go there. The city is horrendous, there is nothing to do, everything is overpriced, and the city has the vibe that something is going underneath. I’m not telling you this to sound like a prick from the capital, but it’s really ugly. It gives a cringy vibe; many streets are unpaved, it is a desert, and the city is full of gangs of stray dogs with rabies. The only inhabitants are the workers of the mines. I was working there as a service designer because I was consulting for a mining company located in Antofagasta, but I actually spent more time at the mines talking to

the workers. They would work for three weeks and then have one whole week off. When they finished their shifts, they returned to Antofagasta with lots of money; some of them were paid in cash. They would lavishly spill that money drinking, gambling, and probably on prostitutes. The day after people return from the camps is the more deplorable, as you would find miners passed out on the streets. So, I don't like Antofagasta at all."

Despite Zoila's view on Antofagasta, the city's rich mines of copper, lithium, molybdenum, and boron (OCDE, 2021) are the core of the extractivist capitalist model of Chile that has fueled its recent development. Antofagasta is also one of the most expensive cities (T13, 2022) and was, in the nineteenth century, the centre of 'saltpeter cosmopolitanism' (González Pizarro & González Tello, 2020, p. 360).

It is largely due to the mining companies and Antofagasta's proximity to the borders with Peru and Bolivia, through the Atacama Desert, that the city has long attracted workers. Although records are inconsistent, they show that the first significant wave of Colombians in Chile crossed by the Tacna-Arica border about 15 years ago. These pioneers were women of African descent from the Colombian Pacific. Some Colombians and Chileans told me that these women initially worked in prostitution, serving the miners, and also as maids. However, the current landscape is more diverse, with Colombians from different ethnicities, backgrounds, and genders.

In the northern part of the city, in a sector called La Chimba, on the hillside, there is a squat known as Barrio Latino. At the time of this research, Barrio Latino existed on the edge of legality. Only a few streets had access to public services and were recognised as part of the city; most of the neighbourhood does not appear in public documents. Media coverage, however, has highlighted the conditions in Barrio Latino. The newspaper *El País* described it as: 'a piece of Chile where three crises converge; housing, migration, and environmental. It is La Chimba, one of the emblematic areas of Antofagasta, where around 7,000 people live' (*El País*, 2023). Some authors have referred to the area as the hinge between marginality and

otherness in urban integration, a manifestation of the precarious neoliberal model where people resort to self-regulated processes of appropriation and construction ((González Pizarro & González Tello, 2020).

According to Martina, another of my Chilean informants, 'El Barrio Latino is a slum, where a bunch of black bin bags are used to improvise the windows and ceilings of the humblest houses. All the streets are unpaved, and there is rubbish everywhere,' but above all, 'it is undoubtedly a sign of poverty, but I think it is proof that Chile had never really achieved development, or at least that its wealth is not for everyone.' Benito, the director of the Colectivo de Colombianos in Antofagasta, told me: "El Barrio Latino is a normal neighbourhood populated by hard-working and honest people. Those are the people who, for whatever reason, couldn't find a better place to settle, so they had to stay there." Benito further elaborated that, despite its appearance, Barrio Latino is the land where many Colombians—and other nationalities—have been able to attain and thrive.

Some ethnographic examples from Brazilian favelas help to understand how Barrio Latino is perceived. Reginensi finds that the internal borders of the barrios mark spaces where norms and laws are meaningless (Reginensi, 2015) leading the state and population to see these dwellings as "problematic," "deviant," or expressions of "anti-cityness" (de Souza e Silva & Barbosa, 2013). Dwellers of favelas experience the subtraction of their right to live in the city (Fernandes, 2005). The peculiarity of these barrios is that these zones beyond the reach of the state are the product of neoliberal policies (Saraf, 2020, p. 4).

Antofa-lombia (Antofagasta + Colombia) is an endearing term I repeatedly saw and heard whenever I asked about the presence of Colombians in Chile. People on Facebook groups and on the streets use it to refer to how Antofagasta has become an extension of Colombia. In 2024, when I posed the question in various Facebook groups asking: "What does Antofa-lombia mean to you?" I received diverse answers, such as: "It's my second home," "It's the name given to Antofagasta because it's full of Colombians," "It means that Antofagasta is now

a piece of Colombia because we made it that way,” “It’s where I live and work and will bring my kids to live with me so they can live in peace,” and “It is the place where I found opportunities.”

In conclusion, Barrio Latino signifies many things: disorganisation, inequalities, marginality, lack of control, but for some immigrants, it represents a new opportunity, a place to live and thrive.



Figure 33: Antofagasta-Barrio latino.

San-Hattan: the Financial District.

In stark contrast, 21 hours by bus, there is the financial centre of Santiago. The financial complex has existed since the nineties, and in 2006, urban developers built the *Costanera Center*, a financial building complex with the largest shopping mall in South America, modelled after Manhattan's World Trade Center. This led to the area being humorously dubbed "San-Hattan" (Santiago + Manhattan). Additionally, the complex boasts a 5-star hotel and the Gran Torre Santiago, the tallest building in Chile and the second tallest in Latin America.

In another conversation with Zoila, she shared, "I have been thinking a lot about what you asked me about Chile being a developed country. Well... the other day I was at La Costanera. The building is massive to the point that it makes you feel small, like a cathedral. I was at the entrance because there is a supermarket, and I was just there observing while my boyfriend got us some stuff. From time to time, people came out of the tower, wearing suits, well dressed, driving BMWs and Mercedes. But outside the complex, there were people selling things on the streets. It reminded me of you because they were selling arepas, so I supposed they were either Colombians or Venezuelans; I can't tell the difference. And I wondered, will they ever be able to enter the tower if not to do the cleaning? And then I kept ruminating, it is not only the immigrants, but the vast majority of Chileans, they will, and I will never make it."

Zoila's words remind me of the contentious character of Wall Street. Ginzl mentioned that it has been a symbol of both the good and the evil of the American Dream (Ginzl, 2006), and was recently at the centre of the Occupy Wall Street movement (Taylor, 2013).

To close this section, I will reflect on the words of Anastasia, another Chilean informant, as I believe her words elucidate the contradiction of development sublimely. Anastasia said: "The migrants are like a mirror for Chilean society, but they are the mirror that gives them an ugly face and shows them that this supposed development that Chile has reached is an illusion. I have never been to Antofagasta, but I have heard about el Barrio Latino, and I think it is like a conventillo that I saw in a documentary. I think that the personification of poverty is the conventillos."

Conventillos were multi-family residences built to host the massive influx of immigrants during industrialisation (De Ramón, 1990), often stigmatised as violent places (Velásquez, 2024). To Anastasia, “Conventillos are the most discreditable, worthless, unfit, and lumpen dwellings. They showed a conventillo that was cracking down, and inside it, they found many migrants from different places. That shocked me and my friends. The conditions were subhuman. It was like a slap, as if they threw a bucket of ice because people thought that that kind of poverty, which is misery, no longer existed in Chile.”

In conclusion, for Anastasia, the material conditions of poverty existing in Barrio Latino and conventillos are material evidence that Chile has not overcome the most pressing symptoms of underdevelopment. For Zoila, Antofagasta represents a kind of development that nurtures misery and extraction, while the Costanera represents that development and wealth are only available to a fraction of the population who can truly inhabit San-Hattán. Then there is Benito and other participants from the Facebook groups, who believe that for many Colombians and possibly other nationalities, living even in the adverse conditions of Antofagasta is proof of success or at least that they are trying their luck. Antofagasta, in this sense, symbolises the progress and development that some participants have achieved.

The Encounter with Otherness: Threats to Chilean Development.

Thus far, I have examined how the presence of Colombians in Chile challenges the notion of the Chilean Dream by highlighting the fact that migrants experience success and prosperity differently from the neoliberal model of economic development. In this section, I will explore how the presence of migrants in Chile also disrupts the Chilean Dream by being perceived as a direct threat to Chilean conceptions of development.

In this section, I will examine the encounter with otherness provoked by the arrival of immigrants, including Colombians, to Chile. Specifically, I will discuss how this encounter is perceived as a threat to Chilean development by some radical sectors. Echeverri interprets the

encounter with otherness of Chileans as a racialised encounter, thus defining Colombian emigration as racialised migration (Echeverri B, 2016). Tijoux agrees with this interpretation, declaring that the colour of one's skin is a sign of migration, marking migrants as inferior to locals (Tijoux, 2016). Furthermore, Tijoux mentions that while Chileans were used to older migrations, such as those of Peruvians, they also discriminated against them (Tijoux, 2013).

But is there more than race at stake in this migration? What other interpretations of this encounter exist? Why do immigrants signify a threat to Chilean development? I will argue that while it is true that recent migration to Chile is racialised, another aspect that should be considered is that the emigration of Colombians is seen by some sectors as a threat to development. I will explore these questions, first presenting some findings regarding otherness, and then analysing how it might be perceived as a threat.

The story of Rosario is illustrative of the contact with the "other" described by Echeverri and Tijoux. I met Rosario through a Colombian friend who has some binational Colombian-Chilean relatives. Rosario told me:

"I was born in Santiago in the nineties, during the return to democracy. I remember when I was at school, growing up I was always taller than the other kids, not only the girls but also the boys, and the average Chilean is not very tall. Also, you can't see it very well because of the camera lighting, but my skin is a bit darker than other people's—not super dusky but enough to be noticeable; it is a fair skin. When I was younger, I think the other kids feared me because I was bigger; my frame was very different from other kids, and I was about the same height as the tallest boy. Back in the day, Chile was a hermetic country; there were no immigrants, and everybody looked more or less the same."

"My entire family from my mother's side abruptly moved to Colombia as they were members of the Chilean Socialist Party and actively supported Allende. After Pinochet took over, they fled the country as exiles in Colombia. There, my mother met Anibal, my father, at the National

University of Colombia. My father is Costeño, from Santa Marta; he is a moreno—I mean, he is black. Well, he is not black-black; he is mulato, a mixture of African and Spanish—do you know what I mean?”

Rosario’s family moved back to Chile along with her father after the end of the dictatorship. She concluded, “Despite loving Colombia, Chile offers better life standards and more opportunities. I studied marketing in Chile and worked for a while in Colombia, but the wages are too low. I feel very comfortable in Colombia, I love arepa’ehuevo and coffee, but I have a start-up in Chile and am making good money. Chile is changing; my upbringing has nothing to do with today’s world. You see people from everywhere—Colombians, Haitians—and think it is shocking and changing society.”

Around the 2000s, Chile reopened, and new influxes of Colombians, Venezuelans, Haitians, and returning exiles took place (Tijoux, 2014, 2016). According to Anastasia, Chileans were used to “Croats, some Germans, Spaniards, Palestinians, as well as some Italians, and Peruvians and Bolivians in the north, but the newcomers are transforming the smell and the landscape.”

Beyond the anecdotal transformations of the landscape and social composition of Chile, the rejection of immigrants, manifested in racism and xenophobic attacks, is not simply based on an encounter with otherness but on the interpretation that these new immigrants threaten what Chile has achieved. In the following paragraphs, I will explore how migration could be perceived as a threat.

I ran a WhatsApp group during 2020, including participants like Anastasia and Zoila, who supported logistics before my planned trip to Chile and helped throughout the research with their views and ideas. As I sought alternative sources of information during the lockdown, I decided to scrape information from Twitter and process it using social network analysis

software. I used my findings to foment debate within this group, routinely sharing some of my findings.

On many occasions, I found xenophobic tweets addressed to Latin American immigrants in general. These included: “Migrants carry diseases,” “migrants, especially black, should be exterminated,” and “Venezuelans have brought communism to Chile.” Regarding Colombians, there were tweets referring to them as “delinquents” and claiming they brought violence to Chile, such as Cobra Diarios, motorised hitmen, and narcotrafficking, supposedly rampant in the north. These tweets actively fostered a stereotypical image of Colombians as drug dealers. One tweet even stated: “The dictatorship had not been so bad because it had brought development.” But the tweet that caught my attention the most was: “They—the immigrants—want to take/steal development.” A structural analysis of the communication revealed these ideas were isolated, circulating in small cliques¹.

Tweets from August 2020



Figure 34: Some tweets arguing for the expulsion of immigrants. Arguing that they are destroying Chile.

¹ Explore interactively in the following link a sample of some tweets that have been processed and anonymised: <https://embed.kumu.io/5fe363c8b059c756d2b1b296fb3c4562#twitter-colombianos-in-chile-2020>

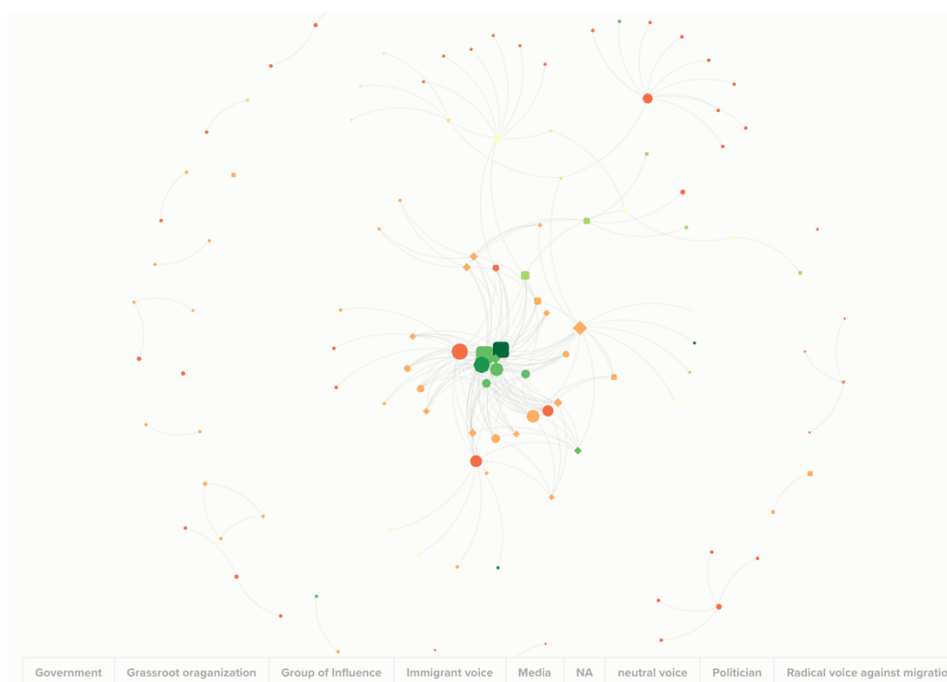


Figure 35: Explore a sample of some conversation revolving around colombian immigrants in Chile on Kumu.

I could not follow up with the person who tweeted the information, but I shared this and other materials in my WhatsApp focus group. Zoila was struck and suggested the idea that maybe they were bots, as the comments sounded inhumane. She said, “I’m sorry, mate, I know Chileans are racist but didn’t know we would go that far.” Her impression was that those “tweets were dehumanising, comparing immigrants to viruses and germs, or even cancer that was percolating through the border was simply bad... I simply think that Chilean development is fragile, and if you have to change the policies and forbid people to enter to defend it, well, it just shows how dumb it is.”

According to Rosario, whom I shared my findings with, “the Barrio Latino was a poor area but was like a normal neighbourhood. But sometimes bad things happened that the tabloids would pick up... People use these occurrences as arguments.” In fact, in my observations on Twitter, I found that people tended to echo and articulate their messages around news.

Echeverri concludes that “the figure of the immigrant is treated as a social problem, with discourses that associate Colombians with violence. Discrimination emerges as the articulation of multiple social markers,” and particularly African women “carry the stigma of a sexualised

and racialised otherness” (Echeverri B, 2016, p. 101). Furthermore, Richards brilliantly exposed the paradoxes of Chilean development, saying that while it is true to some extent that Chile is developed, the reality of racism is prevalent, particularly with the indigenous population (Richards, 2013, p. 1) but is expanding to newcomers.

However, I would like to complement their argument by saying that in the case of Colombian immigrants in Chile, the racism they face is partially based on the idea that they pose a threat to development. This becomes evident by analysing the tweets that clearly portray immigration as a threat or disease to development.

***Castrochavismo* and the “Good Immigrant”**

In interactions with my participants, I encountered the idea of “being a good immigrant” as a common theme. But what does this concept entail? What purpose does it serve, and how does it relate to *Castrochavismo*? I argue that self-promoting the idea of Colombians as good immigrants is a survival strategy. It is presented as a counterargument to those in Chile who view immigration as a threat to the nation’s developmental progress. Additionally, this notion reflects *Berraquera’s* idea of development, where Colombians as good immigrants are characterised as hardworking, tenacious, and entrepreneurial, in contrast to the image of a *Castrochavista*.

The concept of good versus bad immigrants has been central to governmental efforts in various countries in the Americas and Europe to direct their developmental policies (Kokkali, 2011). For instance, in Hungary, as noted by Reményi et al. (Reményi et al., 2023), the government focused on migration in public discourse after the 2014 elections, advocating for border securitisation. Definitions of worth are often morally constructed rather than rational (Andrews, 2018), leading some immigrants to adopt positive traits to differentiate themselves from other groups, similar to Tsing’s observations (Tsing, 2012). Hackl adds that the space for these identities and behaviours is limited, making their acceptance conditional (Hackl, 2022).

Finally, the definition of good and bad immigrants is part of a negotiation between immigrants and institutional frameworks, as illustrated by the case of Filipinos in Canada, where narratives of sacrifice for the community prevail, contrasting with the "labour visa" pathways provided by the state (Gardiner Barber, 2008).

The first question is: who is considered a good immigrant? To clarify this point, let us revisit the story of Evaristo as explained by Rosario. Evaristo is from Tolima and, while he crafted musical instruments as a side job, his main occupation was as a *todero* [handyman]. He worked in construction, transportation, and ran errands. Rosario introduced him as a *Berraco*, meaning he never shied away from hard work and was admired for his tenacity and dedication. She had hired him for various tasks, including removals and home repairs.

Rosario recalled their last interaction, which was only a week before our conversation. She had been looking for someone to fix the electricity but found that many had declined the job. Evaristo commented, "You know, lady, Chileans are becoming lazy. They're rich now, scared of hard work [*se aculillan*], and have forgotten how to work hard. Luckily, you have me, a purebred Berraco. People like me -other hardworking Colombians- don't shy away from anything". Rosario concluded her description by noting that whenever Don Evaristo is questioned about his life, work, and contributions to society, he asserts that he is a good migrant, unlike those who expect everything for free, such as Venezuelans.

During the *Estallidos Sociales* in Chile and Colombia, there was extensive debate on social media about the instability in Chile. Participants in various groups often criticised what they perceived as communist influences, branding demonstrators—mostly university students—as "misguided" or "vulnerable to dangerous ideas like socialism". Occasionally, posts directly condemned Venezuelan immigrants as instigators and destabilizers. One such post featured a meme that generated considerable discussion.

The meme depicted a low-quality image of an African man with a sack on his back, rummaging through rubbish for valuable items. The man was thin, wearing a threadbare T-shirt and flip-flops. The caption read, "I value the work of the Haitians. They work hard and are not afraid of anything, unlike the Venezuelans who want everything for free". A response on the forum stated, "I was willing to work and eat shit; some days it tastes good, other days it tastes like shit. But eating shit keeps me alive and my family thriving. It is true that many people expect everything for free from the state and that the state should guide their lives".

Other participants agreed that "Haitians and Colombians are good workers and contribute to Chile's development. In contrast, others, like the Venezuelans, are seen as lazy because socialism taught them to get everything for free and earn things without effort". Another comment said, "I admire Haitians—they don't even speak Spanish, but they won't just wait around until someone saves them".

From the account of Don Evaristo and the debates on Facebook, several points emerge that require unpacking and further contextualisation. Participants refer to the notion of *Castrochavismo*, a term combining the names of Fidel Castro and Hugo Chávez, two prominent left-wing leaders of the twentieth century. This concept promotes the idea that all Venezuelans are communists, and that idleness, retrogression, and lack of development are inherent to communism.

Laclau's perspectives on populism offer insight into *Castrochavismo*. Laclau's idea of populist discourse centres on the creation of a clear distinction between "us" (the pure people) and "them" (the corrupt elite or adversaries). This antagonistic division is essential for constructing collective identity, mobilising support, and fostering a sense of unity against a common opposition. The notion of *Castrochavismo* originated from right-wing populist discourse and had a significant impact in Colombia and other American countries. It created a simplistic, moralistic view of politics, dividing people into "good" and "bad" categories and consolidating a range of unrelated grievances. While I could not retrieve any ethnographic research

specifically on *Castrochavismo*, numerous articles focusing on discourse, content analysis, and media studies have been produced.

A clear definition of *Castrochavismo* is lacking, as its proponents, typically right-wing politicians, have not provided one. This ambiguity seems to have been a deliberate strategy to encourage its adoption and adaptation by the public. Despite its lack of definition, the concept has been widely used by politicians, media, and people in general. Gutierrez offers a near-definition: "According to this narrative promoted by former president Uribe, the country was being handed over to the FARC at Havana—where the peace negotiations took place—leading to Colombia's descent into communism, *Castrochavismo*, and gender ideology. These accusations, in a conservative country like Colombia, embodied the worst fears of the population" (Guerrero-Gutiérrez, 2023, p. 45). Gutierrez also notes that mentions of *Castrochavismo* date back to 2012 and were used extensively in various campaigns, including the "NO" campaign against the Peace Accords, presidential elections, and regional elections. Despite its vagueness, the concept of communism, reminiscent of McCarthyism, continues to provide a narrative and vocabulary for people to use and position themselves. Juárez and Restrepo argue that *Castrochavismo* has effectively created a divisive line between "us" the good, and "them", the bad, which people have adopted (Rodríguez & Restrepo-Echavarria, 2022, p. 152).

Acosta et al. (Acosta Valencia et al., 2021) conducted a content analysis on Twitter and found that *Castrochavismo* has been prominent for nearly a decade, gaining traction during the Peace Accords negotiations between the Colombian Government and the FARC-EP Guerrilla. They also observed that discussions about *Castrochavismo* peaked during electoral campaigns. Semantically, *Castrochavismo* is associated with terms like corruption and the Peace Accords, and was predominantly promoted by right-wing parties, though some centrist parties also referenced it. The authors found that the communication was largely unidirectional, with little

proper debate; responses to tweets often involved memes, deepfakes, and expressions of anger. They also suggested that some recipients might be *Bodegas*—bots or paid fake profiles.

How does *Castrochavismo* relate to migration? It is implied that *Castrochavismo* and its supposed negative effects are transferred with immigrants, especially Venezuelans, as if they were carriers of a disease. This is evident in Don Evaristo's comments and some of the tweets that link immigration to disease and germs. Interestingly, literature has not clearly linked the term *Castrochavismo* to the large-scale Venezuelan exodus, which began around 2012 and peaked between 2015 and 2017, according to the UN (2018).

Ordoñez and Ramírez note that "Venezuelan immigrants have emerged in media and public debate as a homogeneous category of bodies threatening national security and the Colombian social fabric. Solidarity is reciprocated with disease, social disintegration, and the threat of *Castrochavismo*" (Ordóñez & Arcos, 2019, p. 62). This notion is not confined to Colombia; it has also been used in countries like Peru (Valera Marin & Miranda Delgado, 2023) and Chile, where surveys indicate that people believe immigration negatively impacts labour markets (Cruz-González & Cárdenas Ruiz, 2022, p. 66) and in Argentina, Brazil, and Ecuador, where Venezuelan immigration has influenced foreign policies and internal power struggles (Ramírez & Grajales, 2021, p. 23).

In summary, according to my informants, immigrants who do not rely on state support, work hard, are self-entrepreneurial, and reject communism are seen as "good" immigrants. There remains the question of how people act upon the notion of being a good immigrant. For my Colombian informants, being a good immigrant is not about qualifications or skills but it is linked to *berraquera*, encompassing self-entrepreneurship and hard work. They argue that good immigrants contribute to the development of Chile and Colombia. By asserting this, they seek to align themselves with the Chilean developmental model. However, despite their efforts to distinguish themselves, populist discourses tend to homogenise and portray them as

dangerous, silencing their actual contributions (Martínez (Martínez Pizarro & Cano Christiny, 2022, p. 43).



Figure 36: "The image shows an African man rummaging through the trash, while another man, supposedly Venezuelan, begs for alms. The title reads: 'Venezuelan in Chile begging, Haitian who doesn't speak Spanish working.'"

The Governmentality of the Chilean State and Berraquera.

The final friction I wish to explore in this chapter is the tension between Colombian immigrants and Chilean governmentality. I will examine Chilean state governmentality and its approach to fostering development through immigration and compare this with what Colombian immigrants propose. I argue that while Chile has implemented a migratory policy aimed at promoting neoliberal development and punishing alternative forms, participants advocate for *berraquera* as a form of development, suggesting that these two models are incompatible.

On one hand, the new immigration law was launched in Iquique, Antofagasta, and broadcast on YouTube on April 11, 2021. The backdrop of President Piñera's speech was the desert landscape, suddenly interrupted by the towering skyscrapers of Santiago's financial district. Piñera chaired the event, with a representative of the Venezuelan diaspora opening the speech: "Every migration story is associated with a bittersweet experience. I made the painful decision to leave my country because of a cruel dictatorship and its systematic violence; Venezuela is a failed state and a devastated society. I chose Chile, which opened the doors for me safely. Thousands of us see Chile as a land of opportunities; it is my case and that of other migrants of goodwill. I am convinced that an orderly, safe, and regular migration protects the country and the people who come from other countries. Migrants do not want to be a burden; we want to be the new Chileans who contribute to this homeland. Today Chile has a new migration law that guarantees a responsible process" (T13, 2021).

The maître of the ceremony then gave Piñera the floor: "We are here today to promulgate the new migration law, which replaces the law from 1975, no longer suited to Chile's current challenges and needs. The main objective is to put our house in order through an orderly, safe, and regular migration policy that allows legal migration and combats illegal immigration. Chile has always been open and welcoming to migrants who come to start a new life, comply with our laws, and work peacefully to contribute to our country's integral development and diversity. However, we do not want and will not allow entry for drug trafficking, organised crime, smuggling, human trafficking, and those who do not respect our laws. To prevent these evils, not only for our compatriots but also for migrants, we launched the secure border programme. Those who enter or attempt to enter our country clandestinely or through unauthorised crossings not only commit a crime but also risk expulsion."

On the other hand, the perspective of some participants reveals a different reality. I initially intended to join the Jesuit Service for Refugees (JRS) in Antofagasta as a volunteer. Due to the pandemic, I served as a remote advisor for a few months, providing counsel to people in the

city. Most of the individuals I advised were migrants from Colombia, Venezuela, and Haiti, often with low qualifications and many who had not completed secondary education. Consultations typically focused on family reunification, obtaining work permits, accessing government aid for Covid-19, and related issues.

In contrast, Facebook groups displayed a different kind of consultation. People already in Chile and those considering emigration sought migratory advice, often with more open questions and less formal tone. Typical questions included: “What border crossings are not monitored by police? Where can I find a job without legal documents? Can I cross through the desert? What are things like there—regarding the economy, public order, etc.? How can I resolve a legal infraction? Do you know any middlemen who can help? Has the government declared an amnesty?”

These two logics are in clear contradiction. While the Chilean state advocates for an orderly migration that contributes to the state’s neoliberal development and prevents alleged criminality from failed states, my participants attempt to circumvent this order. They pursue this goal through both institutional means, as seen in consultations at the JRS, and informal means, as evidenced by their questions on Facebook. In the following paragraphs, I will analyse in more detail the governmentality surrounding migration and development.

I argue that selective migration is a key aspect of governmentality concerning migration and development, and it conflicts with what Colombian immigrants and *berraquera* can offer. How has selectivity manifested in Chile? What are the apparent contradictions between *berraquera* and the goals of the Chilean state?

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Chile, like Colombia, employed selective migration as a tool for development. This ideal of racialised progress was heavily influenced by eugenics and social Darwinism (MacKenzie, 1976, p. 501). The Chilean state believed that “talent, skills, and intelligence run in families” through bloodlines (Villela Cortés

& Linares Salgado, 2011, p. 191). Consequently, the idea was to “use European immigration as an instrument of modernisation” (Delgado, 2014; Gómez, 2009; Martínez, 1997). Chile aimed to selectively attract and admit racial groups deemed capable of “improving the qualities” of the local population (Delgado, 2014; Pizarro, 2020, p. 236; Turra Díaz, 1997; Vásquez, 2018). The state sought immigrants from “Swiss, French, Germans, and Italians through the National Colonisation Agency” (Pizarro, 2020, p. 334), while deterring those from Italy and Spain, and avoiding communists and anarchists.

Norambuena indicates that eugenic governmentality prevailed until the mid-twentieth century (Norambuena et al., 2018) and was interrupted by the dictatorship, resuming only with the return to democracy.

It is important to note that the newfound democracy in Chile was unequivocally neoliberal. Economic treaties such as Mercosur, Unasur, and more recently the Pacific Alliance have significantly influenced migratory laws (Norambuena et al., 2018; Rodríguez Aranda, 2014). Despite these agreements fostering migration in member territories (Brumat, 2019; Wilhelmy, 2013), Chile has tightened its laws and border control (Wilson & Donnan, 2012a, 2012b), and since 2017, Venezuela has been suspended from Mercosur (Mercosur, 2024).

This situation echoes Fassin’s connection between borders and governmentality (Fassin, 2011; Vaughan-Williams, 2010; Walters, 2015), with security arguments often mobilised to stigmatise entire populations (Massey, 2016; Stephen, 2018). Borders manage the movement of goods and services while restricting people based on economic, political, or security arguments (Borneman, 2012; Wilson & Donnan, 2012b). In Chile, the state “peopled the northern border” to protect it (Grimson, 2012).

But has selectivity disappeared from Chilean legislation? Is migration still an instrument of development? After a careful review of visa policies, it appears that selectivity remains but is now based on neoliberal standards such as meritocracy and capital. The most apparent change

is the restriction on freedom of movement and residence that Mercosur members previously enjoyed. Under new legislation, individuals cannot transition from tourist entry to permanent residence with a work permit (Mercosur, 2024). Instead, individuals must enter with a visa sponsored by a job offer, typically granted to those with higher qualifications (Sección Consular Chile, 2024). Another pathway is the visa for graduates of the top 200 universities according to the Shanghai ranking—currently under review—and the investor and related personnel visa, which grants temporary residence to “people performing top managerial positions and specialised personnel” (Sección Consular Chile, 2024). Additionally, Venezuelans and Haitians are now required to obtain a visa in their home countries before travelling, in an effort to “put the house in order” (Tapia et al., 2020).

The overall strategy seems to be to foster selectivity based on meritocracy, encouraging the arrival of individuals with higher qualifications while deterring those with lower qualifications and capital from even attempting to travel. This is achieved by policing the border and expanding border control to consulates in countries of origin.

In conclusion, Chile’s neoliberal development model is perceived as being under constant threat from destabilising forces. Thus, the immigration of citizens from Latin America, including Colombians, Venezuelans, and Haitians, is framed as a threat. While Colombian immigrants advocate for contributing to Chilean and Colombian development by being hard workers and not rejecting any job, even if they do not fully comply with the law, the Chilean governmentality focuses on increasing border control to ensure the arrival of individuals deemed as agents of development. Reay’s observation is pertinent here, as they assert that meritocracy is often an illusion that harms people from working-class backgrounds by suggesting that one’s status is not a barrier to success (Reay, 2020).

The crossroads at which Chile finds itself is similar to other countries like the UK, where “values of cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism, central to internationalisation, are being challenged by the ideology of right-wing nationalism” (See also Kaya et al., 2020 in France;

Nagel, 2019 in the US; Waterbury, 2020 in Hungary; Weimer & Barlete, 2020, p. 33). Even though legislative changes may have long-term detrimental effects on social, economic, and labour market terms (Chang, 2018; Hassan et al., 2023).

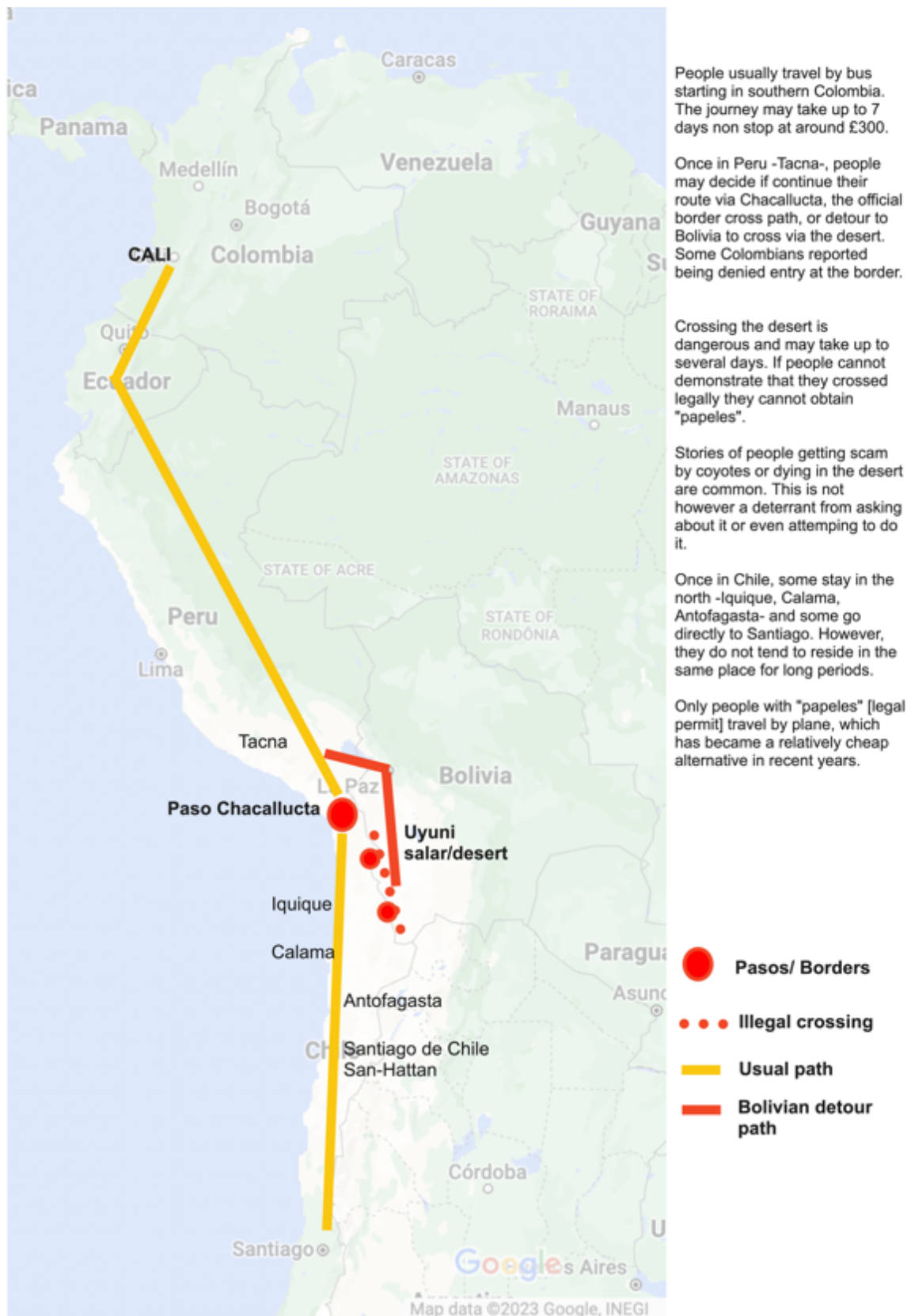


Figure 37: "This map shows the route that migrants used to take before the pandemic. Now, the airline Jetsmart offers direct flights to Santiago and Antofagasta, departing from Cali, Colombia."

Conclusion.

Tsing's perspective on freedom—viewing it as a concept that connects individuals from diverse migratory backgrounds and reveals the range of opinions within a single group—parallels the complexities surrounding the term development. For the Chilean state, development is synonymous with neoliberal principles, meritocracy, and entrepreneurship. In contrast, some radical sectors of Chilean society perceive it as a fragile concept under constant threat from immigrants. Conversely, for many Colombians, *berraquera* embodies the ideals of hard work, entrepreneurship, and tenacity, serving as both a motivation to migrate and a dream to strive towards.

Colombian participants do not aim to redefine development radically. Instead, they present themselves as 'good immigrants' striving to be part of Chile's development narrative.

However, a persistent contradiction arises most of the participants in this research do not meet the qualifications or possess the economic resources required to align with the Chilean development model. This disparity underscores the challenges faced by immigrants striving to integrate into a development framework that remains exclusive and selective.

Conclusion:

Berraquera as Alternative Development.

Berraquera is an alternative way of development, despite being conservative. I began this research over coffee with Maritza in Bogotá, with the intent of exploring alternatives to established development models, akin to the work of Escobar (Escobar, 1992, 2004, 2018; Escobar & Rocheleau, 2008). However, I was struck by the realisation that I could not identify any clear alternatives. Instead, I encountered narratives of hard work and self-entrepreneurship, underscoring how the *mules* have driven development in Colombia—stories that resonate more with liberal development and modernity than with radical alternatives.

In a general way, I explore the question posed by Escobar and Rahenma (Escobar, 1995; Rahnema & Bawtree, 1997), ‘What lies beyond development?’ while they answered this question by urging the exploration of subaltern alternatives in the global south and social movements, I explored it by interrogating *berraquera*, and a more dispersed set of informants. By exploring *berraquera*, I ask: What type of development does it propose? How does it align with or oppose Colombia’s neoliberal model? Who are its key actors, and how do they envision development?

As I have shown along these chapters, *berraquera* represents an alternative form of development, distinct from the state-led neoliberal model of the Colombian state. The core difference lies in its moral foundation— *berraquera* is rooted in Christian values, whereas neoliberal development lacks this ethical dimension. While both advocate for economic progress and embrace liberal principles like hard work and entrepreneurship, *berraquera* sharply diverges in its view of the state, which it sees as corrupt and morally compromised.

In Chapter 1, *Flesh of Pig. Spirit of Martyr*, I advance the central argument of this thesis by highlighting how my informants view certain state positions as morally flawed. They see a fundamental incompatibility between their moral expectations for the future and the state's vision of development. While *berraquera* preserves a moral and ethical foundation, the state, in the view of my participants, has strayed down the wrong path, leaving itself vulnerable to external threats. This moral divergence is key to understanding how *berraquera* frames its alternative approach to development.

Chapter 2, *The Dream of Modernisation*, contributes to the central argument by tracing the historical shift in the Colombian state's conception of development. Initially, *El Progreso* embodied a comprehensive approach, deeply influenced by Catholic morality. Over time, this gave way to neoliberal development, which my informants perceive as morally adrift, stripping development of its ethical foundation. This shift underscores their belief that the current model lacks the moral compass once central to the nation's progress.

Chapter 3, *Politics: Violence and Populism*, strengthens the central argument by revealing that my participants perceive politics as an intrinsically rigged game (*amañado*) and politicians as fundamentally corrupt. This perspective heightens their distrust in political institutions and state affairs, further widening the divide between them and the state.

Chapter 4, *Covid-19: The Reconfiguration of Trust*, contributes to the central argument by examining how the pandemic has deepened the gap between the people and the state. It highlights how mistrust accentuates a sense of rupture—particularly in moral and political terms—reinforcing the separation between neoliberal development and *berraquera*.

Chapter 5, *Of Mules and Unicorns: Rebusque and Informality*, contributes to the main argument by demonstrating that, despite the stark differences between my participants' visions of development and the neoliberal state's perspective, their economic values and ideas

align. It also illustrates how, at the fringes—where the state lacks full control—alternative economic survival strategies can emerge and thrive, often in opposition to state policies.

In Chapter 6, *berraquera* as Development: Colombian Migrations to Chile, the concept of Castrochavismo—a tool relentlessly wielded by right-wing populists in Latin America—is repurposed by my participants to assert their identity as "good immigrants" who contribute to national development. This chapter highlights my informants' desire to engage with and reshape development, infusing it with the values, morality, and practices inherent in *berraquera*.

For my participants, the gap between *Berraquera* and neoliberalism creates a sense of rupture. They don't wait for the state to solve their problems but instead take matters into their own hands. In this process, God and Catholic teachings become central forces shaping their ideas of development.

My informants' call to prioritise morality in development merits serious attention from scholars seeking alternatives to modernity, especially those who overlook subaltern voices that do not overtly challenge the status quo. *Berraquera* is not a radical alternative like *Vivir Bien*, but a conservative one, seeking to restore the morality the state has lost in the national development project. This alternative originates at the fringes of the state's control, formed during a period of territorial expansion, and endures today at the symbolic and physical margins of the state grasp.

The alternative my informants advocate is a return to God and, more broadly, a reintegration of morality as a central tenet of development and modernisation. Once, development and modernisation were part of a grand project aimed at humanity's progress, with the nation-state steering the future. Through the ingenuity and efforts of individuals like my participants, the world would advance to a new, enlightened phase of civilisation. Yet, over time,

development has devolved into a series of numbers, figures, reports, and bureaucracy—an antipolitical machine, as Ferguson has noted.

This research also makes a critical contribution to the anthropology of post-development by highlighting conservative subalterns—often overlooked in development studies. It offers a new perspective on development by focusing on less structured discourses and practices.

Berraquera, as a vernacular term, provides a lens through which to explore the lived experiences of marginalised Colombians—experiences that are often invisible in academic discourse. By foregrounding this concept, we gain a richer, more nuanced understanding of their resilience and day-to-day realities.

Berraquera at the Fringes of the State.

The term *berraquera* originated during a period of colonial expansion, reflecting the essential qualities of those conquering new territories, such as entrepreneurship, tenacity, and strength. Historically, the ideas associated with *berraquera* embody a position of subalternity that persists to this day. As Das and Poole (Poole & Das, 2004) note, the margins are often ambiguous; however, I argue that these margins are both symbolic—due to exclusion from national development projects based on undesirable skills and irregular circumstances pushing individuals into informality—and physical, as they tend to inhabit geographies far from the central state, including marginal urban areas.

Living on the fringes also means viewing the state not as a provider but, at times, as an obstacle. Consequently, they occupy a space where laws, norms, and legality are seen as tools to exploit. This is exemplified in the concept of *rebusque*, which denotes the search for opportunities in various contexts, irrespective of their legality or formality.

La berraquera thus emerges as a response to a state characterized as weak (Rojas, 2001, 2002, 2009; Rojas & Tubb, 2013) Pecaut (Pecaut, 2019; Pécaut, 2012, 2016)). Over time, as the state has adopted increasingly neoliberal positions, its role in people's lives has diminished rather

than strengthened. What was once an entity with a civilising mission aimed at creating development has devolved into a government focused on shrinking its presence, regulating rather than providing for its citizens.

Existing at the fringes has several implications. First, while the state remains a reference point, it is not the only influence on the ideas and actions of my informants. Other forces, such as the Catholic Church, God, caudillos, and political parties, also shape the development of *berraquera*.

Second, the relationship between my informants and the state is fraught with friction. This tension often manifests as feelings “of being used as a tool” [ser instrumentalizado], expressed in the term *amaño* (rigging). For many, state law represents a space of terror, as Taussig (Taussig, 1984, 2013; Taussig, 2005) suggests, given that the state has employed unethical means to impose its vision of development. Moreover, interactions between my informants and the state can lead to perceptions of one as a hindrance to the other, exemplified by instances where participants view the state as an obstacle, while the state complains about their perceived lack of technical skills needed to achieve an *Economía Naranja*.

The Will of God. The Will of the State.

Another significant contribution of this work lies in moving away from a state-centric analysis of development to explore alternative development possibilities through actors beyond the state. In this context, the teachings of God and the historical influence of the Catholic Church significantly shape the concept of *berraquera*, contributing to a moral framework that my informants perceive as lacking in the state-led development model.

I propose a straightforward suggestion for the debate on the anthropology of development, particularly concerning the concept of governmentality. Traditionally, governmentality in development literature has focused on the mechanisms and aspirations of the state in

producing and governing subjects. However, by analysing the influences of other actors, such as God, I can illuminate how individuals adopt and interpret development.

Lemke defines governmentality as “the discursive field in which exercising power is ‘rationalised’ and comprehensive.” While the term government is often associated solely with political meanings, it can be extended to encompass broader “philosophical, religious, medical, and pedagogic instances” involving management, control, self-regulation, and guidance over both mundane and spiritual realms (Lemke, 2001).

When considering the political rationality of the state, several observations arise. Firstly, the Colombian and Chilean states are far from monolithic institutions; they resemble a collection of diverse microorganisms that adhere to specific guidelines, with agents and institutions possessing varying characteristics and objectives. Historically, the Colombian state has continually changed and modernised, often following divergent paths from those of my informants and *berraquera*.

Currently, however, their paths have diverged significantly. While the state sometimes appears to intersect with *berraquera*, it ultimately pursues an amoral and apolitical development trajectory, nearly atheistic in nature. In contrast, my informants hold that there can be no future without the grace of God.

Moreover, the supposed rationality that the state claims to follow is often misleading. It is laden with unarticulated ideas, desires, and dreams of development, rarely coherently defined—almost akin to a fantasy of unicorns nurtured by entrepreneurial and resilient citizens.

Perhaps the most striking revelation from this investigation is that the most relevant force for modernisation and development corresponds to God. This leads to an important aspect of governmentality: the desire to be governed and to participate in the governing process. Findings by myself and others, like Cristina Rojas, indicate that state governance is often

imposed, coerced, and has historically required alliances with paramilitary actors to function effectively (Rojas, 2001, 2002, 2009).

While my participants had a discordant relationship with the state, in their relationship with God, there is acceptance, subordination, and a willing be used as tools. My participants often implore God to guide their steps -Chapter 6- and are reassured by His influence over their lives, including the hands of surgeons as seen in Chapter 4. They are not merely coerced or used; they actively participate in the governing process.

Populism and Development.

Another significant contribution of this thesis lies in its empirical and theoretical exploration of subjects and discourses that have often been overlooked in scholarly work, particularly the right-wing opinions of subalterns. As the anthropology of populism suggests, these perspectives have frequently been dismissed, not only from the political landscape but also from academic discourse (Eller, 2021; Laclau, 1996, 2005, 2006, 2013; Laclau & Howarth, 2015; Retamozo, 2017).

This oversight has limited our understanding of positions like *berraquera*, which, although not advocating for radical change, could nonetheless serve to revitalise a decaying political system. By engaging with these voices, this research opens avenues for a deeper interrogation of alternative development narratives and highlights the potential for meaningful contributions to the political discourse in contexts often defined by marginalisation.

Fostering a dialogue between the anthropology of development and studies of populism presents a valuable opportunity for deeper insight. As highlighted by Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Kaltwasser (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2012), the anthropology of populism often examines the antagonism between “the pure people” and “the corrupt elite,” exploring the notion of *volonté générale*. However, in the context of *berraquera*, this notion extends beyond mere

rhetoric; it encompasses a discourse and a set of practices that propose tangible alternatives quo.

berraquera emerges as a counterhegemonic discourse rooted in grievances that have not been effectively articulated or mobilised by political parties and leaders. This gap underscores the relevance of integrating frameworks from both post-development and populism in this analysis. While post-development offers a lens through which to understand the fragmented nature of *berraquera* and its interplay with neoliberal narratives, the populism framework provides the tools to analyse the relationships it engenders.

Ultimately, this synthesis enables a more comprehensive understanding of *berraquera* as not merely a collection of disjointed grievances but as a potential catalyst for collective action and social change. By recognising the interplay between these frameworks, I can better appreciate how *berraquera* articulates the aspirations of those often sidelined in conventional development discourse, thereby enriching the broader field of development studies. This dialogue invites further exploration into the ways in which alternative discourses can emerge, challenge dominant paradigms, and shape the future of development in contexts marked by inequality and marginalisation.

For the Future.

One of the most significant limitations of this research stems from its timing during the lockdowns caused by COVID-19, an atypical period that altered life and affected the relationships between key actors involved in modernisation and development. Future studies will need to examine how these relationships evolve in a post-pandemic context and which observations from this research will endure and shape future dynamics.

It is still too early to draw definitive conclusions, but at the end of this investigation, both Chile and Colombia have, for the first time, shifted to the political left. What implications does this have for La *berraquera*? Will it fundamentally alter the relationships between people and

states? How much of what I have observed will resonate in the future? These questions extend beyond the scope of this thesis but could offer valuable insights for the field of development studies going forward.

REFERENCES

- Accomazzo, S. (2012). Anthropology of violence: Historical and current theories, concepts, and debates in physical and socio-cultural anthropology. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 22(5), 535-552.
- Acevedo, D. D. (2022). Freedom at work inside and outside the gig economy. In *The Routledge Handbook of the Anthropology of Labor* (pp. 233-242). Routledge.
- Acosta, A., & Abarca, M. M. (2018). BUEN VIVIR
- AN ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVE FROM THE PEOPLES OF THE GLOBAL SOUTH TO THE CRISIS OF CAPITALIST MODERNITY. In V. Satgar (Ed.), *The Climate Crisis* (pp. 131-147). Wits University Press. <https://doi.org/10.18772/22018020541.11>
- Acosta Valencia, G. L., Maya Franco, C. M., Acevedo Merlano, A., & Crawford-Visbal, J. L. (2021). Campaña presidencial colombiana en Twitter (2018): Apropiación, comunicación y subjetividades. *Observatorio*, 15(4), 116-143.
- Afzal, A. (2010). From An Informal To A Transnational Muslim Heritage Economy: Transformations In The Pakistani Ethnic Economy In Houston, Texas. *Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development*, 39(4), 397-424. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41291332>
- Alene, G. D., Duncan, J., & van Dijk, H. (2022). Development, governmentality and the sedentary state: the productive safety net programme in Ethiopia's Somali pastoral periphery. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 49(6), 1158-1180. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2021.1945044>
- Aliaga, V. G. (2017). Whose Populism? Which Democracy? *Anthropology News*, 58(3), e79-e85.
- Allison, A. (2013). Ordinary Refugeeism: Poverty, Precarity, Youth. In *Precarious Japan* (pp. 0). Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822377245-003>
- Altmann, P. (2016). Buen Vivir como propuesta política integral: Dimensiones del Sumak Kawsay. *Mundos Plurales-Revista Latinoamericana de Políticas y Acción Pública*, 3(1), 55-74.
- Amat-García, G., & Agudelo-Zamora, H. D. (2020). Las tareas zoológicas de la Real Expedición Botánica del Nuevo Reino de Granada (1783-1816). *Revista de la Academia Colombiana de Ciencias Exactas, Físicas y Naturales*, 44(170), 194-213.
- Andrade Alvarez, N. M. (2011). Religión, política y educación en Colombia. La presencia religiosa extranjera en la consolidación del régimen conservador durante la Regeneración. *HiSTOReLo. Revista de Historia Regional y Local*, 3(6), 154-172. <https://doi.org/10.15446/historelo.v3n6.12267>
- Andreucci, D., & Kallis, G. (2017). Governmentality, Development and the Violence of Natural Resource Extraction in Peru. *Ecological economics*, 134, 95-103. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2017.01.003>
- Andrews, A. L. (2018). Moralizing regulation: the implications of policing "good" versus "bad" immigrants. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 41(14), 2485-2503. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2017.1375133>
- Anwar, M. A., & Graham, M. (2021). Between a rock and a hard place: Freedom, flexibility, precarity and vulnerability in the gig economy in Africa. *Competition & Change*, 25(2), 237-258.
- Arbeláez, M. A., Fernández, C., & Hernández, D. (2021). Plataformas digitales y contribuciones a seguridad social. El caso de Colombia antes y después de la pandemia.
- Arenas Mendoza, H. A. (2021). 200 años de Constituciones nacionales colombianas (1821-2021). *Cuestiones constitucionales*(45), 47-76.
- Arias Trujillo, R. (2009). La democracia cristiana en Colombia (1959-1960). Observaciones preliminares. *Historia crítica (Bogotá, Colombia)*(39E), 188-216. <https://doi.org/10.7440/histcrit39E.2009.10>
- Arturo, S. D. v., & Menéndez, N. E. (2022). La pandemia en zonas periféricas de Colombia: control sanitario a manos de ilegales en el Norte del Cauca y la Sierra de La Macarena1.
- Asher, K. (2009). *Black and green Afro-Colombians, development, and nature in the Pacific lowlands* / Kiran Asher. Duke University Press.
- Atehortúa Cruz, A. L. (2010). De montoneras de caudillos a Ejércitos Nacionales en América Andina. *Revista Colombiana de Educación*(59), 188-204. <https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=413635252014> (IN FILE)

- Azeem, T. P. B. B. A. (2024). Free Will from a Catholic Perspective.
- Bahar, D., Cowgill, B., & Guzman, J. (2023). Refugee Entrepreneurship: The Case of Venezuelans in Colombia. *Available at SSRN* 4329279.
- Bain-Selbo, E. (2014). Review [Deep in Debt: A Review of David Graeber's Debt: The First 5,000 Years]. *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 97(4), 491-508. <https://doi.org/10.5325/soundings.97.4.0491>
- Bakker, M. (2007). The remittances-to-development discourse and the political agency of the collective migrant. *Migracion y Desarrollo*, 41-63.
- Balan, S. (2012). SUBSTANTIVISM, CULTURALISM AND FORMALISM IN ECONOMIC ANTHROPOLOGY. *Cogito*, 4(2), 1-12. <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/substantivism-culturalism-formalism-economic/docview/1115584853/se-2>
- https://ucl-new-primo.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/openurl/UCL/UCL_VU2?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&rft_val_fmt=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:journal&genre=article&sid=ProQ:ProQ%3Asoecscijournals&title=SUBSTANTIVISM%2C+CULTURALISM+AND+FORMALISM+IN+ECONOMIC+ANTHROPOLOGY&title=Cogito&issn=20667094&date=2012-06-01&volume=4&issue=2&spage=1&au=Balan%2C+Sergiu&isbn=&jtitle=Cogito&btile=&rft_id=info:eric/&rft_id=info:doi/
- Ballvé, T. (2013). Grassroots masquerades: Development, paramilitaries, and land laundering in Colombia. *Geoforum*, 50, 62-75. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2013.08.001>
- Barzilai, S., & Chinn, C. A. (2020). A review of educational responses to the “post-truth” condition: Four lenses on “post-truth” problems. *Educational Psychologist*, 55(3), 107-119.
- Bautista, J. (2014). *An economy of sacrifice: Roman catholicism and transnational labor in the Philippines*. Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore.
- Beck, U. (2000). The cosmopolitan perspective: sociology of the second age of modernity. *The British journal of sociology*, 51(1), 79-105. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-4446.2000.00079.x>
- Becker, H. S. (2008). *Outsiders*. Simon and Schuster.
- Bellofiore, R., & Davies, R. (1998). The Concept of Labor in Marx. *International Journal of Political Economy*, 28(3), 4-34. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40470723>
- Beltrán Cely, W. M. (2013). *Del monopolio católico a la explosión pentecostal: pluralización religiosa, secularización y cambio social en Colombia*. Universidad Nacional de Colombia. Maestría en Sociología.
- Benedict, R. (2005). *The chrysanthemum and the sword: Patterns of Japanese culture*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Beresford, M., Wutich, A., Garrick, D., & Drew, G. Moral economies for water: A framework for analyzing norms of justice, economic behavior, and social enforcement in the contexts of water inequality. *WIREs Water*, n/a(n/a), e1627. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1002/wat2.1627>
- Bernecker, S., Flowerree, A. K., & Grundmann, T. (2021). *The epistemology of fake news*. Oxford University Press.
- Biedzynski, J. (2016). The Development State: Aid, Culture and Civil Society in Tanzania by Maia Green (review). *Journal of global south studies*, 33(2), 85-87. <https://doi.org/10.1353/gss.2016.0032>
- Bjerre-Nielsen, A., & Glavind, K. L. (2022). Ethnographic data in the age of big data: How to compare and combine. *Big Data & Society*, 9(1), 20539517211069893.
- Blanco, C. M. (2020). Simbología religiosa y metáforas del CAMINO en la Biblia. *De aquí a Lima. Estudios fraseológicos del español de España e Hispanoamérica*, 45-64.
- Boellstorff, T. (2015). Coming of age in Second Life. In *Coming of Age in Second Life*. Princeton University Press.
- Boellstorff, T. (2020). Rethinking digital anthropology. In *Digital Anthropology* (pp. 39-60). Routledge.
- Born, G., & Haworth, C. (2017). Mixing it: Digital ethnography and online research methods—A tale of two global digital music genres. In *The Routledge companion to digital ethnography* (pp. 96-112). Routledge.
- Borneman, J. (2012). Border Regimes, the Circulation of Violence and the Neo-authoritarian Turn. In (pp. 119-135). John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118255223.ch7>

- Bornstein, E. (2003). *The spirit of development : Protestant NGOs, morality, and economics in Zimbabwe* / Erica Bornstein. Routledge.
- Botero-García, J. A. (2012). Desempleo e informalidad en Colombia: un análisis de equilibrio general computable. *Capítulo 19. Desempleo e informalidad en Colombia: un análisis de equilibrio general computable*. Pág.: 795-839.
- Bourdieu, P. (2001). *Masculine domination* / Pierre Bourdieu ; translated by Richard Nice. Polity.
- Brown, S. (2012). *British Philosophy and the Age of Enlightenment: Routledge History of Philosophy Volume 5*. Taylor & Francis. <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=couCj7D1Vz0C>
- Brown, S. S. (2006). Can remittances spur development? A critical survey. *International Studies Review*, 8(1), 55-75.
- Brumat, L. (2019). (Libre) circulación de personas y políticas migratorias regionales en el MERCOSUR. *Revista MERCOSUR de políticas sociales*, 3, 10-24.
- Buchanan, T., & Benson, V. (2019). Spreading disinformation on Facebook: Do trust in message source, risk propensity, or personality affect the organic reach of “fake news”? *Social media+ society*, 5(4), 2056305119888654.
- Buechler, S. M. (1995). New social movement theories. *Sociological Quarterly*, 36(3), 441-464.
- Bulloch, H. C. M. (2017). *In Pursuit of Progress: Narratives of Development on a Philippine Island*. University of Hawai'i Press. <https://doi.org/10.21313/hawaii/9780824858865.001.0001>
- Burawoy, M. (1976). The functions and reproduction of migrant labor: Comparative material from Southern Africa and the United States. *American journal of Sociology*, 81(5), 1050-1087.
- Burrell, J. (2009). The Field Site as a Network: A Strategy for Locating Ethnographic Research. *Field Methods*, 21(2), 181-199. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X08329699>
- Bushnell, D. (1993a). *The Making of Modern Colombia: A Nation in Spite of Itself*. University of California Press. <https://doi.org/doi:10.1525/9780520913905>
- Bushnell, D. (1993b). Severing the Ties with Spain (1781–1819). In *The Making of Modern Colombia* (1 ed., pp. 25-49). University of California Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt4cgf7g.5>
- Butter, M., & Knight, P. (2023). *Covid Conspiracy Theories in Global Perspective*. Taylor & Francis.
- Cadavid Misas, R. (1996). *Historia de Antioquia*. Seduca.
- Canclini, N. G., Chiappari, C. L., & López, S. L. (1995). *Hybrid Cultures Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* (NED - New edition ed.). University of Minnesota Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctts9sz>
- Caputo-Levine, D. (2022). Deconstructing the Hustle: Investigating the Meanings of Hustling Within the Carceral State. *Critical Criminology*, 30(2), 267-284. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10612-020-09540-2>
- Caria, S., & Domínguez, R. (2016). Ecuador's Buen vivir: a new ideology for development. *Latin American Perspectives*, 43(1), 18-33.
- Cassaniti, J. L., & Hickman, J. R. (2014). New directions in the anthropology of morality. *Anthropological Theory*, 14(3), 251-262. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1463499614534371>
- Castiglioni, R. (2019). El ocaso del «modelo chileno». *Interciencia*, 44(10), 4-14.
- Castro, W. R. A., & Montes, L. S. P. (2013). Rebusque y mendicidad: Muestra de desigualdad y pobreza en Cúcuta, Norte de Santander, Colombia. *Apuntes del CENES*, 165-188.
- Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica. (2009). *La masacre de El Salado: esa guerra no era nuestra*.
- Chang, W. W. (2018). Brexit and its economic consequences. *The World Economy*, 41(9), 2349-2373. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/twec.12685>
- Chua, E. H. C. (2023). The new monies of the startup world: Future-focused tech ventures as experiments in personal worth. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 29(2), 268-285. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9655.13912>
- Collaborative, F. o. M. R., Nelms, T. C., Maurer, B., Swartz, L., & Mainwaring, S. (2018). Social payments: Innovation, trust, Bitcoin, and the sharing economy. *Theory, culture & society*, 35(3), 13-33.
- Colom, A. (2022). Using WhatsApp for focus group discussions: Ecological validity, inclusion and deliberation. *Qualitative Research*, 22(3), 452-467.
- Corbridge, S., Williams, G., Srivastava, M., & Véron, R. (2005). *Seeing the State: Governance and Governmentality in India* (Vol. 10). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511492211>
- Correa R., J. S. (2009). DEL RADICALISMO A LA REGENERACIÓN. LA CUESTIÓN MONETARIA (1880-1903). *Revista de Economía Institucional*, 11, 161-178.

- http://www.scielo.org.co/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0124-59962009000200010&nrm=iso
- Cruz-González, M. C., & Cárdenas Ruiz, J. D. (2022). La migración venezolana y su construcción en la agenda pública en las conversaciones de Twitter en Suramérica 2014-2019. *Colombia Internacional*(112), 59-87.
- d'Ancona, M. (2017). *Post-truth: The new war on truth and how to fight back*. Random House.
- da Silva, M., & Rodrigues, T. (2021). O Populismo de Direita no Brasil: Neoliberalismo e Autoritarismo no Governo Bolsonaro. *Mediações - Revista de Ciências Sociais*, 26, 86. <https://doi.org/10.5433/2176-6665.2021v26n1p86>
- de Haas, H. (2010). Migration and Development: A Theoretical Perspective. *International migration review*, 44(1), 227-264. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2009.00804.x>
- de Hernández, C. H. (1989). El sagrado corazón en la historia de Colombia. *Revista de la Universidad Nacional (1944-1992)*(22), 80-88.
- De Jong, S., & Mascot, M. H. J. (2010). Closing Development Gaps: Challenges and Policy Options. *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 27. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1663440>
- de la Cadena, M. (2005). Are "Mestizos" Hybrids? The Conceptual Politics of Andean Identities. *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 37(2), 259-284. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3875686>
- De Ramón, A. (1990). La población informal. Poblamiento de la periferia de Santiago de Chile. 1920-1970. *Revista EURE-Revista de Estudios Urbano Regionales*, 16(50).
- de Souza e Silva, J., & Barbosa, J. L. (2013). As favelas como territórios de reinvenção da cidade. *Cadernos do Desenvolvimento Fluminense*, 0(1), 115-126. <https://doi.org/10.12957/cdf.2013.9062>
- del Pilar Peña-Huertas, R., Ruiz, L. E., Parada, M. M., Zuleta, S., & Álvarez, R. (2017). Legal dispossession and civil war in Colombia. *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 17(4), 759-769.
- Delgado, M. S. (2014). Eugenesis: ciencia y religión. Una aproximación al caso chileno. *Revista de Historia Social y de las Mentalidades*, 18(1), 59-83.
- Demaria, F., & Kothari, A. (2020). The Post-Development Dictionary agenda: paths to the pluriverse. In *The Development Dictionary@ 25* (pp. 42-53). Routledge.
- Dhanvantari, S. (2020). The Violent Origins of Psychic Trauma: Frantz Fanon's Theory of Colonial Trauma and Catherine Malabou's Concept of the New Wounded. *Puncta*, 3(2), 33-53.
- Dheer, R. J. S. (2018). Entrepreneurship by immigrants: a review of existing literature and directions for future research. *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal*, 14(3), 555-614. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11365-018-0506-7>
- Di Virgilio, M. M., & Perelman, M. (2022). La vida en las ciudades en tiempos de COVID-19. *Bitácora Urbano Territorial*, 32(2), 7-16.
- Díaz, M. A. C. (2018). Revisión de la literatura sobre economía informal y trabajo de mujeres. *Semestre Económico*, 21(48), 51-71.
- Dini, M., Gligo, N., & Patiño, A. (2021). Transformación digital de las mipymes: elementos para el diseño de políticas.
- Douglas, S. M. (1999). Why Does Immigration Occur?: A Theoretical Synthesis. In (pp. 34). Russell Sage Foundation. <https://doi.org/10.7758/9781610442893.9>
- Dragojlovic, A., & Samuels, A. (2021). Tracing silences: Towards an anthropology of the unspoken and unspeakable. *History and Anthropology*, 32(4), 417-425. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02757206.2021.1954634>
- Duriguetto, M. L. (2017). Criminalização das classes subalternas no espaço urbano e ações profissionais do Serviço Social. *Serviço Social & Sociedade*, 104-122.
- Echeverri B, M. M. (2016). Otredad racializada en la migración forzada de afrocolombianos a Antofagasta (Chile). *Nómadas*, 91-103. http://www.scielo.org.co/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0121-75502016000200007&nrm=iso
- EDUCAR, C. P., DE RIONEGRO, A., & DEL NORTE, F. U. C. (2015). SISTEMATIZACIÓN DE EXPERIENCIAS DEL PROYECTO TABLETAS PARA EDUCAR.
- Eller, J. D. (2021). *The Anthropology of Donald Trump: Culture and the Exceptional Moment*. Taylor & Francis Group. <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=K62EzgEACAAJ>
- Elyachar, J. (2005). NGOs, Business, and Social Capital. In *Markets of Dispossession* (pp. 167-190). Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv111jjq4.10>
- Empson, R. (2020). *Subjective Lives and Economic Transformations in Mongolia : Life in the Gap / Rebecca M. Empson*. University College London.

- Escobar, A. (1992). Imagining a Post-Development Era? Critical Thought, Development and Social Movements. *Social Text*(31/32), 20-56. <https://doi.org/10.2307/466217>
- Escobar, A. (1995). *Encountering development : the making and unmaking of the Third World / Arturo Escobar*. Princeton University Press.
- Escobar, A. (2004). Desplazamientos, desarrollo y modernidad en el Pacífico colombiano. *Conflicto e (in) visibilidad. Retos en los estudios de la gente negra en Colombia*, 1, 53-72.
- Escobar, A. (2018). *Designs for the Pluriverse: Radical Interdependence, Autonomy, and the Making of Worlds*. Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822371816>
- Escobar, A. (2020). *Territories of difference: place, movements, life, redes*. Duke University Press.
- Escobar, A., & Rocheleau, D. (2008). *Territories of Difference: Place, Movements, Life, Redes*. Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822389439>
- Escobar, A., Rocheleau, D., & Kothari, S. (2002). Environmental Social Movements and the Politics of Place. *Development*, 45(1), 28-36. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.development.1110314>
- Escobar, L. J. O. (2017). La debilidad del Estado colombiano en tiempos del neoliberalismo y el conflicto armado. *Colombia Internacional*.
- Escobar-Córdoba, F., Acero-González, Á. R., & Folino, J. O. (2015). Homicidas juveniles en Bogotá, estudio de grupos focales. *Revista de la Facultad de Medicina*, 63(3), 389-398.
- Esping-Andersen, G. (1990). *The three worlds of welfare capitalism / Gøsta Esping-Andersen*. Polity Press.
- Esteve, G. (1994). Basta! Mexican Indians say" enough!". *The Ecologist*, 24(3), 83-86.
- Esteve, G., & Prakash, M. S. (1997). From global thinking to local thinking. *The post-development reader*, 277-289.
- Evans, D. (1996). *An introductory dictionary of Lacanian psychoanalysis / Dylan Evans*. Brunner-Routledge.
- Faier, L. (2013). Affective investments in the Manila region: Filipina migrants in rural Japan and transnational urban development in the Philippines. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 38(3), 376-390. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24582454>
- Fajardo, D. (2004). El conflicto armado y su proyección en el campo. *Guerra, sociedad y medio ambiente*, 67-105.
- Farmer, P. (2004). An anthropology of structural violence. *Current anthropology*, 45(3), 305-325.
- Fassin, D. (2010). The politics of conspiracy theories: On AIDS in South Africa and a few other global plots. *Brown J. World Aff.*, 17, 39.
- Fassin, D. (2011). Policing Borders, Producing Boundaries. The Governmentality of Immigration in Dark Times. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 40(1), 213-226. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-anthro-081309-145847>
- Ferguson, J. (1994). *The anti-politics machine : "development," depoliticization, and bureaucratic power in Lesotho / James Ferguson*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Fernandes, F. L. (2005). Os discursos sobre as favelas e os limites ao direito à cidade. *Revista Cidades*, 2(3).
- Fernández, J. L. (1999). La voz pasiva y la construcción impersonal en español: dos maneras de presentar, manipular y seleccionar información. Español como lengua extranjera, enfoque comunicativo y gramática: actas del IX congreso internacional de ASELE, Santiago de Compostela, 23-26 de septiembre de 1998,
- Flanagan, K., & Jupp, P. C. (2014). Martyrs and martyrdom. *Mortality (Abingdon, England)*, 19(2), 105-116. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13576275.2014.904848>
- Fleck, M. J. (2021). Trump the Caudillo: Tapping into already-existing populist unrest. In J. D. Eller (Ed.), *The Anthropology of Donald Trump: Culture and the Exceptional Moment* (pp. 115-124). Routledge. https://doi.org/https://www.routledge.com/The-Anthropology-of-Donald-Trump-Culture-and-the-Exceptional-Moment/eller/p/book/9780367715922?srsId=AfmBOorrgQ_ffxHpML5lr3M4k6iz-gzoGhrH9UDebwCRVpTxkD9VWqGK
- Foley, K., Lunnay, B., & Ward, P. R. (2023). Feeling and (Dis)trusting in Modern, Post-Truth, Pandemic Times. In P. R. Ward & K. Foley (Eds.), *The Emerald Handbook of the Sociology of Emotions for a Post-Pandemic World* (pp. 211-232). Emerald Publishing Limited. <https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-80382-323-220231011>
- Fonseca, A. B. (2011). *"It's not just about money": an ethnography of rebusque performances and life-stories on public transportation buses in downtown Bogotá, Colombia* Carleton University].

- Fonseca Mejía, C. (1962). Estado fuerte o caudillo. *Estudios de derecho*, 21(62), 489- 491.
<https://doi.org/10.17533/udea.esde.332999>
- Franco-Torres, E. E. (2012). Jorge Eliécer Gaitán: trayectoria e ideología de un caudillo liberal.
- Frega, A. (2002). Caudillos y montoneras en la revolución radical artiguista. *Andes*.
- Friedman, J. (2018). A note on populism and global systemic crisis. *Economic Anthropology*, 5(1), 135-137.
- Frydenlund, S., & Dunn, E. C. (2022). Refugees and racial capitalism: Meatpacking and the primitive accumulation of labor. *Political Geography*, 95, 102575.
- Galvis-Aponte, L. A. (2012). Informalidad laboral en las áreas urbanas de Colombia. *Documentos de Trabajo Sobre Economía Regional y Urbana*; No. 164.
- García, R., Caldas, J. M., Davila, D. E., & Thoene, U. (2020). Políticas públicas de inclusión digital en Colombia. Una evaluación del Plan Vive Digital I (2010-2014). *Revista espacios*, 41(07).
- Gardiner Barber, P. (2008). The Ideal Immigrant? Gendered class subjects in Philippine-Canada migration. *Third world quarterly*, 29(7), 1265-1285.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01436590802386385>
- Gardner, K., & Lewis, D. (2015). The Anthropology of Development. In *Anthropology and Development* (pp. 78-124). Pluto Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt183p13j.11>
- Geertz, C. (1978). The Bazaar Economy: Information and Search in Peasant Marketing. *The American Economic Review*, 68(2), 28-32. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1816656>
- Gemici, K. (2008). Karl Polanyi and the antinomies of embeddedness. *Socio-Economic Review*, 6(1), 5-33. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ser/mwl034>
- Gibbon, P. (2002). Civil Society, Locality and Globalization in Rural Tanzania: A Forty-Year Perspective. *Development and Change*, 32, 819-844. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-7660.00228>
- Gibson-Graham, J. K. (2011). A feminist project of belonging for the Anthropocene. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 18(1), 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2011.535295>
- Gibson-Graham, J. K. G., & Roelvink, G. (2010). An Economic Ethics for the Anthropocene. *Antipode*, 41(s1), 320-346. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2009.00728.x>
- Giddens, A. (1991). *The Consequences of Modernity*. Polity Press.
- Gilbert, A. (2002). On the Mystery of Capital and the Myths of Hernando De Soto: What Difference Does Legal Title Make? Gilbert, A. (2002) *On the mystery of capital and the myths of Hernando de Soto - what difference does legal title make*. *International Development Planning Review*, 24 (1). pp. 1-19. ISSN 14746743, 24. <https://doi.org/10.3828/idpr.24.1.1>
- Ginzl, D. J. (2006). Wall Street: Symbol of Good or Evil. *Com. Lending Rev.*, 21, 46.
- Giuliano, P., & Ruiz-Arranz, M. (2009). Remittances, financial development, and growth. *Journal of Development Economics*, 90(1), 144-152.
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdeveco.2008.10.005>
- Gledhill, J. (1999). Official masks and shadow powers: towards an anthropology of the dark side of the state. *Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development*, 199-251.
- Goldfinch, S. (2015). Property rights and the mystery of capital: A review of de Soto's simplistic solution to development. *Progress in Development Studies*, 15(1), 87-96.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1464993414546971>
- Gomberg-Muñoz, R. (2018). Populism is not the problem-capitalism is. *Economic Anthropology*, 5(1).
- Gómez, M. A. (2009). La política internacional migratoria colombiana a principios del siglo XX. *Memoria y sociedad*, 13(26), 7-17.
- Gómez, P. P. (2014). Arte y estética en la encrucijada descolonial.
- Gómez-González, M. d. P., Chávez-Díaz, A., & Sierra-Macías, A. (2023). COVID-19 y sus imaginarios socioculturales en Latinoamérica: una herramienta para la salud pública. *Revista de Salud Pública*, 22, 393-399.
- Gómez-San Luis, A. H., & Almanza-Avendaño, A. M. (2013). Análisis crítico de discursos sobre prostitución de niñas y adolescentes. *Revista Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales, Niñez y Juventud*, 11, 647-658.
http://www.scielo.org.co/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1692-715X2013000200014&nrm=iso

- González, O. L. (2008). El rebusque, una estrategia de integración social de los migrantes colombianos en Francia. *Revista Colombiana de Antropología*, 44(2), 251-279. <https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=105012451001> (IN FILE)
- González, O. L. (2010). El voto de los colombianos en el exterior: elecciones entre disfuncionamientos y rebusque. *Ciencia Política*, 5(9), 62-77.
- González Pizarro, J. A., & González Tello, P. M. (2020). Migración latinoamericana en situación de marginalidad. Campamentos y educación en Antofagasta, 2012-2018. *Estudios pedagógicos (Valdivia)*, 46(2), 359-379.
- Götz, N. (2015). 'Moral economy': its conceptual history and analytical prospects. *Journal of Global Ethics*, 11(2), 147-162. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449626.2015.1054556>
- Graan, A., Hodges, A., & Stalcup, M. (2020). Fake news and anthropology: A conversation on technology, trust, and publics in an age of mass disinformation. *Political and legal anthropology review*.
- Graham, M. (2019). *Digital Economies at Global Margins*. The MIT Press. <https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/10890.001.0001>
- Graham, M., & Mann, L. (2013). Imagining a Silicon Savannah? Technological and Conceptual Connectivity in Kenya's BPO and Software Development Sectors [<https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1681-4835.2013.tb00396.x>]. *THE ELECTRONIC JOURNAL OF INFORMATION SYSTEMS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES*, 56(1), 1-19. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1681-4835.2013.tb00396.x>
- Grajales, J. (2011). The rifle and the title: paramilitary violence, land grab and land control in Colombia. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 38(4), 771-792. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2011.607701>
- Gramsci, A., Buttigieg, J. A., & Callari, A. (1992). *Prison notebooks / Antonio Gramsci ; edited with introduction by Joseph A. Buttigieg ; translated by Joseph A. Buttigieg and Antonio Callari*. Columbia University Press.
- Griffith, D. (2022). *The cultural value of work: livelihoods and migration in the World's economies*. Cambridge University Press.
- Grillo, R. D., & Stirrat, R. L. (1997). *Discourses of development : anthropological perspectives / edited by R.D. Grillo and R.L. Stirrat*. Berg.
- Grimson, A. (2012). Nations, Nationalism and "Borderization" in the Southern Cone.
- Grinberg, S. M., & Verón, E. F. (2022). COVID-19 y digitalización en contextos de pobreza urbana []. *Bitácora Urbano Territorial*, 32(2), 89-100.
- Guarnizo, L. E., & Díaz, L. M. (2003). La migración internacional: una perspectiva colombiana. *Alejandro Portes, Luis Guarnizo y Patricia Landolt, La globalización desde abajo: transnacionalismo inmigrante y desarrollo. La experiencia de Estados Unidos y América Latina, México, Miguel Ángel Porrúa*, 277-308.
- Gudeman, S. F. (2016). *Anthropology and economy / Stephen F. Gudeman*. Cambridge University Press.
- Gudynas, E. (2011). Buen vivir: Germinando alternativas al desarrollo. *América Latina en movimiento*, 462, 1-20.
- Gudynas, E. (2016). Beyond varieties of development: disputes and alternatives. *Third world quarterly*, 37(4), 721-732. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2015.1126504>
- Guerrero-Gutiérrez, M.-F. (2023). Discursos, narrativas de odio y reconciliación. FORUM. Revista Departamento de Ciencia Política,
- Guillén, G. V. (1993). La modernidad en Colombia: La secularización de la cultura. *Revista Foro*(22), 107.
- Gulfo, Y. E. C. (2018). Diversidad sexual en la historia jurídica colombiana. *Pensamiento jurídico*(47), 149-165.
- Gusterson, H. (2017). From Brexit to Trump: Anthropology and the rise of nationalist populism. *American Ethnologist*, 44(2), 209-214.
- Gutiérrez-Peláez, M. (2021). Not knowing and not wanting to know: Reflections regarding psychosocial and psychotherapeutic interventions in armed conflict scenarios. *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, 38(4), 348.
- Guzmán, G., Borda, O. F., & Luna, E. U. (2019). *La violencia en Colombia: estudio de un proceso social* (Vol. 10). Ediciones Tercer Mundo.
- Habermas, J. (1991). *The structural transformation of the public sphere: An inquiry into a category of bourgeois society*. MIT press.

- Hackl, A. (2022). Good immigrants, permitted outsiders: conditional inclusion and citizenship in comparison. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 45(6), 989-1010.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2021.2011938>
- Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (2019). *Ethnography : principles in practice / Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson* (Fourth edition ed.). Routledge.
- Han, C. (2012). *Life in debt: times of care and violence in neoliberal Chile* (1 ed.). University of California Press. <https://doi.org/10.1525/j.ctt1pncz5>
- Hart, K. (1973). Informal Income Opportunities and Urban Employment in Ghana. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 11(1), 61-89. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/159873>
- Hart, K. (1985). THE INFORMAL ECONOMY. *Cambridge Anthropology*, 10(2), 54-58.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/23816368>
- Harvey, D. (2009). *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*. Columbia University Press.
- Heath, K. W. (2003). Defining the nature of vernacular. *Material Culture*, 35(2), 48-54.
- Helg, A. (1987). *Aline Helg, La educación en Colombia, 1918-1957. Una historia social, económica y política. Translation of Civiliser le peuple et former les élites. Bogotá: CEREC, 1987. Full text available on:*
<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=txu.059173025475691&view=1up&seq=2>.
- Henderson, J. D. (2001). *Modernization in Colombia : the Laureano Gómez years, 1889-1965 / James D. Henderson*. University Press of Florida.
- Henry, S., & Sills, S. (2006). Informal economic activity: Early thinking, conceptual shifts, continuing patterns and persistent issues – a Michigan study. *Crime, Law and Social Change*, 45(4), 263-284. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10611-006-9036-2>
- Hervik, P. (2018). Out-trumping economic consequences in populist voting. *Economic Anthropology*, 5(1), 144-147. <https://doi.org/10.1002/sea2.12111>
- Hervik, P. (2020). Neo-nationalism and far right studies: Anthropological perspectives. In *Researching the Far Right* (pp. 92-108). Routledge.
- Hinsch, W. (2011). Ideal Justice and Rational Dissent. A Critique of Amartya Sen's The Idea of Justice. *Analyse & Kritik*, 33(2), 371-386. <https://doi.org/doi:10.1515/auk-2011-0202>
- Ho, K. (2018). Markets, myths, and misrecognitions: Economic populism in the age of financialization and hyperinequality. *Economic Anthropology*, 5(1), 148-150.
- Hochschild, J. L. (1996). Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/doi:10.1515/9781400821730>
- Hodges, A. (2017). Trump's Formulaic Twitter Insults. *Anthropology News*, 58(1), e206-e210.
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/AN.308>
- Horevitz, E. (2009). Understanding the Anthropology of Immigration and Migration. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 19(6), 745-758.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10911350902910914>
- Huff, R. (2020). governmentality. In *Encyclopedia Britannica*.
- Hurtado, C. (2016). Políticas agrarias: Entre la legalización del despojo y acaparamiento de tierras en Colombia. *Reflexiones universitarias sobre el derecho a la alimentación, el agua y el saneamiento y la tierra en el marco de la agenda 2030. Es una publicación coordinada y editada por Fundación Alianza por los Derechos, la Igualdad y la Solidaridad Internacional dentro del proyecto de Educación para el Desarrollo "Reflexionando sobre la Desigualdad, la Justicia Global y los Derechos Humanos en la Comunidad Universitaria Valenciana el marco de los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible" financiado*, 68.
- Hurtado, V. B., J. A. . (2016). *Mitos utilizados en la campaña del no en el plebiscito por la paz en redes sociales: Facebook y Twitter Los Libertadores*. Colombia.
- Jäkel, O. (2003). How can mortal man understand the road he travels?: prospects and problems of the cognitive approach to religious metaphor. *The Bible through metaphor and translation*, 55-86.
- Jansson, O. (2006). Tríadas putumayenses: relaciones patrón-cliente en la economía de la cocaína. *Revista Colombiana de Antropología*, 42, 223-247.
- Jaramillo, J. F. (2007). La Constitución de 1991: un análisis de sus aportes desde una perspectiva histórica. *Pensamiento jurídico*(20).
- Jasanoff, S., & Simmet, H. R. (2017). No funeral bells: Public reason in a 'post-truth' age. *Social Studies of Science*, 47(5), 751-770.
- Jenna, B. (2016). The Fieldsite as a Network. In *The Routledge Companion to Digital Ethnography*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315673974.ch5>
- Jimeno, M. (1998). Corrección y respeto, amor y miedo en las experiencias de. *Las violencias: inclusión creciente*, 311.

- Jimeno, M. (2001). Violence and Social Life in Colombia. *Critique of Anthropology*, 21(3), 221-246. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0308275x0102100302>
- Kasmir, S. (2020). The anthropology of labor. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Anthropology*.
- Katigbak, E. O. (2015). Moralizing emotional remittances: transnational familyhood and translocal moral economy in the Philippines' 'Little Italy'. *Global Networks*, 15(4), 519-535. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/glob.12092>
- Katsambekis, G. (2017). The populist surge in post-democratic times: Theoretical and political challenges. *The Political Quarterly*, 88(2), 202-210.
- Kaya, A., Robert, M.-V., & Tecmen, A. (2020). Populism in Turkey and France: nativism, multiculturalism and Euroskepticism. *Turkish Studies*, 21(3), 361-391.
- Kearney, M. (1994). From the invisible hand to visible feet: anthropological studies of migration and development. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 15(1), 331-361.
- Kerekes, C. B., & Williamson, C. R. (2008). Unveiling de Soto's mystery: property rights, capital formation, and development. *Journal of Institutional Economics*, 4(3), 299-325. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1744137408001100>
- Khanal, K., & Todorova, Z. (2019). Remittances and Households in the Age of Neoliberal Uncertainty. *Journal of Economic Issues*, 53(2), 515-522. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00213624.2019.1603763>
- Kirby, D. A. (2003). Science consultants, fictional films, and scientific practice. *Social Studies of Science*, 33(2), 231-268.
- Kireyev, A. (2006). The macroeconomics of remittances: the case of Tajikistan.
- Kirk, N. (2017). Labour and the Politics of Empire: Britain and Australia 1900 to the Present. In *Labour and the politics of Empire*. Manchester University Press.
- Kiss, C. (2002). From liberalism to conservatism: The federation of young democrats in post-communist Hungary. *East European Politics and Societies*, 16(03), 739-763.
- Klaas, B. (2008). From miracle to nightmare: An institutional analysis of development failures in Côte d'Ivoire. *Africa Today*, 55(1), 109-126.
- Kloosterman, R., & Rath, J. (2001). Immigrant entrepreneurs in advanced economies: mixed embeddedness further explored. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 27(2), 189-201.
- Köhn, S., & Siré, N. (2022). Swap It on WhatsApp: The Moral Economy of Informal Online Exchange Networks in Contemporary Cuba. *The Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology*, 27(1-2), 80-100. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/jlca.12583>
- Kokkali, I. (2011). From scapegoats to 'good' immigrants?
- Albanians' supposedly 'successful' integration to Greece. *Quaderni del Circolo Rosselli*, 3/2011, 161-173. <https://shs.hal.science/halshs-00691884>
- Kontinen, T., & Millstein, M. (2017). Rethinking Civil Society in Development: Scales and Situated Hegemonies. *Forum for development studies*, 44(1), 69-89. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08039410.2016.1264994>
- Kopytoff, I. (1986). The cultural biography of things: commoditization as process. In A. Appadurai (Ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (pp. 64-92). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/DOI: 10.1017/CBO9780511819582.004>
- Kothari, U. (2019). *A Radical History of Development Studies : Individuals, Institutions and Ideologies*. Zed Books. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ucl/detail.action?docID=5915285>
- Kovalainen, A. (2015). *Qualitative Methods in Business Research : A Practical Guide to Social Research*. SAGE Publications Ltd. <http://digital.casalini.it/9781473952515>
- <http://digital.casalini.it/5018479>
- Lackey, J. (2021). Echo chambers, fake news, and social epistemology. *The epistemology of fake news*, 206-227.
- Laclau, E. (1996). Why do empty signifiers matter to politics. *Emancipation (s)*, 36(46).
- Laclau, E. (2005). *On populist reason*. Verso.
- Laclau, E. (2006). La deriva populista y la centroizquierda latinoamericana. *Nueva sociedad*, 205(1), 56-62.
- Laclau, E. (2013). ¿ Qué es populismo? Conferencia de Ernesto Laclau. *Controversias y Concurrencias Latinoamericanas*, 5(8), 12-18.
- Laclau, E., & Howarth, D. R. (2015). *Ernesto Laclau : post-Marxism, populism, and critique / edited by David Howarth*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203762288>

- Lander, E. D., Enrique D. Mignolo, Walter D. Coronil, Fernando Escobar, Arturo ,Castro-Gómez, Santiago, Moreno, Alejandro, López Segrera, Francisco. Quijano, Aníbal (2000). La colonialidad del saber: eurocentrismo y ciencias sociales. Perspectivas latinoamericanas. CLACSO, Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales. <https://doi.org/http://biblioteca.clacso.edu.ar/clacso/sur-sur/20100708034410/lander.pdf>
- Lara, C. A. V. (2013). Los imaginarios de la colonización antioqueña desde 1860 hasta 1930 en la zona del Eje Cafetero: una visión antropológica. *Revista de Educación y pensamiento*(20), 7-30.
- Largo Vargas, J. M. (2018). Del análisis de las relaciones entre el Estado y la Iglesia católica, al estudio conceptual y lingüístico de la secularización en los siglos XIX y XX en Colombia: una revisión historiográfica y una propuesta. *Anuario de Historia Regional y de las Fronteras*, 23(2), 25-50.
- Lebowitz, M. A. (2015). Understanding the Critique of the Gotha Programme. In (pp. 42). Monthly Review Press.
- Lee, E. S. (1966). A Theory of Migration. *Demography*, 3(1), 47-57. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2060063>
- Lemke, T. (2001). 'The birth of bio-politics': Michel Foucault's lecture at the Collège de France on neo-liberal governmentality. *Economy and Society*, 30(2), 190-207. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03085140120042271>
- Leongómez, E. P. (1989). Los orígenes del movimiento armado comunista en Colombia (1949-1966). *Análisis político*(7), 7-32.
- Lerma, B. R. L. (2010). Mujeres negras (sirvientas, putas, matronas): una aproximación a la mujer negra de Colombia. *Temas de Nuestra América Revista de Estudios Latinoamericanos*, 26(49), 135-158.
- Levitt, P. (1998). Social remittances: Migration driven local-level forms of cultural diffusion. *International migration review*, 32(4), 926-948.
- Lewis, W. A. (1954). Economic development with unlimited supplies of labour.
- Li, T. M. (2007). *The Will to Improve: Governmentality, Development, and the Practice of Politics*. Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822389781>
- Lindtner, S. M. (2020). Prototype Citizen
- COLONIAL DURABILITIES IN TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION. In *Prototype Nation* (pp. 39-73). Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvz938ps.6>
- Liu, Q., & Palmer, D. A. (2020). Chinese NGOs at the interface between governmentality and local society: An actor-oriented perspective. *China Information*, 35(2), 158-178. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0920203X20942094>
- Liz, A. (2012). Consecuencias cataclísmicas de la expulsión de los jesuitas: el caso de los Moxos. *e-Spania*, 12. <https://doi.org/10.4000/e-spania.21448>
- Llano, A. V. (2013). Campesinos pobres y señores de la tierra. Migraciones hacia el sur de Antioquia 1800-1900. *Revista Historia y Memoria*(6), 41-66.
- Llano, A. V. (2018). *Colonización antioqueña y vida cotidiana: construcción de la región caldense*. Editorial Universidad de Caldas.
- Lockie, S. (2017). Post-truth politics and the social sciences. *Environmental Sociology*, 3(1), 1-5.
- Londoño, J. (2002). El modelo de colonización antioqueña de James Parsons. Un balance historiográfico. *Fronteras de la Historia*(7), 187-226.
- López Daza, G. A., & Gómez García, C. F. (2014). La legalización por vía judicial del consumo de la dosis personal de droga: ¿un desafío al sistema democrático en América Latina? *Justicia Juris*, 10(1), 102-116.
- López, O. T. (1996). Colombia: Tradición y modernidad en el siglo XIX religión y política. *Historia Caribe*(2), 9.
- López-Murcia, J. D. (2022). Look Who's Back: Recentralisation in Colombia. In J. D. López-Murcia (Ed.), *Recentralisation in Colombia* (pp. 1-18). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-81674-2_1
- Lorente Muñoz, M. (2023). El extraordinario martirio de Lorenzo de Roma.
- Lucy, M. (2022). *In Search of Us : Adventures in Anthropology* [Book]. Atlantic Books. <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,shib&db=nlebk&AN=3139042&site=ehost-live&scope=site&custid=s8454451>
- Lugo-Vera, P. J. (2015). Antropología y" estudios de la violencia" en Colombia: en busca de una perspectiva crítica. *Revista Colombiana de Antropología*, 51(1), 245-269.

- Luhmann, N., & Behnke, K. (1994). The Modernity of Science. *New German Critique*(61), 9-23.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/488618>
- Luhmann, T. M. (2015). Thick description: methodology. *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 24(2), 291-293.
- Lynch, J. (1983). Bolívar and the Caudillos. *The Hispanic American historical review*, 63(1), 3-35.
<https://doi.org/10.1215/00182168-63.1.3>
- Mabogunje, A. L. (1970). Systems approach to a theory of rural-urban migration. *Geographical analysis*, 2(1), 1-18.
- MacKenzie, D. (1976). Eugenics in Britain. *Social Studies of Science*, 6(3-4), 499-532.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/030631277600600310>
- Madianou, M., & Miller, D. (2012). Polymedia: Towards a new theory of digital media in interpersonal communication. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 16(2), 169-187.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1367877912452486>
- Mair, J. (2017). Post-truth anthropology. *Anthropology Today*, 33(3), 3-4.
- Malamud, C., & Núñez, R. (2020). El COVID-19 en América Latina: desafíos políticos, retos para los sistemas sanitarios e incertidumbre económica. *Real Instituto Elcano*.
- Marazzi, C. (2011). The violence of financial capitalism. *MIT Press Books*, 1.
- Marcus, G. E. (1995). Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 24, 95-117.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2155931>
- Marquardt, B. (2011). Estado y constitución en la Colombia de la Regeneración del Partido Nacional 1886-1909. *Ciencia Política*, 6(11), 56-81.
- Márquez, I. D., & Restrepo, P. F. B. (2013). *La Economía Naranja: Una oportunidad infinita*. Inter-American Development Bank. <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=wCfOoQEACAAJ>
- Martin, J. D., & Hassan, F. (2020). News media credibility ratings and perceptions of online fake news exposure in five countries. *Journalism Studies*, 21(16), 2215-2233.
- Martínez, F. (1997). Apogeo y decadencia del ideal de la inmigración europea en Colombia, siglo XIX. *Boletín cultural y bibliográfico*, 34(44), 3-45.
- Martínez Pizarro, J., & Cano Christiny, M. V. (2022). Sobre las contribuciones de la migración al desarrollo sostenible: estudios en países seleccionados.
- Martínez Rangel, R., & Soto Reyes Garmendia, E. (2012). El Consenso de Washington: la instauración de las políticas neoliberales en América Latina. *Política y Cultura*(37), 35-64.
<https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=26723182003> (IN FILE)
- Martz, J. D. (1963). [La Violencia en Colombia; Estudio de un proceso social., Germán Guzmán, Orlando Fals Borda, Eduardo Umaña Luna]. *The Hispanic American historical review*, 43(2), 303-305. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2510520>
- Marx, K. (2020). *Capital* An Abridged Edition: An Abridged Edition
Capital An Abridged Edition (D. McLellan, Ed.). Oxford University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/owc/9780199535705.001.0001>
- 10.1093/owc/9780199535705.003.0006
- Marx, K., & Engels, F. (2020). *The communist manifesto / Karl Marx and Frederick Engels* (D. McLellan, Ed. Updated edition / edited with an introduction and notes by David McLellan. ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Massey, D. S. (2016). The Mexico-U.S. Border in the American Imagination. *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 160(2), 160-177. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26159208>
- Mattingly, C. (2012). Two virtue ethics and the anthropology of morality. *Anthropological Theory*, 12(2), 161-184. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1463499612455284>
- Mauss, M. (2002). *The gift : the form and reason for exchange in archaic societies*. Routledge.
- Mbembé, J.-A., & Meintjes, L. (2003). Necropolitics. *Public culture*, 15(1), 11-40.
- McGranham, C. (2017). An anthropology of lying: Trump and the political sociality of moral outrage. *American Ethnologist*, 44(2), 243-248.
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/amet.12475>
- McGranahan, C. (2017). An anthropology of lying: Trump and the political sociality of moral outrage. *American Ethnologist*, 44(2), 243-248.
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/amet.12475>
- McWilliams, S. A. (2022). Truth as Trophy: The Social Construction of Veracity. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, 35(2), 448-459.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10720537.2020.1727386>

- Mead, M., & Métraux, R. (2000). *The study of culture at a distance* (Vol. 1). Berghahn Books.
- Melki, J., Tamim, H., Hadid, D., Makki, M., El Amine, J., & Hitti, E. (2021). Mitigating infodemics: The relationship between news exposure and trust and belief in COVID-19 fake news and social media spreading. *Plos one*, 16(6), e0252830.
- Melo, J. O. (2008, August 6). *La idea del progreso en el siglo XIX, ilusiones y desencantos, 1780-1930* [Conference paper]. Revista de Estudios Colombianos, Charlottesville.
- Méndez, A. A. (2019). América Latina y la ilusión nacional. Liberales y conservadores: historia, tensión y pugnas durante la consolidación del proyecto nacional del siglo XIX. *Nexus*, 25. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.25100/nc.v0i25.8191>
- Mendoza, P. (2015). L'art du rebusque dans les rues de Bogota. (*pensamiento*), (*palabra*)... *Y obra*(13).
- Meo, A. (2012). Masculinidad y juventud en sectores populares. Entre el “mal camino” y la respetabilidad. *Imágenes y voces de estudiantes secundarios. Escuela, futuro y masculinidades*, 249-265.
- Meyer, D. S., & Minkoff, D. C. (2004). Conceptualizing Political Opportunity*. *Social Forces*, 82(4), 1457-1492. <https://doi.org/10.1353/sof.2004.0082>
- Meza, D. (2020a). In a Pandemic Are We More Religious? Traditional Practices of Catholics and the COVID-19 in Southwestern Colombia. *International Journal of Latin American Religions*, 4(2), 218-234. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41603-020-00108-0>
- Meza, D. (2020b). “Mamita: protégenos de la Pandemia”. La misa a través de Facebook, una etnografía digital en el suroccidente colombiano. *Perifèria. Revista d'investigació i formació en Antropologia*, 25(2), 50-62.
- Michelutti, L. (2017). “We Are All Chávez”: Charisma as an Embodied Experience. *Latin American Perspectives*, 44(1), 232-250. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0094582x16666023>
- Michelutti, L., Hoque, A., Martin, N., Picherit, D., Rollier, P., Ruud, A. E., & Still, C. (2018). *Mafia Raj: The Rule of Bosses in South Asia*. Stanford University Press.
- Michelutti, L., & Picherit, D. (2021). Le bandit et ses mythes: La production collective du charisme violent [introduction]. *Terrain (Paris, 1983)*(74). <https://doi.org/10.4000/terrain.21028>
- Micić, L. (2017). Digital Transformation and Its Influence on GDP. *ECONOMICS*, 5(2), 135-147. <https://doi.org/doi:10.1515/eoik-2017-0028>
- Mignolo, W. D. (2011). *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*. Duke University Press. https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=m_vnpxCkoZcC
- Mignolo, W. D. (2017). COLONIALITY: THE DARKEST SIDE OF MODERNITY. *Revista Brasileira de Ciências Sociais*, 32(94). <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.17666/329402/2017>
- Miranda, L. C. d. S. (2008). Vizinhos do (in) conformismo: o Movimento dos Sem Teto da Bahia entre a hegemonia e a contra-hegemonia.
- Moallic, B. (2021). El Salvador: un autoritarismo millennial. *Nueva sociedad*(295), 149-161.
- Molano, A. (2021). *Rebusque mayor-Relatos de mulas, traquetos y embarques*. Bogotá aguilas.
- Montenegro, S., Llano, J., & Ibañez, D. (2019). *El PIB de la cocaína 2005-2018: Una estimación empírica*. Universidad de los Andes Bogotá.
- Moore, J. W. (2017). The Capitalocene, Part I: on the nature and origins of our ecological crisis. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 44(3), 594-630.
- Morales, Y. J. G. (2005). Política científica y bibliometría: usos. *Nómaditas*(22), 241-254.
- Moreno Cardozo, B. D. R. (2013). Un grito que rompe los espejos. *Desde el Jardín de Freud*, 0(13), 21-37. <https://revistas.unal.edu.co/index.php/jardin/article/view/40692>
- Morris, M. L. (2019). Speculative fields: Property in the shadow of post-conflict Colombia. *Cultural Anthropology*, 34(4), 580–606-580–606.
- Mpofu, B. (2014). Chapter 1 After the Big Clean-Up: Street Vendors, the Informal Economy and Employment Policy in Zimbabwe. In H. Keith & S. John (Eds.), *People, Money and Power in the Economic Crisis* (pp. 19-40). Berghahn Books. <https://doi.org/doi:10.1515/9781782384687-003>
- Mudde, C., & Kaltwasser, C. R. (2012). *Populism in Europe and the Americas: Threat or corrective for democracy?* Cambridge University Press.
- Murphy, L. (2020). A Glossary for the Pluriverse.
- Musaraj, S. (2017). Anthropology and Economy (Gudeman's Anthropology and Economy). *Current anthropology*, 58(6), 822-823. <https://doi.org/10.1086/695438>
- Nagel, C. (2019). Populism, immigration and the Trump phenomenon in the US. *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*, 37(1), 12-16.

- Narváez, J. H., Obando-Guerrero, L. M., Hernández-Ordoñez, K. M., & De la Cruz-Gordon, E. K. (2021). Bienestar psicológico y estrategias de afrontamiento frente a la COVID-19 en universitarios. *Universidad y Salud*, 23(3), 207-216.
<https://doi.org/10.22267/rus.212303.234>
- Navarro, M. J., Peñafiel, N. A., & Magpantay, E. (2023). Productivity: A Hidden Engine of Growth in Philippine Remittance Inflows under Gravity Model (Pre-Pandemic Period). *International Journal of Social and Management Studies*, 4(2), 141-154.
- Navarro, V. (2000). Development and Quality of Life: A Critique of Amartya Sen's Development as Freedom. *International Journal of Health Services*, 30(4), 661-674.
<https://doi.org/10.2190/10XK-UYUC-E9P1-CLFX>
- Neira, M. A. (1991). El uso del tiempo libre de los obreros 1910-1945. *Anuario Colombiano de Historia Social y de la Cultura*, 145-184.
- Nguyen, C. T., & Nguyen, C. T. (2020). 1Agency as Art. In *Games: Agency As Art* (pp. 0). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190052089.003.0001>
- Norambuena, C., Navarrete, B., & Matamoros, R. (2018). Entre continuidades y rupturas, mejor la continuidad. Política migratoria chilena desde comienzo de siglo XX. *Revista Austral de Ciencias Sociales*(34), 217-237.
- Nourani Rinaldi, P. (2022). The Age of Transition: Postdevelopment and North-South Synergies. *Latin American Perspectives*, 49(1), 237-256. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0094582x211060381>
- Nussbaum, M. C. (2011). *Creating capabilities : the human development approach / Martha C. Nussbaum*. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.4159/harvard.9780674061200>
- Nuzhath, T., Tasnim, S., Sanjwal, R. K., Trisha, N. F., Rahman, M., Mahmud, S. F., Arman, A., Chakraborty, S., & Hossain, M. M. (2020). COVID-19 vaccination hesitancy, misinformation and conspiracy theories on social media: A content analysis of Twitter data.
- Ocampo, G. I. (1986). Hacienda, parentesco y mentalidad: la colonización antioqueña en el Sinú. *Revista Colombiana de Antropología*, 26, 7-42.
- Ocampo López, J. (2001). *Mitos y leyendas de antioquia la grande*. Plaza y Janés Editores Colombia.
- Ochoa Valencia, D., & Ordoñez, A. (2004). Informalidad en Colombia: causas, efectos y características de la economía del rebusque. *Estudios gerenciales*, 20(90), 105-116.
- OECD. (2019). *OECD Reviews of Digital Transformation: Going Digital in Colombia*.
<https://doi.org/doi:https://doi.org/10.1787/781185b1-en>
- Ollman, B. (1977). The fetishism of commodities. In B. Ollman (Ed.), *Alienation: Marx's Conception of Man in a Capitalist Society* (2 ed., pp. 195-201). Cambridge University Press.
<https://doi.org/DOI: 10.1017/CBO9780511611902.031>
- Ono, K. A., & Sloop, J. M. (1995). The critique of vernacular discourse. *Communications Monographs*, 62(1), 19-46.
- Ordóñez, J. T. (2015). Friendship and the Inner Workings of Day Labor. In *Jornalero* (1 ed., pp. 57-82). University of California Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt14btfzf.9>
- Ordóñez, J. T., & Arcos, H. E. R. (2019). (Des) orden nacional: la construcción de la migración venezolana como una amenaza de salud y seguridad pública en Colombia. *Revista Ciencias de la Salud*, 17, 48-68.
- Ortner, S. B. (2016). Dark anthropology and its others: Theory since the eighties. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, 6(1), 47-73. <https://doi.org/10.14318/hau6.1.004>
- Oslender, U. (2007). Violence in development: the logic of forced displacement on Colombia's Pacific coast. *Development in Practice*, 17(6), 752-764.
- Pablo II, J. (1998). SALVIFICI DOLORIS SOBRE EL SENTIDO CRISTIANO DEL SUFRIMIENTO HUMANO. In: Ediciones Palabra, SA.
- Paisana, M., Pinto-Martinho, A., & Cardoso, G. (2020). Trust and fake news: Exploratory analysis of the impact of news literacy on the relationship with news content in Portugal.
- Palacios, M. (2009). *El café en Colombia, 1850-1970 una historia económica, social y política* (4, corregida y aumentada ed.). El Colegio de Mexico.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv47w55p>
- Pardo, M. (2002). Entre la autonomía y la institucionalización: dilemas del movimiento negro colombiano. *Journal of Latin American Anthropology*, 7(2), 60-84.
- Parra, J. (2013). Complicaciones de lo ilegal y de lo informal: el “business”, una propuesta conceptual. *Antípoda. Revista de Antropología y Arqueología*(17), 205-228.

- Parra, J., Pérez-Pons, M. E., & González, J. (2021). The impact and correlation of the digital transformation on GDP growth in different regions worldwide. *Distributed Computing and Artificial Intelligence, Special Sessions, 17th International Conference*.
- Parry, J. P., & Bloch, M. (1989). *Money and the morality of exchange / edited by J. Parry and M. Bloch*. Cambridge University Press.
- Parsons, J. J. (2022). La colonización antioqueña en el occidente de Colombia.
- Pécaut, D. (2019). *MODERNIZACION Y ENFRENTAMIENTOS ARMADOS EN LA COLOMBIA DEL SIGLO XX; MODERNIZACION Y ENFRENTAMIENTOS ARMADOS EN LA COLO.* UNIVERSIDAD DEL VALLE.
- Pécaut, D. (1993). 13. Violencia y política en Colombia. In. Instituto de Estudios Peruanos. <https://doi.org/10.4000/books.ifea.2185>
- Pécaut, D. (2012). *Orden y violencia: Colombia 1930-1953*. Universidad Eafit.
- Pécaut, D. (2016). Symbolique nationale, libéralisme et violences. *Problèmes d'Amérique latine*, 101(2), 11-64. <https://doi.org/10.3917/pal.101.0011>
- Pedersen, M. A. (2023). Editorial introduction: Towards a machinic anthropology. In (Vol. 10, pp. 20539517231153803): SAGE Publications Sage UK: London, England.
- Penen, L. M. (2018). La lucha del movimiento social católico en contra del matrimonio igualitario en Colombia: un medio para legitimar el estilo de vida católico (2009-2015). *Estudios Socio-Jurídicos*, 20, 129-163. http://www.scielo.org.co/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0124-05792018000200129&nrm=iso
- Peters, B. G., & Murillo S, L. (2005). Gobernanza y burocracia pública: ¿ nuevas formas de democracia o nuevas formas de control? *Foro internacional*, 585-598.
- Peters, M. A., Rider, S., Hyvönen, M., & Besley, T. (2018). *Post-truth, fake news: Viral modernity & higher education*. Springer.
- Petri, D. P. (2023). El impacto de las medidas sanitarias para combatir el COVID-19 sobre la regulación religiosa: Estudio de Colombia, Cuba, México y Nicaragua (2020-2021). *Rhombus*, 3(1), 41-69. <https://revistas.ulacit.ac.cr/index.php/rhombus/article/view/25>
- Philbin, S. P., & Ayón, C. (2016). Luchamos por nuestros hijos: Latino immigrant parents strive to protect their children from the deleterious effects of anti-immigration policies. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 63, 128-135. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2016.02.019>
- Pillen, A. (2016). Language, Translation, Trauma. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 45(1), 95-111. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-anthro-102215-100232>
- Pink, S., Horst, H., Postill, J., Hjorth, L., Lewis, T., & Tacchi, J. (2015). *Digital ethnography: Principles and practice*. Sage.
- Pinzón, O. A. H. (2009). Las minorías étnicas colombianas en la constitución política de 1991. *Prolegómenos. Derechos y Valores*, 12(24), 189-212.
- Pitt-Rivers, J. (2011). The place of grace in anthropology. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, 1(1), 423-450.
- Pizarro, J. A. G. (2020). Desde la influencia del darwinismo social hasta el imperio de los derechos humanos. Inmigración en Chile entre 1907 y 2018. *Estudios de derecho*, 77(169), 323-348.
- Plata, W. E., Plata, D., & Acevedo, J. A. (2023). El covid-19 y las iglesias cristianas. Representaciones de la pandemia entre católicos, protestantes y pentecostales en Colombia, 2020-2021. *Revista Colombiana de Sociología*, 46(1), 195-218. <https://doi.org/10.15446/rsc.v46n1.101569>
- Polanyi, K., & MacIver, R. M. (1957). *The great transformation / Karl Polanyi ; foreword by Robert M. MacIver*. Beacon Press.
- Polleri, M. (2019). Conflictual collaboration. *American Ethnologist*, 46(2), 214-226. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/amet.12763>
- Poole, D., & Das, V. (2004). *Anthropology in the margins of the state / edited by Veena Das and Deborah Poole* (1st ed.). School of American Research Press.
- Portes, A. (1998). Social Capital: Its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 24(1), 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.24.1.1>
- Portes, A., Castells, M., & Benton, L. A. (1989). *The informal economy: Studies in advanced and less developed countries*. JHU Press.
- Portes, A., & Guarnizo, L. E. (2019). Tropical capitalists: US-bound immigration and small-enterprise development in the Dominican Republic. In *Migration, remittances, and small business development* (pp. 101-131). Routledge.

- Portes, A., Guarnizo, L. E., & Landolt, P. (1999). The study of transnationalism: pitfalls and promise of an emergent research field. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 22(2), 217-237.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/014198799329468>
- Portes, A., & Landolt, P. (2000). Social Capital: Promise and Pitfalls of its Role in Development. *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 32(2), 529-547.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022216X00005836>
- Postill, J. (2016). Remote Ethnography. In *The Routledge Companion to Digital Ethnography*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315673974.ch6>
- Postill, J. (2024). *The Anthropology of Digital Practices: Dispatches from the Online Culture Wars*. Taylor & Francis.
- Quattrociocchi, W., Scala, A., & Sunstein, C. R. (2016). Echo chambers on Facebook. Available at SSRN 2795110.
- Quezada, W. E. P. (2009). El catolicismo liberal (o liberalismo católico) en Colombia decimonónica. *Franciscanum*, 51(152), 71-132.
- Quezada, W. E. P. (2020). Gustavo Arce Fustero. De espaldas a Cristo. Una historia del anticlericalismo en Colombia, 1849-1948. Medellín: Editorial Universidad de Antioquia, 2018, 290 pp. *Trashumante. Revista Americana de Historia Social*(15), 178-182.
- Quiceno Toro, N. (2016). *Vivir sabroso : luchas movimientos afroatreños, en Bojayá, Chocó, Colombia / Natalia Quiceno Toro*. Editorial Universidad del Rosario.
- Rabasa, J. (1998). Del zapatismo: reflexiones sobre lo folclórico y lo imposible en la insurrección subalterna del EZLN. *Revista Andina de Letras*(9).
- Rahnema, M., & Bawtree, V. (1997). *The post-development reader*.
- Raijman, R. (2005). Mexican Immigrants and Informal Self-Employment in Chicago. *Human Organization*, 60(1), 47-55. <https://doi.org/10.17730/humo.60.1.emtq4bq4c70tqyqr>
- Raju, D. (2017). David Harvey's Theory of Accumulation by Dispossession: A Marxist Critique. *World Review of Political Economy*, 8(4), 590-616.
<https://doi.org/10.13169/worlrevipoliecon.8.4.0590>
- Rakopoulos, T. (2018). Show me the money: Conspiracy theories and distant wealth. *History and Anthropology*, 29(3), 376-391.
- Ramírez, J., & Grajales, M. d. P. O. (2021). Disputa política y decisiones gubernamentales sobre migración: el giro a la derecha en Argentina, Brasil y Ecuador. *Revista Izquierdas*, 50, 1-28.
- Ramírez Vallejo, D. A., & Santamaría Velasco, F. (2022). Actos de habla de la izquierda y de la derecha colombiana en el Paro Nacional de Colombia 2021: análisis de las publicaciones en Twitter de Álvaro Uribe Vélez y Gustavo Petro. *Revista Latinoamericana de Estudios del Discurso*, 22(2), 103-131. <https://periodicos.unb.br/index.php/raled/article/view/42782>
- Ramírez-Pimienta, J. C. (1998). Corrido de narcotráfico en los años ochenta y noventa: un juicio moral suspendido. *Bilingual Review/La Revista Bilingüe*, 23(2), 145-156.
- Ramos-Pérez, J. F. (2021). Digitalización e inclusión financiera en Colombia durante la pandemia 2020.
- Ratha, D., Eigen-Zucchi, C., & Plaza, S. (2016). *Migration and remittances Factbook 2016*. World Bank Publications.
- Reales Utría, A. (2016). La democracia representativa en el marco de los derechos humanos en Colombia. *JURÍDICAS CUC*.
- Reay, D. (2020). The Perils and Penalties of Meritocracy: Sanctioning Inequalities and Legitimizing Prejudice. *The Political Quarterly*, 91(2), 405-412.
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923X.12829>
- Reginensi, C. (2015). Etnografía das margens da cidade: a Margem da Linha em Campos dos Goytacazes. *Terceiro Milênio: Revista Crítica de Sociologia e Política*, 5(2), 19-40.
- Reményi, P., Glied, V., & Pap, N. (2023). Good and Bad migrants in Hungary. The populist story and the reality in Hungarian migration policy. *Social Policy Issues*, 59(4), 323-344.
- Restrepo, E., Rojas, A., Saade, M., Arias, J., Camacho, R. P., Roza, E., Santoyo, Á., Zambrano, M., Montenegro, L., & Álvarez, M. (2017). *Antropología hecha en Colombia: Tomo II*. Colegio de Etnólogos y Antropólogos Sociales, AC (CEAS).
- Restrepo, L. F. (2009). Reinventing the Lacandón: Subaltern Representations in the Rain Forest of Chiapas. *Hispanic review*, 77(4), 503-506.
- Retamozo, M. (2017). La teoría del populismo de Ernesto Laclau: una introducción. *Estudios políticos*, 41, 157-184.
- Richards, D. G. (1997). The Political Economy of the Chilean Miracle [Chile: The Political Economy of Development and Democracy in the 1990s., David E. Hojman; The Chilean Economy:

- Policy Lessons and Challenges., Barry P. Bosworth, Rudiger Dornbusch, Raul Laban; Chile's Free-Market Miracle: A Second Look., Joseph Collins, John Lear; Politics in Chile: Democracy, Authoritarianism, and the Search for Development., Lois Hecht Oppenheim; Democracy and Poverty in Chile., James Petras, Fernando Ignacio Leiva, Henry Veltmeyer; Pinochet's Economists: The Chicago School in Chile., Juan Gabriel Valdes]. *Latin American Research Review*, 32(1), 139-159. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2504050>
- Richards, P. (2013). *Race and the Chilean Miracle*
- Neoliberalism, Democracy, and Indigenous Rights*. University of Pittsburgh Press.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt7zw936>
- Rincón, N. M. (2019). Cartografiando la realidad comunitaria: un acercamiento a las voces de la comunidad La Fortaleza. *Ciudad Paz-Ando*, 12(2 (2019)), 45-59.
- Ríos Molina, C. A. (2002). Identidad y religión en la colonización en el Urabá antioqueño. *Bogotá: Editorial Comunicación*.
- Rivera, A., & Gudeman, S. (1990). THE HOUSE AND THE MARKET. In A. Rivera & S. Gudeman (Eds.), *Conversations in Colombia: The Domestic Economy in Life and Text* (pp. 139-159). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/DOI: 10.1017/CBO9780511558009.008>
- Rivera, E. d. J. V. (2007). Historia del paramilitarismo en Colombia. *História (São Paulo)*, 26, 134-153.
- Rivera-Largacha, S., & Gutiérrez-Peláez, M. (2022). The Politics of Psychoanalysis in Colombia: Social Action for the Representation of the Radical Other. In *Psychoanalysis as Social and Political Discourse in Latin America and the Caribbean* (pp. 103-114). Routledge.
- Robbins, J. (2019). On Knowing Faith: Theology, Everyday Religion, and Anthropological Theory. *Religion and Society*, 10(1), 14-29. <https://doi.org/10.3167/arrs.2019.100103>
- Rodrigo, L. M., Romaní, G., & Ricci, E. (2018). Immigrant Entrepreneurs in Antofagasta, Chile: The Contribution of South-South Entrepreneurs. *Academia Revista Latinoamericana de Administración*, 31(3), 450-470.
- Rodríguez, A. D. C. (2024). *Dinámicas de construcción del discurso político en Twitter: análisis macro y micro en las cuentas del presidente Juan Manuel Santos y el expresidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez Del Quindío*.
- Rodríguez Aranda, I. (2014). Nuevas Configuraciones Económicas en el Asia-Pacífico y sus Consecuencias para América Latina: Desde el APEC a la Alianza del Pacífico. *Dados - Revista de Ciências Sociais*, 57(2), 553-580.
<https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=21831470009> (IN FILE)
- Rodríguez, J. J., & Restrepo-Echavarria, N. J. (2022). 12. Política, mentiras y discursos de odio: Colombia y España como paradigmas de las campañas de manipulación y noticias falsas en Europa y América Latina. *Estrategias de comunicación: Género, persuasión y Redes sociales*.
- Rodríguez Mir, J. (2008). Los movimientos indígenas en América Latina. Resistencias y alteridades en un mundo globalizado.
- Rodríguez Ortiz, A. M., & Santamaría-Velasco, F. (2023). Expresivos de odio institucionalizados en el discurso político colombiano. Un análisis de 'guerrillero', 'castrochavista', 'vándalo' y 'gente de bien'. *Signo y Pensamiento*, 42. <https://doi.org/10.11144/Javeriana.syp42.eoid>
- Rodríguez Rodríguez, D. (2013). REMESAS SAGRADAS. LA CONSTRUCCIÓN DE UN TEMPLO CATÓLICO EN UNA COMUNIDAD POBLANA DE MIGRANTES INTERNACIONALES DE ORIGEN NAHUA. *Iberoforum. Revista de Ciencias Sociales de la Universidad Iberoamericana*, VIII(16), 67-84. <https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=211030706003> (IN FILE)
- Rojas, C. (2001). "Development": What's in a Word? Views from the Paradigms. *Canadian Journal of Development Studies / Revue canadienne d'études du développement*, 22(3), 571-596. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02255189.2001.9668833>
- Rojas, C. (2002). *Civilization and violence regimes of representation in nineteenth-century Colombia / Cristina Rojas ; foreword by Michael J. Shapiro*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Rojas, C. (2009). Colombia's Neoliberal Regime of Governance: Securitization by Dispossession. In L. Macdonald & A. Ruckert (Eds.), *Post-Neoliberalism in the Americas* (pp. 231-245). Palgrave Macmillan UK. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230232822_15
- Rojas, C., & Tubb, D. (2013). La Violencia in Colombia, through Stories of the Body [<https://doi.org/10.1111/blar.12110>]. *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, 32(s1), 126-150. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/blar.12110>

- Rojas, D. (2017). La actitud de la Iglesia católica colombiana durante las hegemonías liberal y conservadora de 1930 a 1953. *Cuestiones teológicas*, 44, 67-94.
<https://doi.org/10.18566/cueteo.v44n101.a04>
- Rondón Palmera, C. (2007). Pentecostalismo y minorías religiosas. Aportes a la sociología de la religión. *Revista Colombiana de Sociología*, 0(28), 95-113.
<https://revistas.unal.edu.co/index.php/recs/article/view/8002>
- Roniger, L., & Senkman, L. (2023). Vulnerability and Conspiracy Theories: Latin America in the Time of Covid-19. In *Covid Conspiracy Theories in Global Perspective* (pp. 353-365). Routledge.
- Rose, N., O'Malley, P., & Valverde, M. (2006). Governmentality. *Annual Review of Law and Social Science*, 2(1), 83-104. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.lawsocsci.2.081805.105900>
- Rowe, S. B., & Alexander, N. (2017). On post-truth, fake news, and trust. *Nutrition Today*, 52(4), 179-182.
- Rueda Pineda, C., & Espinosa Poveda, L. V. (2019). Influencia política de Álvaro Uribe Vélez a través de Twitter, durante el plebiscito por la paz 2016 en Colombia. *Ciencia UniSalle*.
- Ruiz-Alba, N., & Mancinas-Chávez, R. (2020). The communications strategy via Twitter of Nayib Bukele: the millennial president of El Salvador. *Communication & Society*, 259-275.
- Ryburn, M. (2016). Living the Chilean dream? Bolivian migrants' incorporation in the space of economic citizenship. *Geoforum*, 76, 48-58.
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2016.08.006>
- Salcedo, S. J. J. E. (2004). Las vicisitudes de los jesuitas en Colombia durante el siglo XIX. *Theologica Xaveriana*, 0(152).
<https://revistas.javeriana.edu.co/index.php/teoxaveriana/article/view/20149>
- Saldarriaga Velez, s. (2010). La racionalidad del fanatismo: independencia, secularización y educación en Colombia, siglos XVIII al XX [Article]. *Historia de la Educación*, 77+.
<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A270894452/IFME?u=anon~cb215bdd&sid=googleScholar&xid=1c5e205f>
- Salinas, G. (2021). *Chile: A Role Model of Export Diversification Policies?* International Monetary Fund. https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=BvI_EAAAQBAJ
- Sánchez-Jabba, A. (2011). La economía del mototaxismo: el caso de Sincelejo. *Documentos de Trabajo Sobre Economía Regional y Urbana*; No. 140.
- Sanford, V. (2004). Contesting displacement in Colombia: citizenship and state sovereignty at the margins. *Anthropology in the Margins of the State*, 253-277.
- Santamaría, J. (2020). La Masacre De El Salado Como Paradigma De Violencia Soberana Paramilitar. *eidós(SPE34)*, 161-191.
- Santillana, L. P., & Bustamante, N. R. (2021). *Mucho camello, poco empleo: por qué el trabajo de las mujeres en Colombia es escaso, desvalorado y mal remunerado*. Universidad de los Andes.
- Saraf, A. (2020). Frontiers. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Anthropology*.
- Schavelzon, S. (2015). *Plurinacionalidad y Vivir Bien/Buen Vivir: dos conceptos leídos desde Bolivia y Ecuador post-constituyentes*. Abya Yala Quito.
- Scheper-Hughes, N., & Bourgois, P. (2004). Introduction: Making sense of violence. *Violence in war and peace: An anthology*, 1-27.
- Scheper-Hughes, N., & Bourgois, P. I. (2004). *Violence in war and peace: An anthology* (Vol. 5). Blackwell Pub.
- Scheper-hughes, N. (2008). Whose Violence? Death in America-A California Triptych. *Social Anthropology/Anthropologie Sociale*, 16(1), 77-82.
- Scott, J. C. (1977). *The moral economy of the peasant: Rebellion and subsistence in Southeast Asia*. Yale University Press.
- Selmeczi, A. (2011). 'From shack to the Constitutional Court' The litigious disruption of governing global cities. *Utrecht Law Review*, 60-76.
- Sen, A. (1999). *Development as freedom / Amartya Sen*. Oxford University Press.
- Siegenthaler, F., & Bublatzky, C. (2021). (Un) Sighted Archives of Migration—Spaces of Encounter and Resistance: An Introduction. *Visual Anthropology*, 34(4), 283-295.
- Sierra Lopera, L. M. (2011). Álvaro Uribe: un presidente de teflón: la estrategia de opinión pública que lo hizo inmune a las crisis.
- Simanca, J. J. A. (2020). Emprendimiento e informalidad empresarial, un estudio de caso en venezolanos residentes en Barranquilla. *Renovat: Revista de Estudios Interdisciplinarios en Ciencias Sociales, Tecnología e Innovación*, 4(1), 81-92.

- Simoni, V., & Voirol, J. (2021). Remittances and morality: family obligations, development, and the ethical demands of migration. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 47(11), 2516-2536. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2020.1779678>
- Slotta, J. (2019). The annotated Donald Trump: signs of circulation in a time of bubbles. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, 29(3), 397-416.
- Sobreviñas, A. B., & Cruz Tulud, G. (2022). Migrant Remittances, Development, and Catholic Social Teaching. In *Catholicism in Migration and Diaspora* (pp. 89-102). Routledge.
- Solari, C. D. (2019). Transnational moral economies: The value of monetary and social remittances in transnational families. *Current Sociology*, 67(5), 760-777. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392118807531>
- Sonntag, H. R. (2001). Dependency Theory. In N. J. Smelser & P. B. Baltes (Eds.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (pp. 3501-3505). Pergamon. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/B0-08-043076-7/01890-8>
- Sosa A, G. (2001). Guerra y caudillos en la delimitación de la frontera sur de Colombia (1809-1834). *Procesos. Revista Ecuatoriana de Historia*, 1(17), 61-78. <https://doi.org/10.29078/rp.v1i17.288>
- Standing, G. (2012). The Precariat: From Denizens to Citizens? *Polity*, 44(4), 588-608. <https://doi.org/10.1057/pol.2012.15>
- Stephen, L. (2018). Creating Preemptive Suspects: National Security, Border Defense, and Immigration Policy, 1980–Present. *Latin American Perspectives*, 45(6), 7-25. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0094582x17699907>
- Steven, E. P. (1973). Marianismo: The Other Face of Machismo. *Female and Male in Latin*.
- Stewart, A. (1992). A Prospectus on the Anthropology of Entrepreneurship. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 16(2), 71-92. <https://doi.org/10.1177/104225879201600206>
- Stigler, G. J. (1958). Ricardo and the 93% Labor Theory of Value. *The American Economic Review*, 48(3), 357-367. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1809772>
- Stoller, P. (2018a). *Adventures in blogging: Public anthropology and popular media*. University of Toronto Press.
- Stoller, P. (2018b). Resisting the alternate realities of global populism. *Economic Anthropology*, 5(1), 138-140. <https://doi.org/10.1002/sea2.12109>
- Stubbs, P., & Lendvai, N. (2016). Re-assembling and disciplining Social Europe. *Europe Unfinished*, 31.
- Sturm, T., & Albrecht, T. (2021). 'Constituent Covid-19 apocalypses: contagious conspiracism, 5G, and viral vaccinations'. *Anthropology & Medicine*, 28(1), 122-139. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13648470.2020.1833684>
- Suaréz Guava, L. A. (2017). GUACAS: TEORÍAS DEL MUNDO EN LOS ANDES COLOMBIANOS. *Mopa Mopa*, 1(22). <https://revistas.udenar.edu.co/index.php/rmopa/article/view/2975>
- Swift, J. (1977). Sahelian pastoralists: underdevelopment, desertification, and famine. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 6, 457-478.
- Tapia, R. D., Rodríguez, R. R., & Rojas, D. Q. (2020). "Ordenar la casa": securitización y producción de irregularidad en el norte de Chile. *Sociologías*, 22(55), 172-196.
- Taragín-Zeller, L., & Kessler, E. (2021). "It's Not Doctrine, This Is Just How It Is Happening!": Religious Creativity in the Time of COVID-19. *Religions*, 12(9), 747. <https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/12/9/747>
- Taussig, M. (1984). Culture of Terror--Space of Death. Roger Casement's Putumayo Report and the Explanation of Torture. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 26(3), 467-497. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/178552>
- Taussig, M. (2013). *The magic of the state*. Routledge.
- Taussig, M. T. (1992). *The nervous system / Michael Taussig*. Routledge.
- Taussig, M. T. (2005). *Law in a lawless land : diary of a "limpieza" in Colombia / Michael Taussig* (University of Chicago Press ed.). University of Chicago Press.
- Taussig, M. T. (2010). *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America*. The University of North Carolina Press. https://doi.org/10.5149/9780807898413_taussig
- Taylor, B. (2013). From alterglobalization to Occupy Wall Street: Neoanarchism and the new spirit of the left. *City*, 17(6), 729-747. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13604813.2013.849127>
- Thompson, E. P. (1971). The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century. *Past & Present*(50), 76-136. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/650244>

- Tijoux, M. E. (2013). Niños(as) marcados por la inmigración peruana: estigma, sufrimientos, resistencias. *Convergencia Revista de Ciencias Sociales*(61).
<https://convergencia.uaemex.mx/article/view/1051>
- Tijoux, M. E. (2014). El Otro inmigrante “negro” y el Nosotros chileno. Un lazo cotidiano pleno de significaciones”. *Boletín Onteaken*, 17, 1-15.
- Tijoux, M. E. (2016). *Racismo en Chile: la piel como marca de la inmigración*. Editorial Universitaria de Chile.
- Timofeeva, O. (2017). Lexical Loans and Their Diffusion in Old English: of 'gospels', 'martyrs', and 'teachers'. *Studia neophilologica*, 89(2), 215-237.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00393274.2017.1297208>
- Tomkins, A., Duff, J., Fitzgibbon, A., Karam, A., Mills, E. J., Munnings, K., Smith, S., Seshadri, S. R., Steinberg, A., & Vitillo, R. (2015). Controversies in faith and health care. *The Lancet*, 386(10005), 1776-1785.
- Toren, C. (1989). Drinking cash: the purification of money through ceremonial exchange in Fiji. In J. Parry & M. Bloch (Eds.), *Money and the Morality of Exchange* (pp. 142-164). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/DOI: 10.1017/CBO9780511621659.006>
- Torres-Solis, M., & Ramírez-Valverde, B. (2019). Buen vivir y vivir bien: alternativas al desarrollo en Latinoamérica. *Latinoamérica. Revista de estudios Latinoamericanos*(69), 71-97.
- Troccoli, G. (2018). *Building Belize City : autonomy, skill and mobility amongst Belizean and Central American construction workers* University of St Andrews].
- Truitt, A. (2020). Money. The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Anthropology. In: URL: <https://www.anthroencyclopedia.com/entry/money> (accessed 2 September
- Tsing, A. L. (2015). *The Mushroom at the End of the World*
- On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*. Princeton University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvc77bcc>
- Turra Díaz, O. (1997). Inmigración colonizadora y modernización agrícola: Chile en el siglo XIX. *Revista de Historia*, 1(7), 159-169. <https://doi.org/10.29393/RH7-11ICOT10011>
- Urán, A. (2013). La legalización de la minería a pequeña escala en Colombia. *Letras Verdes. Revista Latinoamericana de Estudios Socioambientales*(14), 255-283.
- Uribe Alarcón, M. V., & Restrepo Uribe, E. A. (1997). *Antropología en la modernidad : : identidades, etnicidades y movimientos sociales en Colombia*. Instituto Colombiano de Antropología.
- Uribe, M. (2008). Mata que Dios perdona. Gestos de humanización en medio de la inhumanidad que circunda a Colombia. In.
- Urrego, M. A. (1998). Mitos fundacionales, reforma política y nación en Colombia. *Nómadas*, 8, 10-18.
- Valencia Gutiérrez, A. (2012). La Violencia en Colombia de M. Guzmán, O. Fals y E. Umaña y las trasgresiones al Frente Nacional. *Revista Colombiana de Sociología*.
- Valentine, B. L. (1975). *Hustling and other hard work in the ghetto* Union Institute and University].
- Valera Marin, A. M., & Miranda Delgado, R. G. (2023). Instrumentalización de la migración venezolana en las elecciones presidenciales de Colombia (2018) y Perú (2021). Un análisis crítico del discurso. *Discursos del sur*(11), 247-267.
- Vásquez, M. F. (2018). Degeneración y mejoramiento de la raza: ¿higiene social o eugenesia? Colombia, 1920-1930. *História, Ciências, Saúde-Manguinhos*, 25.
- Vaughan-Williams, N. (2010). The UK Border Security Continuum: Virtual Biopolitics and the Simulation of the Sovereign Ban. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 28(6), 1071-1083. <https://doi.org/10.1068/d13908>
- Velásquez, I. F. (2024). Conventillos, violencia y vida cotidiana, Santiago-Chile, 1880-1930: un análisis de expedientes judiciales. *Páginas (Rosario): Revista Digital de la Escuela de Historia*, 16(41), 11.
- Vélez-Torres, I. (2016). Disputes over gold mining and dispossession of local afrodescendant communities from the Alto Cauca, Colombia. *Third World Thematics: A TWQ Journal*, 1(2), 235-248.
- Vertovec, J. (2021). “No trabajaré pa' ellos”: Entrepreneurship as a form of state resistance in Havana, Cuba. *Economic Anthropology*, 8(1), 148-160.
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1002/sea2.12191>
- Villa Posse, E. (1993). Mitos y Leyendas de Colombia, Volumen II. *Ediciones IADAP, Quito*.
- Villela Cortés, F., & Linares Salgado, J. E. (2011). Eugenesia: Un análisis histórico y una posible propuesta. *Acta bioethica*, 17, 189-197.

- http://www.scielo.cl/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1726-569X2011000200005&nrm=iso
- Volpe, M. A. (2015). Catholic Moral Anthropology. In *The Oxford Handbook of Catholic Theology*.
- Wade, P. (2000). *Music, race, & nation : música tropical in Colombia / Peter Wade*. University of Chicago Press.
- Wade, P. (2003). Repensando el mestizaje. *Revista Colombiana de Antropología*, 39, 273-296.
- Wade, P. (2020). Colombia, Country of Regions. In (pp. 99-121). Duke University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822373070-007>
- Wallis, C. (2013). *Technomobility in China: Young Migrant Women and Mobile Phones*. NYU Press.
<https://doi.org/10.18574/9780814784815>
- Walters, W. (2015). Reflections on Migration and Governmentality. *Movements. Journal for critical migration and border regime studies*, 1(1).
- Waterbury, M. A. (2020). Populist Nationalism and the Challenges of Divided Nationhood: The Politics of Migration, Mobility, and Demography in Post-2010 Hungary. *East European Politics and Societies*, 34(4), 962-983. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325419897772>
- Watts, M. (2017). Development and governmentality. In *Development* (pp. 515-544). Routledge.
- Weber, M. (2012). *The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism / Max Weber ; new introduction and translation by Stephen Kalberg* (S. Kalberg, Ed.). Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315063645>
- Weimer, L., & Barlete, A. (2020). The rise of nationalism: The influence of populist discourses on international student mobility and migration in the UK and US. In *Universities as political institutions* (pp. 33-57). Brill.
- Werbner, P. (2001). Metaphors of spatiality and networks in the plural city: A critique of the ethnic enclave economy debate. *Sociology*, 35(3), 671-693.
- Westermeyer, W. (2022). 2 Stigmatized identity motivating right-wing populism: How the tea party learned to love Donald Trump. In (pp. 21-39).
- Wilhelmy, M. (2013). Alianza del Pacífico: una visión desde Chile. *Estudios internacionales (Santiago)*, 45(175), 119-125.
- Wilson, K. L., & Martin, W. A. (1982). Ethnic enclaves: A comparison of the Cuban and Black economies in Miami. *American journal of Sociology*, 88(1), 135-160.
- Wilson, T. M., & Donnan, H. (2012a). 7 Border Regimes, the Circulation of Violence and the Neo-authoritarian Turn
- A Companion to Border Studies. In (pp. 119-136). Wiley-Blackwell (Publisher).
https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C4087715
- Wilson, T. M., & Donnan, H. (2012b). Borders and Border Studies. In (pp. 1-25). John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118255223.ch1>
- Winick, S. D. (2018). Rumors of our deaths: Fake news, folk news, and far away moes. *Journal of American Folklore*, 131(522), 388-397.
- Wolloch, N. (2009). William Smellie and Enlightenment Anti-Anthropocentrism. *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 33(2), 45-63. <https://doi.org/10.1215/00982601-2008-045>
- Woodcock, J., & Graham, M. (2020). *The gig economy : a critical introduction / Jamie Woodcock, Mark Graham*. Polity.
- Xie, Y., & Gough, M. (2011). Ethnic enclaves and the earnings of immigrants. *Demography*, 48(4), 1293-1315.
- Zaloom, C. (2012). 169 Traders And Market Morality. In K. K. Cetina & A. Preda (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Sociology of Finance* (pp. 0). Oxford University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199590162.013.0010>
- Zaloom, C., & James, D. (2023). Financialization and the Household. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 52(Volume 52, 2023), 399-415.
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-anthro-052721-100947>
- Zamudio, L. E. V. (2019). El plan nacional de desarrollo 2018-2022: "Pacto por Colombia, pacto por la equidad". *Apuntes del CENES*, 38, 12-14.
http://www.scielo.org.co/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0120-30532019000200012&nrm=iso
- Zapata, G. P. (2011). The migration-remittances-development-nexus: "mi casa con remesas" and transnational flows between Colombia and London.

- Zapata, S. P. (2022). Historia política de la secularización en Colombia. Primera mitad del siglo XX. Lineamientos y directrices.
- Zaryan, S. (2017). Truth and Trust: How audiences are making sense of Fake News.
- Zelinsky, W. (1971). The Hypothesis of the Mobility Transition. *Geographical Review*, 61(2), 219-249. <https://doi.org/10.2307/213996>
- Ziv, T. (2022). THE PRACTICE OF INFORMALITY: Hustling, Anticipating and Refusing in the Postindustrial City. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 46(5), 807-821. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.13134>
- Žižek, S. (2006). Against the Populist Temptation. *Critical Inquiry*, 32(3), 551-574. <https://doi.org/10.1086/505378>
- Žižek, S. (2008). The violence of the liberal utopia. *Distinktion: Scandinavian Journal of Social Theory*, 9(2), 9-25.
- Zukin, S. (2021). Planetary silicon valley: deconstructing New York's innovation complex. *Urban Studies*, 58(1), 3-35.

Annexe 1: summary of fieldwork techniques.

Table 1. List of in-depth interviews			
Typology/Description	Where	When	Topics
relative of immigrant/African descendant from the Pacific	Bogota/virtual	2 weeks before the lockdowns	Vivir Bien, plus immigration, but instead spoke about <i>berraquera</i> , development
relative of immigrant/African descendant from the Pacific/ Victim of violence	Bogota	2 weeks before the lockdowns	Vivir Bien, arms conflict
African descendant, entrepreneur returnee from Chile	Bogota	2 weeks before the lockdowns / May 2020	Vivir bien, <i>berraquera</i> , entrepreneurship
upper middle class, relative of 3 immigrants in Chile.	Bogota/virtual	August, 2020	Life in Chile, development
Upper middle class, married to a Chilean man	Santiago/Virtual	August 2020	Life in Chile, development, life in Chile
Upper middle class, migrated to Chile and now is in Germany	Berlin/Virtual	September 2020	Life in Chile, discrimination, life in Chile, development

Married to an upper-class Chilean	Santiago/Virtual	September 2020	Life in Chile, development, life in Chile
middle class from Villeta, mother is immigrant	Villeta/Virtual	October 2020	Life in Chile, violence
Migrant in Chile, family left behind	Santiago/Virtual	October 2020	Life in Chile, violence, development
Friend of Damaris, knew her story closely	Villeta/Virtual	early 2020	Life in Chile, violence, politics, development
Binational/racial lived in Colombia and Santiago	Santiago/Virtual	November 2020	Life in Chile, race, class, life in both countries, development
Binational/racial lived in Colombia and Santiago	Santiago/Virtual	November 2020	Life in Chile, race, class, life in both countries, development, conspiracy theories
Political activist and journalist	Antofagasta/virtual	June 2020	Life in Chile, race, class, life in both countries, development

Comedian, micro-celebrity	Antofagasta/virtual	December 2020	Life in Chile, entrepreneurship, <i>berraquera</i>
Entrepreneur, from Lorica	Lorica/Santiago/virtual	February 2021	Life in Chile, entrepreneurship, <i>berraquera</i>
Prospective immigrant	Bogota/Quito/virtual	June 2020	Life in Chile, development, life in Chile
has lived in Chile and France	France/El Tapao/Virtual	August 2021	Life in Chile, development, life in Chile
Lives in el Tapao	El Tapao	August 2021	Life in Chile, development, life in Chile, violence
Oral history of political violence in Colombia	Bogota	March 2020	development, political violence
Servicio de acogida al migrante	Bogota/virtual	early 2020	development, political violence, sagrado corazon
Servicio de acogida al migrante	Bogota/virtual	early 2021/visit in 2023	development, political violence, sagrado corazon
Chilean, upper middle-class	Santiago/Virtual	before and after fieldwork, March	Life in Chile, development, life in Chile

		2020, December 2021	
Chilean, upper middle-class	Santiago/Virtual	before and after fieldwork, March 2020, December 2021	Life in Chile, development, life in Chile
Chilean, upper middle-class	Santiago/Virtual	before and after fieldwork, March 2020, December 2021	Life in Chile, development, life in Chile
Chilean, upper middle-class	Santiago/Virtual	before and after fieldwork, March 2020, December 2021	Life in Chile, development, life in Chile
Indigenous colombian	Antofagasta/virtual	January 2021	Life in Chile, <i>berraquera</i>
Indigenous colombian	Antofagasta/virtual	January 2021	Life in Chile, <i>berraquera</i>
Family friend, descendant of Colonos	Bogota	January 2021	<i>berraquera</i> , colonizacion paisa
lives in Antofagasta, works SJR	Antofagasta/virtual	1/1/2020 / late 2021	Life in Chile and development
Friend of worker, sells empanadas	Bogota	March 2023 / April 2021	Life in Chile and development
Director of SJR	Antofagasta/virtual	January 2020	Life in Chile and development

Works for National Planning Department produces National Development Plans	Bogota/virtual	November 2020	Development
Note: some interviews were asynchronous, instead we exchanged voice notes for extended periods.			

Table 2. WhatsApp Focus groups

WhatsApp groups
WhatsApp group 1
WhatsApp group 2

Table 3. participant collectives

Groups I interacted with:	members
Parroquia del Divino Salvador	around 12 members, they would send memes, chains of prayer, but mostly channelled this through Martha Camila and another person
entrepreneurs/ <i>rebuscadores</i>	on several occasions I asked about products, production process, and delivery in Santiago
Intermediaries	I spoke with several intermediaries that advertised their services online
SJR	participated of training series with around 5 people from the service
Advice sessions with immigrants SJR	Participated in 3 sessions
Colectivo de Colombianos en Chile	Participated in 1 meeting

Table 4. List of recurring livestreams

Live streams
Asociacion de Berracos en Chile
El Masa
Mr. Balanta
Blanca la Tia Colombiana
Colectivo de Colombianos en Chile
Proceso de Comunidades Negras
Negritos decentes

Table 5. Field trips

Field trips in Colombia during ease of lockdowns by mid 2021 to late 2021	
	where
El tapao	6 days trip. Spoke with the family of an immigrant in Chile, and now France
Villeta	3 days trip. Spoke with Danilo and Damaris
Bogota	12 months strict lockdown. Made some in person interviews before lockdown
Lorica-Cerete	5 days
Monteria	2 days

Table 6. Twitter Datasets	Column1
Collected data biweekly with search terms: Colombianos en Chile, Colombianos en Antofagasta, inmigracion en chile, migrantes en Chile	datasets varied from aprox. 50 nodes, to 200.

	Also, several tweets were repetitive as they were retweets. I analysed both the structures and the content
Also collected data on important days such as national days of Colombian and Chile	Total of 8 datasets
Collected between June to September 2020	

Table 7. List of Facebook Groups
Colombianos en Chile y el mundo
Colombianos Berracos en Chile
Colombianos Berracos en la serena
Colombianos en Chile Oficial
COLOMBIANOS Guerreros en Chile
Colombia nos UNE
Colombianos Berracos y extranjeros en Chile
Los berracos de Guaca
Colombianos guerriandola en Chile
Colombianos berracos
Los verdaderos colombianos nos ayudamos en Chile
Colombianos berracos en Ovalle original
Colombianos emprendedores en Chile
Colombianos berracos mas nah
Negocios Colombianos en Chile

Colombianos en chile buena gente
???Colombianos en Chile???
Colombianos guerreros en Chile Oficial
Negocio Colombiano en Chile
Colombianos en Antofagasta,
Solo Colombianos en Antofagasta
Colombianos residentes en Chile antofagasta
Colombianos de bien en Antofagasta
Colombianos en valparaiso

Table 8. Documents for content analysis
Development Plan Samper
Development Plan Gaviria
Development Plan Pastrana
Development Plan Juan Manuel Santos
Development Plan Uribe I
Development Plan Uribe II
Development Plan Duque
Reporte de Competitividad
Boletines migratorios Colombia Migra 2020 12 issues
Instituto Nacional de Estadisticas Chile, reporte de migracion 2021
La economia Naranja