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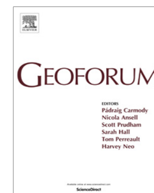

Violence and conservation: Beyond unintended consequences and unfortunate coincidences

Diana Bocarejo [a,1], Diana Ojeda [b,1,*]

[a] Escuela de Ciencias Humanas, Universidad del Rosario, Calle 12C # 6-25, Edificio Santafé, Of. 502, Bogotá, Colombia
[b] Instituto Pensar, Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Carrera 7 # 40A-54, Segundo Piso, Bogotá, Colombia

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ABSTRACT

While the relationship between violence and conservation has gained increasing attention in both academic and activist circles, official and public discourses often portray their entanglements as (unlucky) overlapping phenomena. In this article, we show how, under specific practices of state territorialization, conservation becomes both the means and reasons for violence. Based on ethnographic research in Colombia's emblematic Tayrona National Natural Park, we detail how both the war on drugs and tourism promotion shape these state practices, and how they have translated into everyday, yet powerful, means of dispossession in the name of conservation. By analyzing the effects of the production of peasants as environmental predators, illegal occupants and collateral damage, we show how official conservation strategies have justified local communities' political and material erasure, and how they have resulted in the destruction of their lived ecologies and the erosion of their livelihood strategies.

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1. Introduction

During the last two decades in Colombia, both the war on drugs and tourism promotion have become central mechanisms of state territorialization in the midst of intense armed conflict. In this article, we study how these mechanisms have translated into tight entanglements of violence and conservation. In particular, we show how state-led conservation programs have actively shaped landscapes of exclusion and destruction, where peasants' erasure – both political and material – has been justified. We refer specifically to the transformations that the area of Tayrona National Natural Park and its surroundings have undergone under state policies of *Seguridad Democrática* (Democratic Security). Launched in 2002 by former President Álvaro Uribe, democratic security policies combined the militarization of national territories with an intensive campaign of tourism promotion. Under the slogans of "Colombia is passion" and "Colombia, the only risk is wanting to stay," tourism became part of a larger strategy of counterinsurgency and security proliferation. This is evident in official documents: "The National Government will guarantee the security conditions that will allow free movement through the main highways of the country... In this way, threats from illegal armed organizations and common delinquency on the national roads will be counteracted" (Ministerio de Defensa, 2003: 58, our translation). Media and government discourses thus effectively framed travel and recreation as important means for taking back the country from guerrilla control. The possibility to transit the country's militarized roads became the means as well as the proof that peace had finally been achieved (Ojeda, 2013: 767).

Within this context, state officials, as well as conservation and development experts, started to see ecotourism projects as the logical way to simultaneously assert territorial control in presumed wild and remote areas, and take advantage of national parks' natural riches. A neoliberal rhetoric in which wildlife, local communities and the state would all benefit from the securing of tourist sites, and thus capital investment, shaped new forms of nature commodification and privatization around the country. But while carried out in the name of local communities' development, ecotourism projects largely criminalized local populations as invaders and environmental destroyers, resulting in their eviction and the impossibility of them making a living within park limits.

This article is the result of an ongoing conversation between the two authors that started back in 2009. We have tried to bring together different academic backgrounds and research projects with the aim of understanding the regional practices and political implications of environmental conservation for local inhabitants in Tayrona and, more broadly, Colombia's Caribbean coast. Our fieldwork throughout the past six years has been based on qualitative

* Corresponding author.
E-mail addresses: diana.bocarejo@urosario.edu.co, dbocarejo@gmail.com (D. Bocarejo), diana.ojeda@javeriana.edu.co, dianaojeda@gmail.com (D. Ojeda).

[1] Authors listed in alphabetical order.

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research, mainly ethnographic work. Through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, life histories and informal conversations, we have followed the everyday practices of local inhabitants to ensure their land, labor and livelihoods in the disputed context of Tayrona's recent history. As we will show, this context has been shaped by the concession of tourism services to a private company, the complex state of affairs imposed by paramilitarism and drug trafficking, state development interventions and coca eradication programs, and the reinforcement of political divisions within communities through multicultural policies.

In this text, we reflect on the mutual constitution of violence and conservation in this context through the resulting *erasure* of local peasantry. As we show in the following sections, this erasure works in three dimensions: (i) the actual removal of park inhabitants through eviction, direct threats and murder; (ii) the attacks on local communities' livelihood strategies; and (iii) their delegitimization as rightful inhabitants of the park and their illegibility as state subjects. Each dimension provides a lens through which we explore the different articulations between state-sanctioned violence – physical, structural and symbolic – and conservation, as well as its results in terms of local communities' dispossession in the name of protecting nature. In the next section, we further delve into the ways in which an ethnographic approach to Tayrona National Park contributes to the literature on the relationship between violence and conservation. In the following sections, we then proceed to piece together the ways in which conservation discourses and practices have shaped local community members, in particular peasants, as environmental destroyers, invaders and collateral damage. In the conclusions, we return to the ways in which conservation practices are connected with local communities' erasure and dispossession.

2. Conservation as dispossession, violence as erasure

The case of Tayrona National Park exemplifies well how state anxieties regarding territorial control in Colombia concur with both paramilitary violence and private capital's interests around tourism promotion. The park is one of the most important protected areas in the country, comprising about 15,000 ha. Historical geographies of uneven access to resources and of the state's meager role in providing basic services have contributed to its production as a strategic area for illegal crop production, with a strong presence of illegal armed groups. Paramilitary forces, formed in the 1970s in order to take part in the illegal crop business and to provide private security services to drug lords and landowners usually targeted by guerrilla groups, rapidly gained control of the area.

In the 1990s, Hernán Giraldo, also known as ''El Patrón" (The Boss), headed a private militia that, operating with state knowledge and support, quickly grew in number and started to gain more power over different economic activities. By 2001, paramilitary power in the Sierra and Tayrona was so strong that forty percent of all national coca exports that year – with a value of nearly 1.2 billion US dollars – came from Giraldo's territories (Verdad Abierta, 2010: online).[2] The landscapes of fear forged by state-sanctioned violence at the expense of local communities made possible the success of Tayrona National Park as an ecotourism destination. Ironically, the violence – of massacres, forced disappearances and displacements – contributed to the park becoming the poster child of the war on drugs and ecotourism: a ''paradise regained" (USA Today, 2006: online; Hammer, 2007; see Ojeda, 2013).

It is in this way that tourism and militarization have worked side by side toward the country's ''reconquest," and more recently toward its ''consolidation,"[3] reasserting the myth of a post-conflict society. A myth that even if critiqued by local communities, is also longed for by them; a promise for a new form of legibility in which they would not be judged as illegal *cocaleros* or illegal armed group ''sympathizers" and would thus be able to ensure new ways of experiencing everyday life and new livelihoods with activities such as tourism. As Jasmín, a local Tayrona resident, recalled:

> Here we had to live with lots of distrust. Many of us grew up with distrust towards newcomers because there were the [armed] groups, but also the [coca and marihuana] crops... How many died! Now with tourism, you're sitting down in my home, my husband's work is more stable and they call me during high peak season; one learns to be nice to outsiders.
>
> [personal interview, June 2012]

Under the promise of imposing law and order, Democratic Security policies translated into a particular framework for both making legible and controlling peoples and nature. The specific conjunctures we study refer to the military actions carried out under Uribe's government (2002–2010), as his promises of defeating guerrilla groups became an effective platform for the intensification of warfare. At the same time, in 2002 the United States allowed the use of antinarcotics resources in military operations against guerrilla combatants. The eradication of illegal crops by the Colombian military, mostly in the form of massive aerial fumigations with the broad-spectrum herbicide glyphosate (Mattié, 2003), then became part of the war against insurgency, which has now been rescaled as the war on terror. The ''retaking of national territory," as announced repeatedly by former President Uribe, became a powerful trope under which the war on drugs and the war on terror found a useful common enemy in the FARC (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*) guerrilla group. Official and media discourses produced paramilitary forces, working often with state sanction and even in cooperation with the military, as natural allies in the defeat of guerrilla groups (Bolívar, 2006).[4]

Understood broadly as the production of boundaries and jurisdictions, state territorialization allows us to understand the everyday practices through which state formation takes place (Trouillot, 2001). The scholarship on ''resource wars," as stated by Peluso and Vandergeest (2011: 257), ''has focused on the relationship between warfare and access to valuable natural resources, although the ways war helps construct forests as a category of state power and jurisdiction has not generally been a part of that discussion." The entanglements of violence and conservation in Tayrona illustrate such practices of state territorialization. Like other protected areas in Colombia, state attempts to implement order and control have resulted in the production of highly exclusionary

[2] Giraldo was among the few demobilized paramilitary leaders to be detained and extradited to the United States for drug trafficking (see Verdad Abierta, 2009) as part of the highly questioned process of paramilitary demobilization carried out between 2003 and 2006. Despite his imprisonment and 38 year sentence, the paramilitary control of Tayrona continues until today.

[3] The language of Colombia's ''reconquest" and ''pacification" characterized Democratic Security policies. Juan Manuel Santos' government, installed in 2010, started to use the language of territorial ''consolidation." While often using a less militaristic tone, tourism promotion and security proliferation continue to be central to state agendas, particularly those regarding rural development.

[4] This is, for example, the case of the army captain Guevara, who was an active member of the paramilitary group led by commander Jorge 40, Bloque Norte, operating in the Tayrona area at the time. In an official hearing, Guevara stated: ''My command ''(Jorge) 40" used to send me his self-defense troops and I used to pass them as army troops. I used to go to combat against guerrillas leading self-defense units (...). Everybody knew" (Guillén and Villa, 2014: online, our translation). Even political elections were completely managed by the paramilitary group through the designation of four ''electoral districts" in the Magdalena department, which put in power several congressional representatives as well as regional and local state officials (Verdad Abierta, 2013).

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environments, often at the expense of rural populations and their capacity to make a living (Espinosa, 2010; Ruiz, 2003; Ojeda, 2012; Tobón and Restrepo, 2009).

Literature on the close relationship between securitization and the production of protected areas has shown that conservation operates as a powerful mechanism for asserting state power (e.g. Brockington, 2002; Devine, 2014; Lunstrum, 2014; Massé and Lunstrum, this issue; Ybarra, this issue). Although state territorialization works at multiple scales (Peet et al., 2011), we address in particular the violent effects of state initiatives of conservation on local populations' livelihood strategies. Literature on the relationship between state making and conservation has evidenced well the conflicts between hegemonic notions of nature's protection and locals' possibilities of making a living (e.g. Neumann, 1998; Peluso, 1993; Rocheleau, 2015). As Neumann has posited for the case of Africa, "violence against people is inherent and perpetually latent in the practice of state-directed wildlife conservation" (2001: 306). This form of violence is evident in physical violence against local populations, as well as in restrictions to resource access and control (e.g. Brockington, 2002; Büscher, 2012; Devine, 2014; Duffy, 2010; Grandia, 2012).

Violence has many variants and a long and painful genealogy in the Colombian conflict. In this article, we pay attention to how state-led conservation strategies in Tayrona translate into violence toward local populations; a violence legitimized by narratives of security and the protection of nature. We focus "rather than on spectacular displays of state power or unusual and singular events, [on] how the normal state of affairs is maintained..." (Gupta, 2012: 72). This approach allows us to understand violence through the ways in which it becomes part of the "regular" and "natural" occurrence of everyday life (Das, 2006; Jimeno, 1998; Riaño, 2001). We thus refer to usual practices of conservation that render legible local peasant populations as invaders and illegal, limiting their access to natural resources such as land and water and often resulting in their criminalization, eviction, persecution and murder (see Devine, 2014; Rocheleau, 2015). While this form of violence articulates with intense wars between guerrillas, paramilitaries and state forces, our analysis privileges the uneven geographies of resource access in Tayrona and how they are weaved into everyday forms of dispossession. We thus seek to attend to the historical and geographical conjunctures that do not merely reproduce structural forms of violence, but actually enable and make legitimate different forms of physical and symbolic violence against local populations.

Critical literature on land grabbing has grown dramatically in the past years, drawing attention to massive land acquisitions associated with the dispossession of local populations (Borras and Franco, 2010; Borras et al., 2011, 2012). By focusing on practices of state territorialization and their effects on local populations, we examine how the dispossession of the latter from their land and livelihoods is carried out and justified in the name of conservation (e.g. Benjaminsen and Bryceson, 2012; Kelly, 2011; Fairhead et al., 2012; Rocheleau, 2015). Moreover, we seek to focus on how these forms of dispossession operate in a systematic and subtle way through the erosion of livelihood strategies. Rather than extraordinary events, the forms of green grabbing we analyze entail everyday struggles to live and work within park limits.

3. Peasants as environmental destroyers

Practices and discourses of security proliferation have been translated into isolated spaces where capital accumulation has been guaranteed through activities such as tourism and investment (Ojeda, 2013). In the case of Tayrona, tourism development, performed in the name of conservation, accentuated historical processes of class-based and ethnic differentiation. Ecotourism largely contributed to the further stigmatization of local populations and the legitimization of their eviction from the places they had long inhabited within the park, corroborating what Dianne Rocheleau refers to as "dispossession by delegitimation" for the case of Chiapas in Mexico, as well as Jennifer Devine's (2014) findings for the case of Petén in Guatemala. These forms of dispossession became profoundly ingrained within a restricted view of conservation that only considered capital – in the hands of landowners, members of the traditional elite and entrepreneurs – as the viable means for protecting nature. The confluences of conservation and violence were more than an accident or an unintended consequence.

In our conversations with officials from the national agency for National Natural Parks (*Parques Nacionales Naturales*, PNN) and from other government agencies, peasants and fishermen usually appeared as invaders of the park and as poorly conscious of its fragile ecologies (personal interviews, September 2009). Their association with drug trafficking and paramilitaries was very common. In a conversation with two PNN officials, one of them stated that they are most likely to cause wildfires: "They often get drunk and leave bottles behind: of course the fires get started" (personal interview, July 2010). The other one added: "Yes, they're not very conscious about the environment".

The stigmatization of peasants by state officials in charge of the park's management translated into events of physical violence that ended in evictions and murder. Some such acts of violence were weaved into the maintenance of everyday access to the beaches for tourism purposes in an area marked for environmental conservation. As Ana, one of the local inhabitants of the beaches, stated:

> One has always heard the story of the two brothers who were killed here because these beaches are highly prized. One knows that the tourism that arrives here is gold tourism, so there's a lot of interest... to take us out. (...) One feels a lot of pressure. The *señora*'s son, some people say he was killed as a warning for us to leave... we live with that fear constantly.
>
> [personal interview, July 2012]

Historical dynamics of differentiation and exclusion acquired new depths after, under the neoliberal rhetoric of state inefficiency, concession of the responsibility for ecotourism services in five important national parks was given over to the travel company Aviatur. The company's entrance to Tayrona in 2005 had significant effects on local populations' capacity to make a living. Members of the local community expressed how, with the concession, the pressure from the PNN to leave became stronger. As one of them put it: "there was always pressure, but now ... there are too many interests in this place... the PNN is putting us against the wall... the eviction letter we just got has worried us all" (personal interview, October 2010). As Ojeda (2012, 2014) notes, the concession resulted in the criminalization and eviction of workers and park residents, mostly peasants and fishermen, who were not seen by the PNN as capable of protecting nature.

At the same time, Aviatur's presence significantly altered both tacit and explicit arrangements between local populations and state officials, transforming resource access and use within Tayrona's limits. For example, as one of the local inhabitants explained, Aviatur's presence changed previous agreements that local communities had made with PNN officials: "...they promised us we would have a kiosk in front of the park's entrance so we could advertise our lodges and our services as tour guides, but that guy Bessudo [Aviatur's owner and CEO] didn't want to. That's why there were so many problems" (personal interview, June 2012). In addition, local forms of territorial organization and communal work that, for example, designated turns in maintaining the paths to the beach and transporting tourists, changed completely with the concession of ecotourism services to Aviatur.

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The establishment of the concession also revealed how processes of state territorialization in Tayrona, carried out under the banner of conservation, hinged upon ethnic demarcations that, in turn, have determined local populations' access to resources. This was clear in repeated accounts by different officials, both national and local, regarding the impossibility of peasants properly managing natural resources and protecting the environment. Like most community-based natural resource management policies in the country, official multicultural policies have effectively separated peasants from indigenous communities, considering the former as incapable of environmental protection.

Multiculturalism is a broad concept used to address "diversity" in terms of ethnicity, gender, sexuality or religion, and has usually been considered a historical condition of most nation states in the world (Taylor and Gutmann, 1994; Kymlicka, 1995). However, by multiculturalism, we refer to the political arrangements, and in particular the legal mechanisms, that have granted differential rights to state-defined minority groups. In the case of Colombia, since the constitutional reform of 1991, these political arrangements have constructed minorities as ethnic groups, of which indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities are prime examples. Differential recognition has thus depended upon communities' capacity to display a list of cultural traits – language, dress, customs and territory – that are rarely considered peasants' attributes by either official or popular discourses (Bocarejo, 2015; Bocarejo and Restrepo, 2011).

For the case of Tayrona, peasants' categorization as *colonos* (settlers) has deepened this exclusionary categorization. *Colonos* historically embodied *mestizo* and masculinized ideals of industriousness and progress, becoming by the early 20th century the idealized labor force behind the expansion of the agricultural frontier. This changed by the second half of the century, and their association in the official discourse with illegal crops and subversive groups led years later to their production as *cocaleros* (coca growers). In this way, during the past decades multicultural productions of difference have coalesced with conservation discourses that largely oppose peasants' lived (agro)ecologies to the protection of biodiversity (Cárdenas, 2012; Ojeda, 2012; Ulloa, 2005). These connections between particular formations of difference and resource politics have legitimized peasants' eviction from protected areas, in particular in Tayrona, where the presence of Aviatur added remarkable pressure on its territories and resources.

Different state institutions, including the PNN, have effectively framed local peasants as nature's destroyers. Even when the state sees them as victims of drug trafficking and historical inequality, it still condemns their actions as environmentally degrading. This way of reading local peasantry has also been shaped by opposite images of indigenous populations in the area as environmental guardians. Within legal multiculturalism in Colombia that grants ethnic rights to indigenous populations, a strong political articulation was forged between indigenous and peasant typologies and their imagined respective topologies (Bocarejo, 2015). This correspondence between topologies and typologies has meant new forms of state territorialization through which, as Bocarejo shows, indigenous peoples are assumed to belong to *resguardos* (reservations) and peasants to agricultural fields. Both representations drastically and violently encapsulate communities within "a utopic and fixed representational place [reifying] a pervasive irony shared in various contexts of continuous violence where the consolidation and imagination of places as utopias is built upon places of deception, the ironic and painful pendulum between violence and hope" (Bocarejo, 2009: 311).

State programs of community-based natural resource management only include indigenous populations. Indeed, national parks in Colombia tend to overlap with indigenous reservations. Although Tayrona's territories do not coincide with indigenous *resguardos*, there are "sacred places" of *pagamentos* (ritual offerings) recognized by the park's management plan, which states that "all these places should not be inhabited or used permanently in productive activities, these are places that should be maintained in their natural state" (PNN, 2006: 75, our translation). The local PNN office has tried to forge a close relationship with indigenous organizations throughout the years following a legal normativity that ensures at least the possibility of creating alliances with them for purposes of environmental governance. In contrast, as one of the government officials of the PNN stated: "The PNN doesn't have any legal tool to generate agreements or management [plans] with peasants because within a designated national park one can't do any other activity than conservation, recovery, environmental education and research, nothing else. Well, and tourism, wherever it's allowed" (personal interview, July 2015). Moreover, for this PNN official, as well as for other government officials, if management arrangements would also be open to peasants, as they are with indigenous communities, then protected areas would disappear, as it would be impossible to enforce control over their activities, which are seen as inherently detrimental to the environment (personal interviews). Representations of indigenous peoples as agents of environmental conservation and of peasants as prone to agrarian development, although used to advocate for peasants' or indigenous peoples' claims to territory, simplify the lived experiences and ecologies of both populations and often restrict their access to resources. In this way, multicultural policies in Colombia have resulted in perverse logics under which "cultural recognition becomes inextricably related to 'green' practices" (Cárdenas, 2012: 324).

This essentialized notion of culture and indigeneity has been disputed in legal courts and public interventions both by indigenous peoples and peasant communities. One of the most important disputes, at least for the purpose of this article, is both groups' constant complaints about the lack of state clarity on the configuration of jurisdictions and land property in the Tayrona area, where most peasants do not have land titles and indigenous groups seek the expansion of their reservation. This is crucial for understanding the current political isolation of both groups in the broader region, in which their division only favors the consolidation of traditional local elites and national and international investors in tourism, agroindustry and mining. Unfortunately, the practices and discourses of environmental conservation reinforce such political isolation by erasing peasants; that is, silencing their claims, actively denying their participation in processes of governance of protected areas, violently evicting them and openly setting up a discourse of peasants as destroyers that dangerously articulates with the volatile context of paramilitary physical violence.

This is even more paradoxical given the fact that environmentalists themselves have suffered the violence of paramilitaries. Not only have many been personally threatened, but the Tayrona PNN office has had to painfully mourn the death of the park's director Martha Hernández in 2004 at the hands of paramilitaries. The symbolic violence of peasants' stigmatization as destroyers, as well as other forms of stigmatization that environmentalists have had to suffer in the region and all over the country – as obstacles to development or because they are assumed to be too prone to leftist ideas associated with guerrillas – have been dramatically translated into forms of physical violence and death.

4. Peasants as invaders

In 2011, a scandal about the construction of a seven star hotel in Tayrona's beaches further revealed the paradoxes and violence of such forms of state legibility of peasants and their lived ecologies. The hotel was at first backed by president Santos, who believed that the project, involving the Thai multinational Six Senses, was

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a unique opportunity for tourism development in the region. The episode showed the complex articulations between local elites, regional and national politicians, tourism entrepreneurs, and state and non-state environmental institutions that, under the umbrella of development and conservation, have carved deep differences between local populations, in particular between peasants and indigenous peoples.

Under Colombian multicultural legislation, ethnic groups have the right to *consulta previa* or prior consultation when a private actor seeks to carry out an extractive project within officially recognized reservations or untitled lands "regularly and permanently inhabited" by ethnic groups (Decree 1320 of 1998). Prior consultation has been a key juridical tool because it has allowed "indigenous communities to defend themselves from external interventions or threats" and has "the necessary force to demand from the state, and even from private citizens, specific positive actions to protect an autochthonous community" (Cepeda, 2001: 181). As part of the legal procedure to approve the Six Senses tourism project, the Ministry of the Interior had to certify the presence or absence of ethnic groups in the intended area of construction. In this case, the Ministry certified no indigenous presence in the area. This caused tremendous discontent as indigenous peoples have historically inhabited and transited through Tayrona's territories, as revealed by their sites of ritual payment within the park. Furthermore, in various other cases the Constitutional Court had recognized a broad notion of traditional territory in its judgments, using the notion of *ámbito territorial* (territorial setting) that goes beyond the officially recognized reservations. Such an assessment was even more unexpected given the fact that the Ministry of the Interior had to make a public excuse in a previous case regarding the construction of a seaport in the area, precisely because they had not recognized a broader notion of indigenous territory nor had they dictated the necessity of prior consultation for the project.

The case of the Aviatur concession and the Six Senses hotel in Tayrona National Park offers a window for understanding the confluences of conservation and violence. On the one hand, it makes clear that, in the dominant discourse, the implementation of tourism projects such as the Aviatur concession and the Six Senses hotel does not contradict the overarching intention of nature protection. Even if the state officials whom we interviewed acknowledged that the form of tourism associated with these projects was not a particularly green one, they legitimized their implementation in terms of an opportunity to generate revenue that would be earmarked for conservation programs. As one official stated: "the concession is a great ally in conservation, and it relieves us of tourism work we shouldn't do... we're not here to change sheets!" (personal interview, May 2009). Such understandings of "responsible capital" and "conscious tourists" fit well with the idea that "ignorant peasants" are the ones placing the natural heritage of Tayrona at risk. On the other hand, it reveals the complex ways in which local populations' – including indigenous groups' – greenness is contingent upon the presence of legible ethnic and cultural markers. Moreover, what the Six Senses project proved is that the powerful interests involved in these development projects did not recognize indigenous peoples' lived ecologies, and even less those of peasant communities. As was clearly stated in the media outlet La Silla Vacía, "[this] project was finally rejected by the park administration not because of its social and environmental inconvenience, as many other Colombians would have wished, but because of issues related to its proposers" (Osorio, 2011: online, our translation). In fact, family members of the President had been involved in previous design phases of the project and the company that presented it belonged to one of the most powerful families of the area that, in previous years, had faced a huge scandal for fraudulently receiving state agriculture subsidies.

After President Santos himself finally terminated the Six Senses project, he sent a message even more violent: "*vamos a sanear el parque*" (we are going to cleanse the park). The message probably referred to issues of land tenure, since 90% of the park area was in private hands. However, local peasants interpreted Santos' strong words as licensing a mechanism for guaranteeing capital accumulation and reinstating local elite's power at the expense of those living and working in the park. As Fernando and Mariela, two local peasant inhabitants, put it: "the strong hand has arrived to the park and that is also so they could rent it and build big hotels... that only affects peasants" (personal interview, June 2012). In fact, unsurprisingly, just after the announcement of the cancellation of the project, the police and the PNN began the destruction of small peasant ranches. We were able to conduct fieldwork during that time and actually followed some of the evictions and their implications up to today.[5]

Pacho was one of the peasants affected by the violence of evictions and could not understand the President's and PNN's procedures. He stated that the state believes that peasant land titles are fake, unlike the privileged landholders who have titles dating from colonial times, inherited from generation to generation: "The only people who are going to be able to stay are those with the royal stamp from the Spanish Crown... so they will take this from us" (personal interview, January 2012). Pacho further explained how who gets to stay within park limits is determined by profoundly uneven criteria of conservation:

> Where I have that *parcela* [small agricultural plot] I'm not harming anyone. I pick up even the tiniest plastic bag... on the contrary, there are big *fincas* [agricultural or recreational properties] where there's cattle, and the effects of tourism of those hotels are huge. I only have some avocado, mango, cacao and plantain trees.
> [personal interview, January 2012; see also El Espectador, 2011]

Another peasant, Marlen, also reflected on the effects of tourism development, in particular on the establishment of police posts and military patrols in different areas of the park, and on the contradictory effects of more security on locals' safety. "They say it's all for the security... but I think security is when you have food on the table, and that's what they're taking away from us" (personal interview, March 2010). Marlen continued to explain that security is a luxury that only tourists have. "Otherwise, how do you explain that it is us [local community members] who are the ones who get harassed and threatened? How do you explain that we have PNN officials and policemen on our backs all the time?"

The evictions taking place in different areas of the park seemed to corroborate Marlen's view. In March 2010, an entire fishing community of seven households was evicted by PNN officials and their homes of roughly fifty years destroyed, but they did not touch any of the luxurious private houses on the beach. The fishermen, just like Pacho and Marlen and other local community members, resented the fact that conservation had become an alibi to open up spaces for big tourism projects to enter the park. "We don't know what will become of us... They will come after us and kick us out... I have no doubt this will all be turned into ecotourism concessions" (personal interview, March 2010). They stated that it was not nature that mattered, but money (personal interviews).

[5] The forced removal of peasants, fishermen and tourism service providers from Tayrona's limits has become frequent in the past decade, in particular with the concession of tourism services to Aviatur (González, 2014; Ojeda, 2012, 2014). While there is no quantitative data about these evictions, we estimate that tens of families have been physically removed from the park, while additionally, hundreds of local community members have been unable to return to the park to work as vendors, tourist guides and transporters. Several more are given a hard time when they visit the park for recreational purposes (González, 2014; Ojeda, 2014).

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Somewhat paradoxically, the paramilitary commander Giraldo anticipated the fixation of a particular form of state legibility that characterizes peasants as illegal occupants and invaders within the consolidation of tourism in the area. As a local inhabitant recalled, Giraldo stated that "when the marihuana bonanza came, we didn't have to prepare ourselves, we were all peasants. When the coca times came, there wasn't the need either. Now comes the tourism bonanza: get ready" (cited in González, 2014: 47, our translation). As González (2014) argues, state agencies promoted tourism as an effective way of integrating excluded peasants through new legal opportunities for education and work. However, when ecotourism entered this context of inequality and the use of paramilitary control as a mechanism of state territorialization, ultimately it ended up simply maintaining the pervasive dynamics of dispossession in the region.

5. Peasants as collateral damage

The strategies used in the war on drugs and tourism promotion merged in a particular manner in protected areas, which became simultaneously arenas of warfare and prime destinations in which to discover untapped nature. The history of national parks' representations provides an important window for addressing state violence toward local populations, whose erasure has been not only epistemic but also political. In official accounts, the richness of national parks depends on their value as potential sources of development and as repositories of nature isolated from human intervention. As Juan Mayr (2004), an environmentalist and politician, and former Minister of the Environment, expressed:

> National parks... guard the most careful selection of the country's ecosystems; they are part of the nation's environmental heritage and of the world's protected areas. They are our collective heritage, in addition to the genetic bank of Colombia's extraordinary biodiversity – second in the world – that our future development will depend on...
>
> [2004: online, our translation]

The potential of tourism is the other common explanation for natural parks' value, as part of their large portfolio of ecosystem services.

The idea of undiscovered richness and its potential usefulness silences the multiple ways in which local inhabitants have historically built the now officially recognized parks as their homes. Narratives of natural resources yet to be tapped for biotechnology or tourism purposes not only exclude multiple forms of local inhabitancy but are also premised on the idea of an unspoiled nature. Such representations have a long history of violence, ranging from evictions, bans on mobility and restrictions of certain forms of land use, to threats against life and murder. As we have shown, particular entanglements of violence and conservation have proven to be a stable fixture when local populations are marked as invaders and environmental predators of otherwise isolated and uninhabited natural spaces.

Democratic Security, in the name of promoting unrestricted mobility, order and illegal coca eradication, has portrayed parks as wild zones: a confluence of territories of wilderness and unruly drug lords. State policies have seen military intervention as the main way to achieve control over these areas. Spraying nature – and people – thus became a powerful form of state territorialization, when in June 2003, former president Uribe authorized the aerial fumigation of protected areas with glyphosate. Indeed, it is ironic that multilateral organizations and state agencies mobilized glyphosate spraying to eradicate coca plants as a means of protecting the environment from human damage, in particular from the pressure that the plants were exacting on extensive woodlands and rainforests, what years later was coined "narcodeforestation" (McSweeney et al., 2014, see also Powell, 2014). Within this scenario of state territorialization and warfare, the state implemented a model of conservation that excused peasants' erasure, both physically and as political subjects. Fumigation thus became logical and legitimate as one of the most viable ways to fight environmental degradation caused by illegal crops, and ergo by peasants. Such narratives populated public policy discourse, as well as day-to-day interactions, in terms of how the park and its inhabitants were seen. Even if the agencies in charge of conservation, such as the PNN, stood against fumigation, dominant voices insisted on the need to prevent local populations from using and inhabiting protected areas (e.g. Mejía and Argüelles, 2006; c.f. Quimbayo, 2009). This reinforced the reduction of local populations to environmental threats and their homes to nature in peril, allowing the destruction of the ecologies that sustain life – both human and nonhuman. Peasants counted at best as collateral damage.

The violence enacted through aerial spraying, as many local inhabitants and analysts have claimed for decades, proved that the "remedy was worse than the disease."[6] Daniel Mejía, an expert in analyzing aerial fumigation as a mechanism for advancing the war on drugs, has stated that "[its] effect on coca crops, as well as on potential cocaine production, has been very little... If one examines the program's costs and benefits, one sees a small impact, while its direct and collateral effects are way too high" (cited in Bermúdez, 2013: online, our translation; see Gaviria and Mejía, 2011; Lyons, 2015). These "collateral effects" proved to be an effective practice of state territorialization based on the criminalization of local populations, the management of both peoples and nature through the distance of an aircraft, the destruction of peasant livelihoods, and the uncertainty of the human and nonhuman health consequences.

Conservation and violence practices thus took the form of direct threats against rural populations' livelihoods and health, not to mention their stigmatization and the growing distance between them and government institutions. Local inhabitants were caught in the crossfire in the fight over territorial control between state and illegal armed forces and drug traffickers. Their bodies and food poisoned, they experienced the destruction of their lived ecologies (water, soil, crops, trees and animals included), which unfortunately bore little relation to the "nature in peril" invoked by dominant conservation narratives.

The only success in actually stopping aerial fumigation came quite late in the history of the war on drugs and did not consider rural inhabitants. In December 2013, the State Council submitted a judgment that prohibited aerial fumigation in national park areas, but excluded the surrounding areas long inhabited by peasants. It stated: "It was verified that aerial fumigation with glyphosate in the system of national natural parks entails a potential risk to the environment, this risk is scientifically uncertain but its potentiality ...[makes it possible to] classify it as severe and irreversible" (Consejo de Estado, 2013, our translation). It was not until

[6] There is much debate regarding these numbers and various sources indicate that Colombia is the principal supplier of cocaine to the world. An article published by the *Financial Times* stated: "Last year's [2008] 81,000 hectares of coca plantations was only marginally lower than the 86,000 hectares recorded in 2003, and higher than the 80,000 hectares estimated in 2004. Worse still, production has stayed steady, despite eradication programmes becoming more aggressive. US government statistics state that more than 230,000 hectares of coca plantations were destroyed by aerial fumigation and manual eradication in 2007. That is nearly five times more than in 2000, the first full year of Plan Colombia, a multi-billion-dollar US aid package to help fight the drug war in Colombia. ... US government figures... paint an even gloomier picture. According to an annual report of the International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, published by the US State Department, 'coca production has increased from 136,200 hectares in 2000 to 167,000 hectares in 2007...'" (Thompson, 2009: online). There is evidence that even if there was a reduction in cultivated areas, it has occurred simultaneously with an increase in harvests, which has had devastating consequences for ecologies, landscapes and livelihoods (see Samper, 2006; Witness for Peace, 2009).

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very recently that the Colombian state recognized the potential connection between glyphosate and cancer, and thus finally advised the cessation of fumigations with the broad-spectrum herbicide; fumigations with glyphosate have not stopped, however, and other potentially equally destructive herbicides can be used (Vélez, 2015).

Fumigations were accompanied by development projects sought to break "the vicious circle of illegal crops-violence-terrorism-drug trafficking" (UNODC, 2010: 71), and were thus understood as "a crucial instrument for the achievement of peace in Colombia" (República de Colombia, 2010: 2). The *Programa Familias Guardabosques* (Park Ranger Families Program), implemented under Uribe's government, was premised on the promotion of new economic activities for actual or potential *cocaleros*. In Tayrona's designated zone of influence which surrounds the park, this program led to the implementation of *posadas turísticas* (tourist lodges), a project envisioned as the most viable way to achieve illegal crop eradication and conservation. The project, which offered the opportunity for a small group of peasants to access land and achieve new forms of legibility (González, 2014), instead translated once more into everyday landscapes of exclusion and dispossession.

Peasants participating in the project, *posaderos*, were required to transform from coca growers into tourist hosts and forest rangers. In exchange for the receipt of a tourist lodge, training as a tourism service provider and technical assistance, *posaderos* had to commit to keeping the land "clean" (coca-free) and devoting it to conservation and sustainable economic activities such as organic small-scale farming and ecotourism. In a public presentation, the project consultant explained the necessary steps for the project implementation: "project participants had to be educated and taken by the hand... we had to show them that other ways of making a living are possible" (personal observation, September 2009). "Other ways of making a living" were premised on the notion that they would tend to tourists as their main productive activity. The project also included as a condition, however, that while *posaderos* could stay within the park's immediate surroundings, they were prohibited from "invading" the park itself.

Among other reasons, the prohibition against *posaderos* accessing the park, the main tourist attraction of the area, translated into the project's rapid failure. Nevertheless, state officials and NGO professionals implementing the project blamed the *posaderos* for not being self-sufficient and for damaging the business. As the project's consultant explained: "What has been more challenging is... their lack of motivation for productive work and their low levels of service quality... There's also their lack of discipline: they let friends stay at the cabins, charging them less or nothing..." (personal interview, September 2009). Or as noted by an NGO professional: "Local community members need to be able to generate their own income, and not be beggars... they are not innocent, they know how to navigate all this... so they need to know there are no more subsidies coming" (personal interview, November 2009). Most *posaderos* abandoned the project and had to leave the area, becoming yet another collateral effect of conservation and illicit crop eradication in the Tayrona area.

6. Conclusions

In this paper, we have shown how violence is not an unfortunate or unintended consequence of conservation programs. In the case of Tayrona, official conservation strategies, often operating as an instrument of state territorialization, have required systematic forms of exclusion, eviction and dispossession for their implementation and maintenance. We argue that Tayrona National Park as a state jurisdiction is constantly constituted by violence toward peasant populations; their criminalization, eviction and dispossession – their political and material erasure – carried out under conservation imperatives.

The manner in which the classification and management of difference articulates with ecotourism projects in Tayrona makes evident the specific ways in which conservation and violence practices become tightly entangled. In the case of Tayrona, a particular form of state legibility articulates with a strong structure of class privilege in which local elites, but also state officials and paramilitary groups, converge around tourism projects. We have presented how peasants are the usual suspects of nature's destruction. We have also shown how peasants' categorization as non-ethnic subjects pave the way for their criminalization and eviction, and how their subsequent production as illegal occupants and invaders of the protected area has contributed to their dispossession from their lands and livelihoods. Lastly, we have noted the different ways in which both aerial fumigations and development projects seeking to eradicate illegal crops for conservation purposes end up destroying peasants' lived ecologies, with their lives and livelihoods counting as collateral damage of the war on drugs.

Overall, the case of Tayrona National Park illustrates the tight entanglements of violence and conservation. Official conservation strategies have contributed to the production of peasants as environmental predators, invaders and collateral damage. This has translated into violent geographies of exclusion, eviction and dispossession that have become entrenched over the past two decades. As our research in the area suggests, violence – physical, structural and symbolic – is not external to, but *constitutive of*, conservation practices. The contradictory ways in which processes of state territorialization rely on the erasure of local inhabitants further evidences such mutual constitution: from the obfuscation of the different forms of violence faced by local inhabitants to the destruction of the ecologies that sustain their life.

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