



## Graduate School of Development Studies

The cultural dimensions of decentralisation: Exploring Indigenous-State relations in the Colombian Amazon

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(ACIYA), Pira (ACAPI); Colombian Amazon,  
North West Amazon Basin

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## **List of Acronyms**

AATI	Association of Traditional Indigenous Authorities
ACAIPI	Association of Indigenous Captains of Pirá-Paraná
ACIMA	Association of Indigenous Captains of the Mirití Amazonas
ACIYA	Association of Indigenous Captains of the Yaigojé Apaporis
COAMA	Consolidación Amazónica NGO
ETI	Entidades Territoriales Indígenas (Indigenous Territorial Entities ITE)
FGA	Fundación Gaia-Amazonas NGO
LOOT	Law of Organic Ordering of Territory /Ley Orgánica Ordenamiento Territorial
MPCI	Permanent Forum (Mesa) for Inter-Administrative Coordination.

## **Abstract**

This study analyses the importance of cultural dimensions in decentralization processes focusing on the transformations in state/indigenous peoples' relations and in indigenous collective citizenship since the 1990s in the Amazonas and Vaupés Departments of the Colombian Amazon. Three case studies related to Resguardo ancestral territories in the Pira-paraná, Mirití and lower Apaporis regions were selected for their geographical contiguity, cultural diversity and high rainforest biodiversity, and where Associations of Traditional Authorities conform Indigenous Local Governments. Analyses of coloniality/modernity, power relations and spaces of participation reveal bottom-up decentralisation processes and the effect on politico-cultural dynamics and contestation, territorial ordering, public education and local development.

## **Relevance to Development Studies**

This paper addresses the gap in analysis on socio-cultural dimensions of decentralisation processes in areas with majority indigenous populations. This approach has important implications for understanding issues of social justice associated to processes of decentralization, including power relations, inequality, discrimination, poverty prevention and socio-environmental resilience in the Colombian Amazon.

## **Keywords**

Amazon, Decentralisation, Culture and Development, Indigenous Local Governments, Territorial ordering, Education, Interculturality, Coloniality, Participation, Power relations, Education, Life Plans

## **Introduction:**

In a world with increasing globalisation and in countries where decentralisation is an important part of social and political processes, whereby national identity and states themselves are being redefined (Sieder 2002 2007; Stavenhagen 2009) and power structures are changing, (Gaventa and Cornwall 2008), important and unavoidable questions rise again in development studies and practices: How do culture, identity and epistemic systems relate to development studies and decentralisation? Are these important and do they help us understand better how power relations, social cohesion and issues such as poverty, social justice and socio-environmental resilience may or may not work in multicultural countries? What do each of these processes and terms mean and how/who is to define them? These questions are clearly beyond this RP (or any single academic work for that matter) but it is within this troublesome and complex relation between culture, local development and decentralisation that lays the heart of this research in the context of Colombia where 30% of the territory is inhabited, owned and managed by indigenous (Amerindian) populations. The Colombian case is in this sense unique. No other Latin American country recognises both the rights of indigenous peoples over their *Resguardos*' collective territories as inalienable, imprescriptible and unmortgageable (Political Constitution, 1991) and the right of indigenous communities to define and establish indigenous local governments according to their cultural, social and organisational systems (CP 1991: Art. 286, 287). In this context, decentralisation in some parts of the Resguardos (such as in the case studies undertaken in this research) engages the central and regional governments and indigenous local governments that have distinctive cultural, political and social structures as well as Amerindian notions and systems of education, health, territorial management, a 'good life' and of development.

This paper is an attempt to shed some light on how culture, especially indigenous peoples' cultural agency in the Colombian Amazon regions of Miríti, Pirá-Paraná and Apaporis, have been pivotal in a radical redefinition and implementation of decentralisation. This bottom-up indigenous led decentralisation is argued to engage in redressing not only problems of public service delivery and governance (key to decentralisation) but also historic power relations entrenched in coloniality. Furthermore, the case studies analysed illustrates how local indigenous cultural political processes have resulted in the creation of innovative alternative local development strategies in the context of decentralisation which are argued as highly pertinent for this Amazonian region with extremely high biodiversity and cultural diversity. The implications of such bottom-up decentralisation in terms of pertinence to local development strategies, local government systems, representation, public service delivery and social justice are here central.

Nonetheless, it is important to note that taking on this topic for research has not been an easy task. The term 'culture' in itself is highly problematic and difficult to address in social sciences and in particular in development studies (Rao and Walton 2004). Attempting to explore the inter-linkages between culture and decentralisation without falling into what could be labelled as

essentialism and romanticism is perhaps one of the trickiest parts of this endeavour. This is also in part because the relation between culture and development has been only marginally addressed in development theory, programs, institutions and agendas and continues to be a highly contested and elusive topic (Arizpe 2004). In an analysis of six decades of notions of ‘culture’ in development theories and institutions, Arizpe notes the fragmentary and insufficient way culture and cultural diversity is understood and the linkages between culture and development acknowledged. Arizpe concludes that development theorisation of culture has been an utter “failure to make a distinction between the constitutive, the functional and the instrumental aspects of culture (...). As the report of the United Nations Commission on Culture and Development explicitly stated: it is not culture that is embedded in development; it is development that is embedded in culture” (Arizpe 2004: 2).

In this RP Stavenhagen’s definition of culture will be utilised whereby “culture is a Total Way of Life (...) the total sum of the material and spiritual activities and products of a given social group which distinguishes it from similar groups” (Stavenhagen 1998). Culture is thus seen as a “coherent self contained system of values and symbols, as well as a set of practices that a specific group reproduces over time and which provides individuals with the specific signposts and meanings for behaviour and social relationships in everyday life” (ibid.). Stavenhagen relates culture also to social organisation, social relations and intercultural relations (economic, social, political and religious) (Stavenhagen, 2004, 2009). This notion is of particular pertinence to this RP as it makes the relations between culture(s) and decentralisation relevant for they both relate to social, political and economic dynamics. Within this ample definition of culture, this RP will focus on the cultural variables of Amerindian and non-indigenous relations while highlighting how Amerindian cultures according to Stavenhagen are distinctive from ‘national culture’ by their languages, worldviews, spirituality, relation to ancestral territories, knowledge systems and ways that give “meaning to the natural and social environment” (Stavenhagen 2004: 28).

In sum, when ‘culture’ is mentioned in this RP in reference to indigenous people it means the indigenous total way of life, spiritual and material activities and expressions, worldview(s), language(s), relation to ancestral territories and knowledge systems that are based in social relations and organisation. In turn, the term *cultural dimensions* of decentralisation refers to the implications/complementarity/conflicting relations between Amerindian cultures and non-Amerindian/Western cultures in terms of social organisation and local government systems, territorial ordering and management and education involved in political and administrative decentralisation processes. It is here important to underline again that by the use of the notion of ‘culture’ and ‘cultural dimensions’ there is neither a romantic nor essentialist simplification of indigenous cultures, nor to pretend that all cultural aspects of Amerindians are free of problematic. The specific sense that is being considered is the relationality of the indigenous ‘cultural dimensions’ (that have been historically marginalised and oppressed) to the non-indigenous and hegemonic ones (Westernised in origin as according to Escobar 2010; Santos

2007; Walsh 2012, 2007; Stavenhagen 2009) and that are involved (directly or indirectly) with decentralisation processes.

Just as the understandings and definitions of ‘culture’ vary greatly from scholar to scholar, the development studies debates on the linkages between culture and development are similarly wide ranged. Hyper-modernist authors such as Harrison and Landes argue that ‘culture matters’ precisely because it is an ‘obstacle’ to development that inhibits modernization and must be overcome (Harrison 2000; Landes 2000 in Rao and Walton 2004: 10). On the opposite side of the spectrum the notions of modernity and development are criticised by authors such as Escobar (2010) as being a Eurocentric forms of cultural hegemony themselves “based on cultural and ontological commitments” (Escobar 2010: 9) imposing beliefs of only one possible model of progress, reason, knowledge, modernity and development that invisibilises and oppresses ‘other’ cultures and reifies them as backward and underdeveloped (Escobar 2010). Other authors such as Rao and Walton suggest that culturally sensitive/aware development is increasingly key to address poverty alleviation/prevention, countering inequality and advancing conflict resolution/prevention (Rao and Walton 2004: 10).

The debate of culture and development is of high relevance to Latin America where the last four decades have been marked with a historical surge of ethnic and indigenous movements indicating the importance of collective identity-based cultural and political mobilisation which constitute one of the most important movements of the region (Arizpe 2004; Walsh 2010, 2002; Le Bot 2004). Escobar analyses this cultural-political mobilisation arguing that the “activation of relational ontologies, such as those of indigenous peoples and afro-descendants, which differ from the dualist ontologies of liberal modernity”(Escobar 2010: 1) are at the core of growing movements for socio-economic, political and cultural transformations in the continent.

However, although the inter-linkages (or contradictions) between culture and development have gained support and momentum in the last few years (Arizpe 2004; Escobar 2010; Stavenhagen 2010; Rao & Walton 2004), local development processes such as decentralisation have yet to problematize and explore this inter-connectedness and more so in areas largely inhabited by indigenous populations such as in the Amazon. The existing literature on decentralisation that analyses power relations, government structures, public service provision, citizenship and participation have largely ignored the distinct dynamics related to indigenous peoples, whom are collective subjects of international law and express indigenous collective citizenship (Stavenhagen 2009) with cultural-political agendas and who uphold distinct knowledge systems as well as non-western notions and practices of social organisation, development, education, health, territorial management and socio-environmental resilience.

This Paper seeks to address this gap by focusing on three main elements where culture and decentralisation interrelate in the case of the indigenous collective territories of the Colombian Amazon: First: The type of local governments and their decision-making systems. This relates to local governments as the ‘recipients’ of the transfer of powers, responsibilities and autonomy (ipolitical decentralisation) from ‘higher levels of government’ (Falleti 2005) and the indigenous social-cultural organisation and ‘Maloca’ (longhouse) communal systems. Second: The territorial jurisdiction of local governments. This refers to territorial ordering, planning and management and the indigenous cultural relation, worldview and management of ancestral territories. Third: Provision of public education. This refers to the production and reproduction of knowledge in formal education and indigenous knowledge systems.

As such, the central question to this research is “In which ways do ‘cultural dimensions’ in ‘Resguardo’ Indigenous Territories of the Colombian Amazon shape decentralisation processes?” while focusing on the above mentioned elements as sub-units of analysis: Local government, Territory and Education. The methodology applied in this research consists of an ‘explanatory multiple case study’ (Yin 2009) where multiple variables which cannot be quantified are analysed through qualitative approaches (*ibid.*). The data analysed consists on: Literature review; Documentation (field reports of NGOs, news clippings); Grey literature (unpublished documents, working papers and internal reports of NGOs); Archival records (public documentation from indigenous organisations, local, regional and central government entities); Semi-structured in-depth interviews with key actors, and data on previous fieldwork and participant observation in the case study areas since 2005. The positioning and reflexivity of the author is based on professional experience as a member of a Colombian NGO (Fundación Gaia Amazons - henceforth FGA-) working along with indigenous communities in the case study areas. In this sense, the way this RP is written also reflects an attempt to reconsider linkages between development practice and theory while visibilising the relevance of indigenous peoples and cultures in decentralisation processes.

The RP is composed of five chapters. Chapter One introduces the theoretical frameworks that will be applied in the analysis. Chapter Two analyses the historical context that has shaped indigenous cultural and political positions in relation to the state and indicates legislation related to indigenous peoples and decentralisation since the 1990s. Chapter Three analyses the internal processes of self-mobilisation of the indigenous communities and Maloca communal dynamics in relation to their position as indigenous peoples (derived from chapter two) and the changes in the legal frameworks in terms of indigenous rights and decentralisation. Particular emphasis is made in the type of participatory process undertaken by the indigenous communities in indigenous local governments and territoriality. It analyses the implications such self-mobilisation processes have in redefining power relations with the state and the resulting cultural, political and local development strategies defined by the communities in bottom-up decentralisation. Chapter Four

analyses the internal processes of indigenous communities in the redefinition and establishment of formal ‘indigenous education plans’ and analyses their implication in formulation of education policies with/for indigenous peoples in intercultural and multicultural contexts. Chapter Five focuses on inter-administrative spaces between Departmental and indigenous local governments and analyses the power relations and negotiations related to political and administrative decentralisation. Emphasis is set here in the type of spaces of participation, power relations and the resulting effects that indigenous cultural and political processes had on the conception, definition and implementation of bottom-up decentralisation in the Colombian Amazon.

# Chapter 1      Theoretical Framework

## 1.1 Problem Statement:

In Colombia, as in most Latin American countries, decentralisation has been largely addressed as a technical matter related to effectiveness and efficiency of public service provision (Gutierrez et al 2010; Faguet and Sanchez 2009). To a lesser degree, power dimensions have been studied in relation to issues of elite capture and the armed conflict (Restrepo 2004). However, little to no attention has been given to the cultural dimensions within decentralisation. This is of particular concern in a country like Colombia where 30% of the national territory and 50% of the Amazon belongs to indigenous communities as 'Resguardo' collective property and where indigenous communities can create their own local governments according to their cultures and norms within a nation-state redefined as multicultural/ethnic since the 1991 Political Constitution of Colombia. This research paper seeks to address this gap while also analysing the relevance of indigenous positions and proposals in decentralisation processes in indigenous territories (Resguardos) in the Colombian Amazon. In this RP the '*cultural dimensions*' of decentralisation refers to the implications/complementarity/conflicting relations between Amerindian cultures and non-Amerindian/Western cultures in terms of social organisation and local government systems, territorial ordering and management and education involved in political and administrative decentralisation processes. To give attention to these dimensions, it is argued, has important implications for understanding issues of social justice associated to processes of decentralization, including power relations, inequality, discrimination, poverty prevention and socio-environmental resilience.

## 1.2 Research Question:

### *Main Question:*

In which ways do cultural dimensions in 'Resguardo' Indigenous Territories of the Colombian Amazon shape decentralisation processes?

## 1.3 Theoretical Framework: Starting Point Definitions/Concepts

### *Decentralisation:*

Decentralisation as such is a concept that has been debated for centuries (Pollitt, 2005 in Dubois & Fattore, 2009). Since colonial times, decentralisation

has been utilised to secure indirect rule and governance within the colonies where local committees (of a similar form of today's community-based organisations) were used as vehicles for colonial administration and control (Ribot, Agrawal, Larson 2006, Ribot 1996; Cornwall 2002; Gaventa 2006). However, it was until the end of World War II (WWII) that decentralisation became a major area of scientific research and State policy (Dubois & Fattore 2009). While decentralisation policies in Europe began in the 1950s as a reaction to the highly centralised government resulting from WWII (*ibid.*), the emergence of neoliberalism in the seventies and eighties was decisive to its global expansion (Dubois & Fattore 2009). The overall failure of the developmental state systems around the world<sup>1</sup> (the State as the "development champion"), the growing neoliberal paradigm promoting the benefits of the market, the need for state roll-back, and the de-bureaucratisation of the business sector, framed decentralisation, and of new public management as the "dominant management ideology of our time." (Pollitt 2005: 371–372 in Dubois & Fattore 2009)

The objective of decentralisation is thus two fold. On the once hand, it seeks to legitimise the state and expand its control through the engagement of local governments (Restrepo, 2012). On the other hand, decentralisation is argued to increase effectiveness and efficiency of the state by 'bringing the government closer to the people' (Faguet 2009) increasing thus the access to information of people's needs and preferences. This in turn allows for better investment of public funds and increased service delivery both in terms of quality as in quantity (*ibid.*). Public Accountability and transparency are also argued as strategic benefits of decentralisation as local communities can have a measure of control over politicians and decision-makers through various mechanisms such as elections and through an increased capacity of the central government to focus on controls (*ibid.*).

In academic literature three types of decentralisation are identified, deconcentration, delegation and democratic decentralization. In practice, these are not necessarily mutually exclusive and cases can be found where the three forms exist in different sectors. Due its relevance in the Amazon case studies and to the limited word space, I will concentrate in explaining the third type: democratic decentralization.

Democratic decentralisation (also referred to as devolution) is the strongest form of decentralisation. For the purpose of this research and it is mainly understood as "a process of state reform composed by a set of public policies that transfer responsibilities, resources, or authority from higher to lower levels of government in the context of a specific type of state." (Falleti, 2005: 329). Two

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<sup>1</sup> With the exception of Asian developmental states.

<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, delegates do have autonomy in operational decision-making in order to make their

particular aspects of this definition are to be highlighted: first, decentralisation is defined as a dynamic process, not as a state of political or fiscal being of the State in a particular moment in time (Falleti 2005; Dubois & Fattore 2009). Second, decentralisation here is a process exclusive within the public sector (*ibid.*). Additionally, it includes autonomy of lower levels of government as well as their capacity to influence higher-levels of decision-making (Dubois & Fattore 2009). In this definition, authority is understood as both formal and real. Formal authority refers to the right to decide while real authority refers to the effective control over decisions (Aghin & Tirole, 1997 in Dubois & Fattore, 2009). Responsibilities on the other hand, are related to accountability and are understood as “the responsibility for program operations and decisions at the level closest to the public consistent with effective and responsible performance” (Ink & Dean, 1970: 61 in Dubois & Fattore 2009: 8). Three major components in democratic decentralisation include:

- 1) Administrative decentralisation which refers to a “set of policies that transfer the administration and delivery of social services such as education, health, social welfare, or housing to subnational governments” (Falleti 2005: 329).
- 2) Fiscal decentralisation, which is a “set of policies designed to increase the revenues or fiscal autonomy of subnational governments” (*ibid.*). Fiscal decentralisation can take diverse forms, from the creation of taxes by lower levels of government to increase in transfers from the central government are some examples.
- 3) Political decentralisation “is the set of constitutional amendments and electoral reforms designed to open new –or activate existing but dormant or ineffective- spaces for representation of subnational polities. Political decentralisation policies are designed to devolve political authority or electoral capacities to subnational actors” (Falleti 2005: 329).

Critics of decentralisation point to the fact that ‘bringing the government closer to the people’ does not necessarily translate in greater participation, equity or social justice (Lane, 2003). In fact, elite capture and the reproduction of power structures of the status quo which silence and marginalise ‘the poor’ and vulnerable sectors of society are common and valid critics of decentralisation (*ibid.*). Also, recentralisation can occur simultaneously to control resources or expropriate common property resources (Agrawal 1999; Agrawal and Gupta 2005; Ribot et al. 2006).

Furthermore, decentralisation has been mainly addressed in academia and in policy circles as a technocratic issue (Bergh, 2004, 2010; Cornwall, 2002, 2004; Falleti, 2004, 2007). While on the one hand there is an overwhelming literature on the fiscal and administrative dimensions of decentralisation, political decentralisation analysis tends to ignore underlying power struggles of economic and social nature. Decentralisation as a technical issue thus deprives marginalised sectors of society such as ‘the poor’ from any agency, reducing them to objects of interventions (Bergh 2004). In short, it is depoliticised.

While these issues are examined in academic research, there is another aspect generally excluded from the analysis of the risks and opportunities of decentralisation: The relevance of indigenous ‘cultural dimensions’ within political and administrative decentralisation processes in regions with high cultural and indigenous diversity. As explained in the introduction, indigenous ‘cultural dimensions’ in this case refers to the indigenous socio-economic and political organisation systems, the relation with the territory and its management, and indigenous education and knowledge systems, three components that refer to political and administrative decentralisation (local government systems/structures; Local government territorial jurisdiction and control, and; Public education). These dimensions are not static but adaptive through time and in relation to historical, cultural, political and economic contexts. While referring to ‘cultural dimensions’ there is no attempt to value more indigenous cultures, traditional authorities, government and knowledge systems over other ones but it refers to the issue that these dimensions are important and constitutive of historical indigenous cultural and political struggles that seek to redress inequitable power relations with non-indigenous societies in decentralisation.

Recently, within the social sciences the modernity/coloniality approach, stemming from but post-structuralist and intercultural philosophy critiques to modernity and colonialism, has focused on the identification of material and epistemic dynamics of control that oppress, invisibilises and dominate certain cultural systems. In particular, some authors have explored how non-Western cultural systems have been subalternised through what is termed the colonial matrix of power (Escobar 2011, 2010; Quijano 2007, Mignolo 2011). This matrix of power makes reference to the categorisation of cultural systems - other than the Western culture - in terms of race. In this process of racial categorization that dates back to Spanish colonization of the Americas in the XVIth century, these ‘other’ cultural systems are considered irrational, inferior and in need of modernisation (*ibid.*).

From this perspective, non-Western cultural practices, values and beliefs are systematically marginalised, silenced and deemed in need to be assimilated to the dominant modern society (Escobar 2011, 2010; Stavenhagen, 2009). In this dissertation, it is argued that the modernity/coloniality perspective provides useful analytical tools for a critical analysis of processes of decentralisation in contexts in which encounters between diverse cultural systems took place. The following section will elaborate the theoretical frameworks and key concepts that will be applied throughout the research in order to expose the relevance of culture as a key analytical dimension in decentralisation processes.

## 1.4 Analytical Framework:

### *Coloniality*

Since the nineties academics such as Escobar, Mignolo, Dussel, de Sousa Santos, Maldonado and Walsh have formed part of a collective that has undertaken the analysis of the ‘colonial wound’ and epistemic repression that shapes today’s development paradigm and the injustices, limitations, risks and shortfalls therein (Escobar 2010, 2011; Mignolo, 2009, 2011; Quijano 2007, Santos, 2006; Walsh, 2002, 2007, 2011; Dussel, 2012)

Coloniality as such is understood as the process that consolidated itself from the XVth century with the encounter between European explorers/colonisers and the American civilisations (Escobar 2007). The expansionist project that thereon was to mark a drastic change in the histories of all peoples was one marked by the imposition of Eurocentric notions of what it is to be ‘rational’, ‘modern’ and a consequent categorisation of other cultures and peoples in terms of race and according to their ‘backwardness’ in relation to the dominant and ‘superior European civilisers’ (Mignolo, 2009; Quijano, 2007; Dussel, 2012). In sharp distinction with post-colonial theories, coloniality is seen as surpassing the colonial era and defining to a large extent the concepts, perceptions and structures of today’s modern societies, development paradigms and state systems and ideologies (Escobar, 2007, 2010; Quijano, 2007; Dussel, 2012). Quijano, for example emphasizes that *“Eurocentered coloniality of power has proved to be longer lasting than Eurocentered colonialism. Without it, the history of capitalism in Latin America and other related places in the world can hardly be explained.”* (Quijano, 2007: 5).

Of particular interest for this research is Santos’ analysis of the ‘sociology of absences and emergences’ (Santos 2006). The sociology of absences aims to explain why and how certain knowledges and cultural systems are made invisible and termed as non-existent; that is, as “non-credible alternatives to what exist” (Santos 2006: 15). Three categories of the sociology of absences will be applied in the analysis, these are:

- 1) Monoculture of knowledge, which refers to concept that modern science is the only valid knowledge. As such, other knowledges are seen as invalid, backward and at best, folkloric.
- 2) Monoculture of time refers to the idea that history has a linear and well-established meaning and direction (progress, modernisation, development). Other notions of time (such as cyclical) that underpin diverse cultural concepts of ‘development’ and alternative relations to society, culture and nature are seen as retrograde and esoteric.
- 3) Monoculture of naturalisation of differences that consist on the categorisation of the “other” according to race. This objectification of the “other” as ‘naturally inferior’ and thus subject of domination is used to

naturalise hierarchies and monocultural power structures of exploitation.

(Santos 2006: 16-17)

The ‘ecology of emergences’ is the flipside of the monocultures above mentioned. As such; it also visibilises ‘epistemologies of the South’ (Santos 2011) different from Western ones. It is an approach that seeks an ‘ecology of knowledges’ and the mutual recognition of knowledge and time concepts and systems as complementary albeit different. The point is not to accredit equal validity to knowledge and time systems but to allow a pragmatic discussion where alternatives to development and social justice emerge from a mutual recognition, moving away from the immediate disqualification of whatever does not fit with the dominant monocultures (Santos 2006).

As an analytical tool, this framework will be used to expose dynamics of cultural systems that are silenced and marginalised in decentralisation processes, in this particular case in the indigenous territories of the Colombian Amazon region. As such, the objective is that of exposing “other” subjectivities and inter-subjectivities of cultural dimensions of indigenous peoples in the Colombian Amazon as these encounters specify power, knowledge and time frameworks in processes of decentralization. In sum, an approach of coloniality will help to make the invisible cultural dimensions in decentralisation visible and to understand where and why indigenous people position themselves in terms of historical, political and cultural terms, i.e.: what *positioning* they take and its relevance.

An additional concept useful in understanding the positioning of indigenous peoples with the state and modern society is that of governmentality. This term, coined by Foucault, refers to the idea that governing is not an exercise imposed by a monolithic and identifiable entity (such as the state), but rather it is a process where the mentality of subjects is colonised and governed (thus *govern-mentality*) through a nexus of interconnected entities (such as education, health, time, social norms, law, punishment and authority figures/institutions, but this power can be contested from within also (Gaventa and Cornwall 2011). As such, the monocultures of power, knowledge and time are part of the processes of governmentality to which indigenous communities are subjected to. The challenging, questioning and resistance emerging from indigenous positioning in their relations with the dominant interconnected entities and the state (governmentality systems) is thus central in the analysis of the cultural dimensions in the governing strategies and systems implicit to decentralisation processes.

### Participation

According to Bergh, participation and democratic decentralisation have a symbiotic relationship (Bergh 2004, 2010). Decentralisation requires participation to some degree so as to provide the channels where information can flow from the local communities to the local government, identifying

needs and preferences and allowing for better decision making, investment and responsiveness. On the other hand, decentralisation itself increases the opportunities for participatory spaces to be constructed due to the closeness of the government to the citizens (Bergh, 2010). Participation is thus a means and an end of decentralisation (*ibid.*). In order to analyse participation and the forms and levels it may entail, the analytical framework of two authors in this topic will be used throughout this research. First, the typologies of participation forwarded by Drydyk, which include:

- 1) "Passive participation (being told what is going to happen).
- 2) Participation in information-giving,
- 3) Participation by consultation (but which does not concede any share in decision-making)
- 4) Participation for material incentives (e.g.: labour in exchange for food, cash, or other material incentives).
- 5) Functional participation (to meet predetermined objectives after major decisions have been made).
- 6) Interactive participation (joint analysis, such as participatory action research, which leads to action plans and the formation of the new local institutions or the strengthening of existing ones; these groups take control over local decisions, and so people have a stake in maintaining structures and practices).
- 7) Self-mobilisation (taking initiatives independent of external institutions to change systems; this can entail receiving resources and technical advice but retaining control of how resources are used), which may or may not challenge existent inequitable distributions of wealth and power; also called "transformative participation”.

(Drydyk 2005: 259-260 in Bergh 2010: 286-287)

Secondly, Cornwall's analysis on the 'spaces of participation' (Cornwall 2002, 2004). Drawing from Foucault's works on the reproduction of power relations and governmentality, Cornwall examines the type of spaces in which participation occurs: this refers to the question of who determines the form of participation by taking the initiative to create said space, set the agendas, concepts, methods, techniques and facilitations, a critical element that underpins power relations and the form, level and quality of participation (Cornwall, 2002, 2004). Cornwall's (2004) notion of 'spaces' are used in this analysis of participation: 'invited' government-created spaces (transient or durable) responses to pressure or demands; 'popular spaces' self-created collectively by peoples; and 'conquered spaces' resulting from success in demand. There are thus '*created spaces*' of participation that refers to processes of self-mobilisation of marginalised groups where the state or donor agencies have not been involved, (Cornwall 2004, Gaventa 2006). '*Invited spaces*' created by the state or donor agencies seeking to include the needs and priorities of marginalised groups and which are characterised as 'instrumental participatory spaces' (Cornwall 2004, Gaventa 2006). "*Closed spaces*" of participation whereby decisions are made by powerful actors behind closed doors without any pretence of inclusion (*ibid.*). These categories of spaces of participation will be helpful in analysing participation not as 'idealised notions of democratic practice' (Cornwall 2002: 29) but in reference to the political, social, cultural and historic particularities inherent in power struggles (*ibid.*). Within these spaces of participation, three notions of

power will be applied: ‘*Visible power*’ which refers to “the visible and definable aspects of political power – the formal rules, structures, authorities, institutions and procedures of decision making” (Gaventa, 2006: 29); ‘*Invisible power*’ which “shapes the psychological and ideological boundaries of participation. Significant problems and issues are not only kept from the decision-making table, but also from the minds and consciousness of the different players involved, even those directly affected by the problem” (ibid.); and ‘*Hidden Power*’ whereby “certain powerful people and institutions maintain their influence by controlling who gets to the decision-making table and what gets on the agenda”(ibid). These three categories of power will in turn be helpful to analyse the power relations within participatory spaces between indigenous local governments and the regional and national governments in relation to the definition and decentralisation of politico-administrative institutions and services.

## Chapter 2     Historical Context and Background

This chapter contains the historical and cultural background of the case study areas. It identifies key elements that articulate indigenous/non-indigenous relations in this region to contextualise the changes occurring during the last three decades while it also highlights recent legislation recognising indigenous rights to their identity, cultures, local governments and territoriality to indicate how they are applied in the case study areas and in changing state/indigenous peoples' relations. The analyses are based on concepts and methods from the modernity/coloniality paradigm and focus on key phases in the history of colonial and postcolonial process to highlight the relevance of contesting cultural systems.

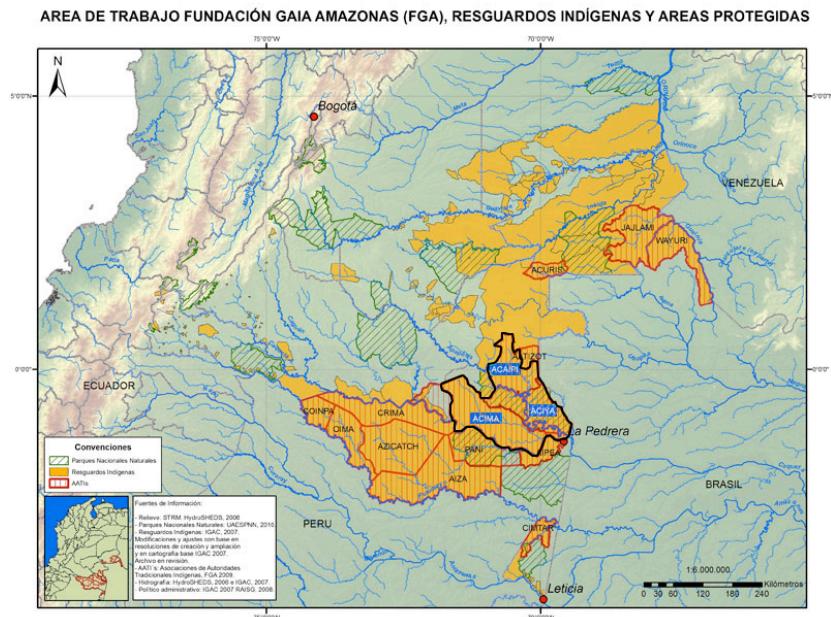
### 2.1 General information of the Case Studies

Colombia is a democratic state, multicultural/ethnic nation where decentralisation policies and processes are under way since the 1980s (Restrepo 2004). Colombia covers 1,038,699 km<sup>2</sup> and has a population of 41,468,384 individuals. The indigenous population of Colombia totals 1,392,632 individuals from 87 officially recognised ethnic groups: 3.43% of the total national population (government census DANE 2007).

The Colombian Amazon region covers 480,000 km<sup>2</sup>, it is 34% of the country and is composed of regional territorial entities called Departments (von Hildebrand & Brackelaire, 2012). Amidst one million non-indigenous settlers (mainly in towns), sixty-two indigenous ethno-linguistic groups inhabit the Amazon with a population of 95,000 individuals; numerically a minority of the country's Amerindians nevertheless constituting the majority of indigenous cultures and languages. The Amazon is the largest extension of national territory and rainforests populated primarily by indigenous peoples. To analyse decentralisation processes since the 1980s and the relevance of the cultural dimensions of decentralisation in Amerindian regions, these three cases were chosen for: a) their high Amerindian population (99%) who are among the most traditional indigenous cultures of Amazonia, b) it is a region with well-conserved and highly biodiverse rainforests due to indigenous agency, c) the relevance of indigenous resilience in spite of centuries of genocide and coloniality, d) the communal vitality and community-based processes in the creation of indigenous local governments related to decentralisation processes taking place in the last two decades which have transformed state-indigenous peoples relations partly due to national legislation but also to indigenous resilience and proposals linked to bottom-up decentralisation.

The three case studies are located within the Amazon and Vaupés Departments and are along the basins of the Mirtí, Apaporis (footnote) and Pirá-Paraná rivers. They are located in the eastern Colombian Amazon in the peripheries of the country (Colombo-Brazilian border) in remote zones of

difficult access. The nearest towns are: La Pedrera, a small border town of some 2000 settlers (mainly former gold miners and merchants) and a military base. It is accessible for Amerindians by fluvial (canoe) transport at a travel distance between one to four days depending on the community of departure. Leticia, capital city of the Amazon Department, is accessible by fluvial means (two weeks) or air transport from La Pedrera. Mitú, capital city of the Vaupés Department is accessible by trails (two week treks) or private mono-engine aircrafts (four registered airstrips: 400 mts. of mud and gravel).



Map 1: Case Study region of Mirití (ACIMA), Apaporis (ACIYA), Pira (ACAIPI); Colombian Amazon, North West Amazon Basin

The case study areas of the Mirití (1 million hectares, ACIMA AATT), Apaporis (1.2 million hectares ACIYA AATT) and Pirá-Paraná (800,000 hectares ACAIPI) regions are inhabited by approximately 4,200 Amerindians living in 46 maloca-based communities dispersed in the rainforests (half a day or more walking distance between communities) and belonging to 20 different ethno-linguistic groups in areas of very high rainforest biodiversity and Amerindian cultural/linguistic diversity; the highest bio-cultural diversity of Colombia. The ethno-linguistic groups of the Mirití are: Yukuna, Tanimuka, Matapí, and Caviyarí ; In the lower Apaporis: Makuna, Tanimuka, Letuama, Yauna, Yuhup; Pirá-Paraná ethno-linguistic groups are Bará, Eduria, Idemasa, Barasana, Buemasa, Desana, Piratapuyo, Tatuyo, Taiwano, Tuyuka, Makuna, Yuruti, Maku. The three case study areas have a majority indigenous population (99%) inhabiting 'Maloca' communal longhouses (ACIMA, ACAIPI, ACIYA Census) and living since the 1980s in titled *Resguardos* (indigenous collective territories).



Photo 1: Maloca of the Makuna, Pirá-Paraná River, Amazon Department, 2012  
Source: Fundación Gaia Amazonas & Sergio Batelsman, 2012

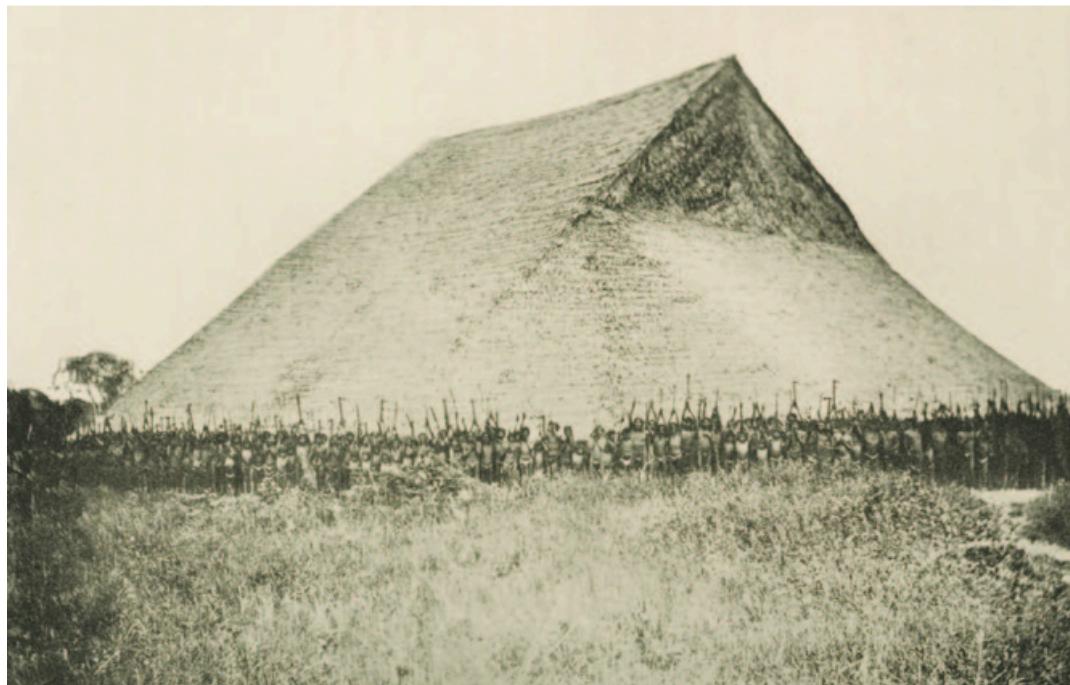


Photo 2: Maloca Huitoto, Caquetá River, Amazon Department, 1912. Source: Banco de la Republica. Photo taken by Whiffen, 1912

The selection of these three case studies is based on four main criteria:

- 1) All case studies areas are predominantly inhabited by indigenous ethnic groups (99% of the population).
- 2) The indigenous peoples whom inhabit these regions are some of the most traditional and resilient groups of the Amazon, and live in the most conserved and biodiverse rainforests of the region (v.Hildebrand & Brackelaire, 2012).

- 3) The ethnic groups in the three case study regions inhabit their ancestral territories and share a common cultural complex (Ortiz et al 2011)
- 4) All case studies are located within Resguardos.
- 5) All case studies share a history of coloniality, resistance, resilience, self-mobilisation and strategic political agency in power relations with the state (Pineda 2010).
- 6) None of the indigenous groups of the three case studies have violent conflicts based on identity politics.
- 7) All three case studies are continuous, constituting a pan-regional cultural and territorial unit.
- 8) The Author of this RP has been personally involved over the last seven years as part of an inter-disciplinary team of development advisors supporting indigenous communities and organisations in the Amazon, including the three case study areas in question.

## 2.2 Historical Context

Amazonia has been inhabited for over 10,000 years by hunter-gatherer nomads and tribal shifting cultivators (Hornborg 2007). Wars, alliances, barter and trade existed across Amazonian and neighbouring regions while cultural identities were created interactively and not in isolation (*ibid.*). Amerindians conceive originary co-governance of ancestral territories and forests was between humans, ancestors and spirit forces of nature, while networks of Maloca (communal longhouses) jointly planned and managed local and regional socio-environmental sustainability; in this millenarian process each ethnic group in their territory amassed distinctive experience and a massive knowledge which each Maloca community and allied groups are to this day responsible to recreate and apply so all 'live well' in the short and long term (van der Hammen 1992; von Hildebrand and Brackelaire, 2012).

In the case study areas, the arrival of the Spanish (and Portuguese) Empires' missionaries, slave traders, military and settlers in the XVI- XIX centuries ravaged the Amerindians through colonial rule as slavery, forced resettlement, evangelization and epidemics decimated indigenous populations (Pineda 2011) European missionaries were in the Pirá-Paraná, Mirití and lower Apaporis for centuries burning Maloca, resettling communities in towns, evangelizing, teaching rudimentary Spanish (or Portuguese) and literacy, and forcing Indians to work in/for mission posts (Hugh-Jones 1988; Cabrera 2002). The presence of local merchants formed part of a world system and 'Atlantic commercial circuit' (Mignolo 2008: 248). The geopolitics of knowledge and the colonial difference was used by European empires consolidating their power, wealth and emerging capitalism by invisibilizing indigenous labour and undermining their cultures. As local 'White' elites imposed Western socio-economic and political systems and religion to colonize minds and enslave work forces, they labelled the Indians as an inferior race, savage, irrational and pagan, while ravaging communities and rainforests (Quijano 2007). Slave raiders abducted Indians while the Indians who escaped were under forced labour working for local merchants and missionaries as debt-bondage was violently imposed to exploit the Indians (Hugh-Jones 1988, Pineda 2010). However many Indians resisted colonial exploitation and defended their modes of life; the indigenous refusal to abandon their cultures, Maloca lifestyles and socio-environmental resilience is documented by Amerindian oral history, myth and by ethno-historians (Pineda 2010; Hugh-Jones 1988; Oostra, 1991)

Postcolonial era. The ousting of the Spaniards and establishment of Colombia in 1810 changed little colonialism's racism, injustice, genocidal economy and ethnocide against Amazon Indians (Pineda 2010). Missionaries continued when in 1887 the Colombian government signed the Concordato treaty with the Holy See to 'foment Catholic missions among barbarian tribes' in '*territorios de misiones*' including the Vaupés and Caquetá regions (Cabrera 2002). The

Concordato delegated education to the Church to work in 'incipient societies' while 'reducing savages to be civilized' in mission boarding schools within an 'administrative-economic system with agricultural labour, services of communication, health, transport, markets, and to nucleate the population' in areas controlled by the Church for the state apparatus (Romero 2002.). In 1973 the Colombian government extended the Concordato with the Holy See. The little differentiation between Church and State and the delegation to the Church of education and health services with the 'task of civilising' Indians negatively impacted indigenous lives and cultures, however many Indian children escaped from boarding schools, as many Indians fled to inaccessible forests (op.cit.) (Annex 1).

The missionaries', settlers' and merchants' expanded a Westernized 'instrumentalisation of reason' 'distorted' and associated to an idea of 'race' to hierarchize, stigmatise and exploit Amerindians (Quijano 1992:10) while as Santos explains (2007) coloniality regimes also defined borders between 'civilised' and 'savage' peoples and zones; furthermore the simultaneous existence of Amerindian cultures and other cultures (non-Indian) were not defined as expressions of contemporary co-existing (different) cultures but instead the Indians were defined as temporal expressions of degenerate races and irrelevant cultures of 'the past' (Santos 1992, 2007) and not as expressions of multiple modernities and ways of being in the world. The genocidal disregard for indigenous rights, life, dignity and indigenous social and political organisation, spirituality and environmental management systems, ignored their cultural rights and achievements as millenarian inhabitants of the Amazon rainforests. As the Indians and their ways of being were oppressed or destroyed in a systematic manner by non-Indian elites, rubber dealers, missionaries and colonizers this is clearly related to what Santos terms the three monocultures of knowledge, power and time (and I add also of space and territoriality) that are part of the theoretical framework used in this RP.

However since the 1970s as rubber prices crashed, this coincided with the start of an era of historically unprecedented indigenous mobilisation in Latin America and Colombia as the Amerindians struggled to have their voices and demands heeded.

### **2.3 Cultural Resistance and indigenous mobilisation since the 70s**

The end of rubber extraction in forced labour camps, in the mid seventies in the case study areas, allowed indigenous families and communities to regroup in their ancestral territories and maloca where the Amerindians critically discussed and evaluated the violent experiences and genocidal process undergone; simultaneously due to the rising presence of indigenous movements at national and international levels they also denounced the atrocities and 'ethnocide' (cultural genocide) endured, reporting these to CG - because local elites such as Corregidores were rubber barons and local merchants - and also to national and regional indigenous organisations surging across Latin America and in Colombia (Warren and Jackson 2002, Stavenhagen

2002, 2010 ). In this process the Amerindians in the three case study areas shared both a common past of genocide and coloniality and also common cultural dynamics based on their shamanism, maloca polities and a contiguous geographical space where the indigenous groups held common rituals based on 'Jaguar shamanism' and also engaged in reciprocity and redistribution of foods and goods. In the 1970s after hundreds of meetings the indigenous leaders and the majority of persons in each maloca overtly decided to recreate their communal ties and recuperate their cultural knowledge and indigenous governance systems (ACIMA 2000). Deeply affected by the previous decades of coloniality and atrocities, communities and traditional authorities rethought their cultural strategies of existence and resistance as collectivities, as indigenous peoples, in relation to the dominant society and the state (v.Hildebrand and Brackelaire, 2012). The challenge was complex: while on the one hand indigenous cultural revitalisation was central, on the other appropriation (in more equitable ways and by indigenous choice) of some elements of non-indigenous cultural elements such as health and education, Spanish and other skills to deal with 'White people' as well to obtain merchandise, and have employment and fair salaries; similarly, resistance to ethnocide and countering coloniality were pivotal to redress centuries of inequality and exploitation. In addition there was the need to establish more just relations with non-Indians and more respectful and fair relations with the state as decentralisation started advancing in the 1980s.

The impact of asymmetrical power relations and the indigenous toll due of coloniality, far from being anecdotes of the past, are highly relevant in the memory of today's indigenous peoples of the Amazon and have influenced the processes of decentralisation within indigenous territories of the case study areas while the indigenous resilience has also been key in their proactive proposals in negotiations in implementing decentralisation. The Amerindians sought to change the violent and asymmetrical relations between indigenous people and the dominant society and state, as indigenous communities made a profound re-evaluation of their strategies to relate with the state and how to resist its colonial matrix of power while revitalising their cultures. In sum, this process of coloniality influenced the positionality of indigenous communities as they moved to an explicit and conscious mobilisation and pro-active collective participation to transform the spaces and also relations with the state. They reconceptualised participation in the state in negotiatory spaces involving indigenous and non-indigenous sectors, while the Amerindians claimed their right to indigenous identities and difference.

The first actions undertaken by the communities of the Mirití, who were the first of the three case studies to mobilise collective efforts countering the coloniality of schools and of local merchant shops as well as to forced labour, was based on support from lawyers who denounced debt-bondage as illegal, while on the other hand the Amerindians set up local stores (funded partly by a project with researchers of the government's Colombian Institute of Anthropology's field station), and also the Indians established improvised autonomous community schools 'pirate schools' (taught by community leaders) where their own language and culture, in addition to Spanish, literacy

and arithmetic, were taught (Echeverri nd:15). This allowed communities to regroup and children to stay within Maloca communal life, participate in daily socio-cultural dynamics within ancestral territories (*ibid*). Clearly, this was a reaction to the exploitative system of Whites and of the coloniality of missionary education while at the same time they recreated and innovated their cultural traditions as they also selected and adapted non-indigenous cultural elements while strengthening the capacities of communities to relate on different terms with the state and the dominant society (and resist them), and to expose indigenous aspirations and needs.

In the 1970s and in Amazon there was a growing mobilization by indigenous leaders to demand recognition of their rights and to denounce the violence and injustice they had been subjected for centuries. As many analysts hold (Le Bot 2004, Stavenhagen 2009), the force and relevance of the indigenous social movements constituted a historically unprecedented collective demand for the right to be recognised as 'indigenous peoples' and not mere 'ethnic minorities' while denouncing the genocide and ethnocide and the overt and covert discrimination, racism, exploitation endured as well as the persecution and destruction of the indigenous cultures, languages, political, socio-economic systems, religions and cosmovisions and Amerindian ways of knowing, being and living and of relating to their ancestral territories.

## **2.4 Changing political and legal frameworks in the era of decentralisation**

In terms of territorial ordering and government structures, as Ortiz indicates (2004:44) the 1886 Constitution stipulated Colombia as a centralised state that was constituted of territorial units of Departments and 'National Territories' in marginal frontier areas such as the Amazon. In 1910 the *Comisaria* units were created under the control of central government (who created Corregimientos within these). In 1930 the *Comisaria del Amazonas* was established with Leticia as its capital and as municipality, but since 1978 was under control of the 'Administrative Department of Intendencias y Comisarias' (DAINCO) a Presidential dependency created to promote economic, social and cultural development of 'rezagada/backward' regions. The central government appointed and controlled the *Comisario* of each *Comisaria* and also members of the *Comisaria* Council and Mayors, while non-Indian regional elites proposed names to the CG to nominate the *Comisario* and *Corregidores* (often persons from regions outside Amazonia) so CG had control of all decision-making in public spaces and total fiscal control (Ortiz 2004:45-50) Changes in the 1991 Constitution would later standardise all territorial units into Departments, and through Decree 2274 of 1991 the Department of Amazonas was recognized, though the government extended its contract with the Church's Apostolic Prefecture to continue indigenous education (Ortiz 2004: 45-50).

Under the presidency of Barco (1986-1990) the indigenous struggle for the recognition of resguardos advanced and Barco's support of these claims changed the national political arena in terms of the relations between the state

and indigenous people. Since then, and under other governments, overall twenty million hectares of Resguardos in the Amazon were legally recognised as collective property, inalienable, imprescriptible and unmortgageable, an area corresponding to 27% of the national territory (v.Hildebrand and Brackelaire 2012).

This initial transformation in the social and cultural pact between indigenous peoples and the state was further advanced in the Political Constitution (CP) of 1991 where indigenous leaders of the Andean region had an important stake in the constituency defining the new CP. Indigenous resguardos were ratified (CP 1991: Art. 329) and the indigenous government systems within them recognised as legitimate public entities for the first time in history (CP, 1991; art. 287). As such, Indigenous Territorial Entities (ITEs) were recognised as territorial entities that indigenous communities could establish according to their cultural systems of social organisation.

As such, the decentralisation in indigenous territories can best be explained in reference to rulings of the Constitutional Court where it is stated that:

“The Indigenous Territorial Entities, as any territorial entity, enjoy full autonomy to administer their affairs. Here the autonomy is even greater, for the general considerations about self-government of article 287 of the Constitution, additions specific prerogatives in matter of costumes of government, language, justice and elections, consecrated in articles 330, 10, 246 and 171 respectively” (Constitutional Court, T-257, 1993)

“(...) Nor the National government, nor the ecclesiastical authorities are authorised by Constitutional norm to intervene in the sphere of Indigenous self-government” (Constitutional Court, C-139, 1996)

The rulings of the Constitutional Court further clarifies that the form of decentralisation related to indigenous resguardos and governments is that of devolution as, defined by Falleti (2005). However, the full implementation of the Constitution in relation to devolution towards ITEs requires an Organic (or Macro) Law of Territorial Ordering (LOOT for its Spanish acronym) which is to define the mechanism and frameworks for the articulation between the ITEs and the central government (Ortiz 2011). Despite countless draft proposals of the LOOT, none has been successful. According to Ortiz this is due to the lack of political will since the recognition of the LOOT would affect the interests of political and economic elites, in particular in the Andean region where resguardos overlap with pre-existing municipalities and private interests of resource exploitation (Ortiz 2011). Nonetheless, the lack of the LOOT has not been a dead end and several legal instruments have been established for the creation of indigenous local governments as public entities of special character while the LOOT comes into existence (CP, 1991; Transitory Article 56; Decree 1088 of 1992).

“Even if up to the moment the corresponding law that regulates the transcendental aspect of the territorial regime of the country has not been expedited (i.e.: the Organic Law of Territorial Ordering), it is possible non the less to distinguish that, differently to what occurs in other territorial entities, the members of the Indigenous communities are guaranteed not only administrative, financial and budgetary autonomy within their territories, as

can happen in other departments, districts and municipalities, but also the exercise of political and judiciary autonomy (...). The former means no less than the recognition and partial realization of the principle of participatory and pluralist democracy and the respect for the ethnic and cultural diversity of the Colombian Nation (P.C art.7)"

(Constitutional Court, T-154, 1994).

The transitory figure of local government that has been legally enabled is termed "Association of Traditional Indigenous Authorities" (AATI for its Spanish acronym). However, there is a legal paradox for although the AATIs are fully recognised as autonomous indigenous local government systems, the inexistence of the LOOT makes AATIs to refer to general laws that are sometimes contradictory to the character of the AATIs in legal terms and to the indigenous politico-administrative systems of social organisation. In consequence, due to the lack of an Organic Law of Territorial Ordering, AATIs have to define 'Territorial Ordering Plans' that are defined under general legislation. 'Territorial Ordering' (T.O) is the term given by the State to the process or 'organising' a specific jurisdiction in terms of its geographic, social, biologic and economic particularities which was to accompany decentralisation and improve regional development and territorial land use and management (Ortiz, 2004). The process of T.O, which has varied in form and content through time (levels of decision-making, actors involved, conceptualisation), produces the 'Plan of Territorial Ordering', also referred to as the 'Development Plan', of a specific region. T.O is thus a State policy for planning whose objective is to provide the politico-administrative organisation of the regions where principles of solidarity, equity and complementary relations between CG and LG were to promote harmonious 'development' (ibid.). The finality is to adapt the politico-administrative regime to promote development while regulating the transformations in the occupation and use of the territory in accordance to social, economic and environmental development strategies (ibid.). As such, territorial ordering is a fundamental element in decentralisation for it is oriented at defining particular development strategies according to the particularities of each region.

T.O thus becomes an important element in the definition of power relations between indigenous communities represented in the AATIs with the State. It would be simplistic to understand T.O as a technical requirement for LGs as not only development strategies are defined in relation to the territory but the conceptualisation of the territory itself, and the political framework that governs such conceptualisation and management are also defined (Garcés 1999 in Ortiz 2009). According to Fals Borda, T.O must also create new spatial institutions that revise or eliminate regional divisions product of vertical geopolitical practices that do not respond to the social realities of a territory (Fals Borda in Ortiz 2004).

The following chapter will analyse how indigenous communities of the case studies engaged in the construction of the territorial ordering plans and Life Plans that included the indigenous socio-cultural dimensions of territory.

# Chapter 3      Life Plans and Indigenous Local Governments

## 3.1 Introduction

This Chapter focuses on the indigenous-led participatory processes in the definition of indigenous local governments (ILG) and their territorial jurisdiction, while analysing the reinterpretation of legal frameworks from an indigenous position. Special emphasis is on the implications these entail in changing power relations of indigenous peoples and the state and in bottom-up decentralisation. The chapter analyses the proposals made by indigenous communities in the formulation of the plans of territorial ordering (POT) described above, but redefined as Life Plans/Plan de Vida to include Amerindian cultural dimensions.

## 3.2 From Territorial Ordering to Life Plans

Western notions reproduced by the state in the POT whereby “territories” are conceptualised as objects to be organised and used for economic and social development are significantly different from the Amerindians concepts of governance and ancestral territories considered complex wholes and living forces with whom they relate, communicate and coexist in a reciprocal dynamic for socio-environmental wellbeing and resilience (v.Hildebrand & Brackelaire, 2012). The governments’ policies for all territorial units to do POT were key part of decentralisation. In this sense, there is an apparent contradiction between the recognition of indigenous rights to self-government within their ancestral territories, and the initial POT framework that is based on western monocultural notions, categories and ontologies. However, laws have both a regulatory and emancipatory character, or as Santos terms it “the paradox of legal instruments” (Santos 1998, 2002 in Sieder 2011: 240). The dominant ontologies of opposition between nature and humans which underpins Westernised notions of economic development and modernity (Escobar 2010) are hegemonic and cultural systems reproduced in the POTs. Laws such as the POT thus codify power relations and categorise socio-economic and socio-environmental relations that also imply contested power dynamics (Sieder 2011). However, although the law does establish particular categories and codifications, these are in practice open to interpretation, contestation and negotiation (*ibid*). Law and legal systems can thus be understood as “contested sites of meaning where dominant ideals and values provide the framework for contestation and for advancing alternative understandings and practices. In this way, law is constantly negotiated and reshaped in a dynamic dialect between hegemonic projections and counter-hegemonic actions” (Santos 1998, 2002; Santos & Rodriguez-Garavito in Sieder 2011: 242). This is particularly significant when those challenging and re-interpreting laws are indigenous peoples whom as identity-based collective citizens advance collective aspirations as political and cultural agents, while also redefining their relation

with the state when there is democratic restructuring. According to Mische, “Exploring what 'being a citizen' means in the midst of a process of democratic restructuring, [refers to a] process wherein distinct social actors advance different demands and aspirational projections of citizenship. Citizenship formation is then best understood as a contested and dynamic struggle of hegemonies and counter-hegemonic actions of resistance between dominant and subordinated actors” (Ann Mische, 1996 in Sieder, 2007:107).

This is the case of the indigenous communities of the case studies who collectively and strategically redefined the notions, objects and the content of the POTs (and its Acronym). This allowed them to express their own interests, needs and plans as indigenous peoples and as collective citizenship contextualised within their particular history, worldviews, ontology, epistemology and their own notions of government and development. They strategically renamed and reframed the POTs as ‘Life Plans’ (LPs) in reference to both its temporal projection (long term/multi-generational, instead of merely based on 5 year government periods) and its scope (focused on referring to life as sustainable socio-environmental systems that shamanically are deemed holistic and interdependent), and they also included Amerindian spatio-temporal notions of territoriality where humans are part of ecosystems and territories as Amerindians and rainforests co-evolve, within a larger socio-ecological system (v.Hildebrand & Brackelaire 2012; Cayón and Turbay 2005).

LPs were constructed from the early 1990s and engaged hundreds of community meetings, workshops and an intense process of indigenous community-based-research (Ortiz et al 2011) carried out by youth, shamans, elders and other community leaders and also involved many gender-based discussions and processes (v.Hildebrand & Brackelaire 2012; Ortiz et al 2011). The community based process constructed the LPs focusing on three central questions: 1) How did we use to live? 2) How do we live today? 3) How would we want to live tomorrow (i.e.: in a future time)? (v.Hildebrand & Brackelaire 2012). As such, this allowed for the analysis and definition of LPs to be produced in relation to the indigenous historical specificity and cultural identities.

This allowed their own definition of needs and future aspirations based on their positioning, worldview and experience as indigenous peoples with collective citizenship rather than responding to mere legal requisites and technocratic processes of decentralisation and public service provision strategies based on hegemonic monocultural and individualistic notions. As such, LPs went beyond the analysis of the *form* that development processes were to be undertaken under the context of decentralisation and further inquired into the meaning, content and pertinence of how development, local governance and service provision must be understood and defined by and with indigenous peoples (ACIMA 1998 ACIPI 2005; v.Hildebrand & Brackelaire,2012).

Between 1992-1998 the resulting Life Plans of the case studies contained four core elements: Territory, ‘Gobierno Propio’ (Own Government),

Education and Health. While an analysis of the components of the LP regarding ‘Gobierno Propio’ and education will follow in this chapter, it is pertinent to highlight the implications that engaging in a redefinition of the POTs and the elaboration the LPs means from a perspective of coloniality. From this perspective, there is a clear indication of not only a resistance to ‘coloniality of power’ (Quijano et al 2007) but also critically advance in the construction of processes aimed at challenging and transforming the structures that reproduce hegemonic and monocultural governmentality. As indigenous communities assumed the definition of LP in official politico-administrative systems this is a shift indicative of ‘claimed power’ (Gaventa, 2006). This achievement, paradoxically occurs as part of a process of decentralisation, thus challenging the colonial matrices of power as indigenous public institutions (the AATIs) move through the new spaces and fissures of a multicultural state and contribute to its democratic transformation while restructuring power relations and territorial ordering in indigenous territories (Arhem et al 2004; Cayón and Turbay 2005; Bellier & Préaud 2011). Furthermore, the communal-based participatory research developed by the Amerindians themselves undertaken in the construction of the Life Plans was critical in breaking the dichotomy of “they (structures, organisations, experts) had power; we (the oppressed, marginalised) did not” (Gaventa and Cornwall 2001: 70) by closing the gap and redressing power inequities with the production of knowledge that strengthen identity, organisation and action at the local level

#### Life Plans and Local Governments: AATIs

The following section analyses the structure, territorial jurisdiction and administrative time frame of the AATIs of the case study. Particular attention is paid to the cultural dimensions that have shaped the local governments and make them distinct from other local governments of the Colombia and of the continent. Each of the three sections contains a brief description of the element of local government, followed by an analysis.

### 3.3 Indigenous Local Government Structure – AATI

In all three cases, the indigenous local government of the AATI was conceived as having the communal Maloca at the primary unit of the community and its ‘centre’ to follow Amerindian community-controlled power they delegate upwards to their traditional authorities (ACIMA 1998; ACIYA 1999; ACAIPI 2002). The Maloca is the local space where political, social, economic and cultural relations occur on a day-to-day basis. From each Maloca-community a representative is elected (a Captain) according to a specific criteria which responds to the candidate’s competence in the cultural traditions of the maloca community as Maloquero or equivalent, whose authority and legitimacy depends on the support and trust of the community, and his/her capacity to frequently convoke all members of the community to jointly discuss and define priorities, aspirations and proposals forwarded to the regional decision-making space of the AATI: The General Assembly (GA) (*ibid.*). The second major traditional authorities are the shamans who hold a

powerful position which is inherited and who are responsible for socio-environmental and spiritual relations and guidance (*ibid.*). Through shamanic meditation and socio-environmental diagnosis, natural phenomena and ecosystem conditions are monitored and ‘read’ so actions needed for their resilience are brought to the GA. Shamans and Captains, who are complementary authorities (socio-environmental and socio-political, respectively) compose the GA which gathers twice a year at a regional level (*ibid.*). The third agent in the AATI government is thus the natural realm with its expressions in visible and invisible forms that are interpreted by shamans.

The GA then appoints delegates whom are accountable to, and controlled by, the GA, to represent the AATI in negotiations and relations with state agencies. Delegates such as the Legal Representative of the local government do not have decision-making autonomy nor can they ignore decisions made at the GA<sup>2</sup> and are subject to yearly evaluations of the G.A where it is decided if they are to continue their task or not (*ibid.*). None of the traditional authorities of the G.A are remunerated in any form while delegates do receive a basic salary.

The government system of the AATIs thus resembles a Parliamentary democracy (which differs from the republican democracy of Colombia) although several key features distinguish them from western systems of democratic government. On the one hand, the GA has representation from both communities and ethnic groups (through the Captains) and of nature and the supra-natural (through the Shamans). The GA thus includes both human and natural communities as having agency and requiring a permanent and careful balance in order to adapt and guarantee socio-environmental sustainability, which is the main objective for maintaining collective well-being. From a perspective of coloniality of power, the AATI brings previously oppressed and invisible government systems into the public realm where alternative models of local development and governance are advanced in an epistemological dialogue between indigenous government systems and statal decentralisation processes. This is a clear example of how decentralisation in indigenous territories is not just about the transfer of power, autonomy and responsibilities to local governments but also of the type of local governments, their structure, the epistemological and ontological framework and the objectives that are sought as ‘development’ is understood by indigenous peoples. This in turn challenges the notion that democratic decentralisation is based in the participation of individual citizens with their representation in local governments (Sieder 2010) but rather on the institutionalisation of collective citizenship with the cultural and political struggles which characterises indigenous movements of Latin America (*ibid.*). In this sense, the articulation of local indigenous local governments and development models

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<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, delegates do have autonomy in operational decision-making in order to make their functions efficient.

with the state can be seen as an extension of the ‘ecology of emergences’ (Santos 2006) into official development processes, a historical change in power and epistemological relations which can be termed ‘emergences in development’.

Another element of particular relevance is that the political system of AATIs of the case study does not function through conventional political party systems where conventional institutional spaces such as municipalities or regional and national power spaces are taken. This is an important point since the existing literature on indigenous governments that move through the state system refers to political processes where indigenous people move as political parties (Ulloa 2010). Although the later has brought important political and legal achievements in relation to indigenous rights, when it comes to local governments problematic dynamics have been identified as indigenous leaders are forced to make alliances with other parties thus compromising autonomy and the positioning of the indigenous political agendas (Ulloa 2010). Furthermore, political alliances also increase clientelism with local or regional elites in order to maintain power and distances political leaders from the communities and indigenous government systems (*ibid.*). In the case of the AATIs there is no need to move through political parties as their community-based organisations are already recognised as local governments and the political structure of the AATTI is community based. It is precisely the lack of political parties that maintain a political unity and legitimate representation of indigenous collective citizenship and cultural polities.

Importantly, the establishment of the AATTI governments of the case study do not result from a government led program that provided ‘invited spaces of participation’ (Cornwall 2004, Gaventa 2006). In this context, as Jones and Speech argue the ‘created participatory space’ whereby indigenous communities defined their local government systems have created “‘heterotopias’ (Foucault, 1986) (whereby) taken for granted rules of interaction (with the state) are disrupted and replaced with new ways of behaving and being (and organising)’ (Jones and Speech 2000 in Cornwall 2002; 7). In this sense, the space of power established by the AATIs can then best be defined in the first phase as a self-created ‘popular space’ (communal space) (Cornwall 2004) and then as as a ‘created space’ (Gaventa 2006), taking it from previously ‘closed spaces’ (*ibid.*) where political and economic elites at the regional level took decisions behind close doors, while it also redefines the power structures through which indigenous communities and ‘higher levels of government’ relate.

A final but relevant annotation is that AATIs incorporate both on notions of individual citizenship (expressed through the elections of Captains and participating in community led processes) and of collective citizenship (forwarding collective aspirations as indigenous peoples that underpin collective identity, knowledge systems and property regimes). The AATIs are thus both an expression of the individual citizenship of community members as well as an institutionalisation of indigenous resistance and pro-active

political and cultural mobilisation. In other words, the relation between indigenous people and the state is transformed not only through the visibilisation and recognition of indigenous local governments but also by the consolidation of collective citizenship through the indigenous local governments (AATIs), which in turn questions and offers alternatives to the hegemonic notions of social order, democracy, participation and public institutions based in individual attention and rights.

### 3.4 Territorial Jurisdiction

In terms of territory, the AATIs have defined their jurisdiction according to their ancestral territories. In the case of ACAIPI, over one hundred young researchers belonging to four ethnic groups in more than seventeen communities engaged for over five years in indigenous community based research (ICBR) of the ancestral territory (Ortiz et al 2011). As a result the territorial, environmental, geographical and historic knowledge encoded in myths were 'deciphered' by young researchers, registering this information in texts, maps and audio-visuals (Ortiz et al 2011). The geographic boundaries set by the ancestral territory of each ethnic group of the Pirá permitted the definition of the territorial jurisdiction of ACAIPI. The knowledge for the managing of the territory was the central pillar for the environmental management plan of the AATI and the overall content of the research became the primary source of pedagogic material for community schools (Ortiz et al 2011).

There is a multiple relevance to this process. On the one hand the process itself which permitted the strengthening of indigenous knowledge transmission between generations, the strengthening of identity, belonging and relations with the territory and the revitalised value of indigenous history and scientific indigenous knowledge, particularly in younger generations (v.Hildebrand & Brackelaire, 2012). Furthermore, this historically unprecedented collective project strengthened relations and improved coordination between traditional authorities that had been disrupted by Western coloniality. It also provided a key space to debate about the underlying principles of Life Plans and of the government system of each AATI. Processes such as this one where participatory dynamics are product of self-mobilisation (Drydyk 2005) and 'create spaces of participation' (Cornwall 2010) have had significant impact in empowering communities due to the effects of internally producing knowledge, strengthening identity, building awareness of the power held by communities and consolidating community based organisations (Gaventa 2012).

On the other hand, the outcome of the ICBR, which in this moment refers to the definition of the jurisdiction of the AATI, represents a shift from the previously externally imposed hegemonic notions over territory and

politico-administrative units. This later ‘monoculture of territoriality’, as I term it, refers to the imposition of Westernised notions of territory that objectivises nature for its exploitation while creating an opposition between culture and nature, thus disembedding the relations that ‘other cultures’ (i.e. Amerindians) have within their environment. ‘Monoculture of territoriality’ has been pivotal in disassociating indigenous peoples with their spiritual and social relation with the territory (i.e.: indigenous socio-environmental government systems) and desecrating sacred territoriality. Examples vary from the construction of churches and government buildings over sacred sites (Ortiz et al 2011), forced migration and by defining politico-administrative units in territories along division that respond to hegemonic notions of order, thus invisibilising and oppressing ‘other’ forms of territoriality. Countering the monocultures of territoriality is thus a redefinition of jurisdictions and local government that visibilises indigenous territoriality that is socio-environmentally interdependent and whose management is based on millenary knowledge and experience with the territory. In this sense, the definition of the jurisdiction of the AATI of ACAIPI goes beyond what Fals Borda refers to the need of challenging the vertical imposition of geographical boundaries in decentralisation processes because it implies a system of government and an expression of citizenship that includes the territory as an agent in addition to the collective character of ethnic groups. Indigenous collective citizenship is thus not only territorially-based but is territorially embedded, thus distinguishing indigenous cultural and political positioning.

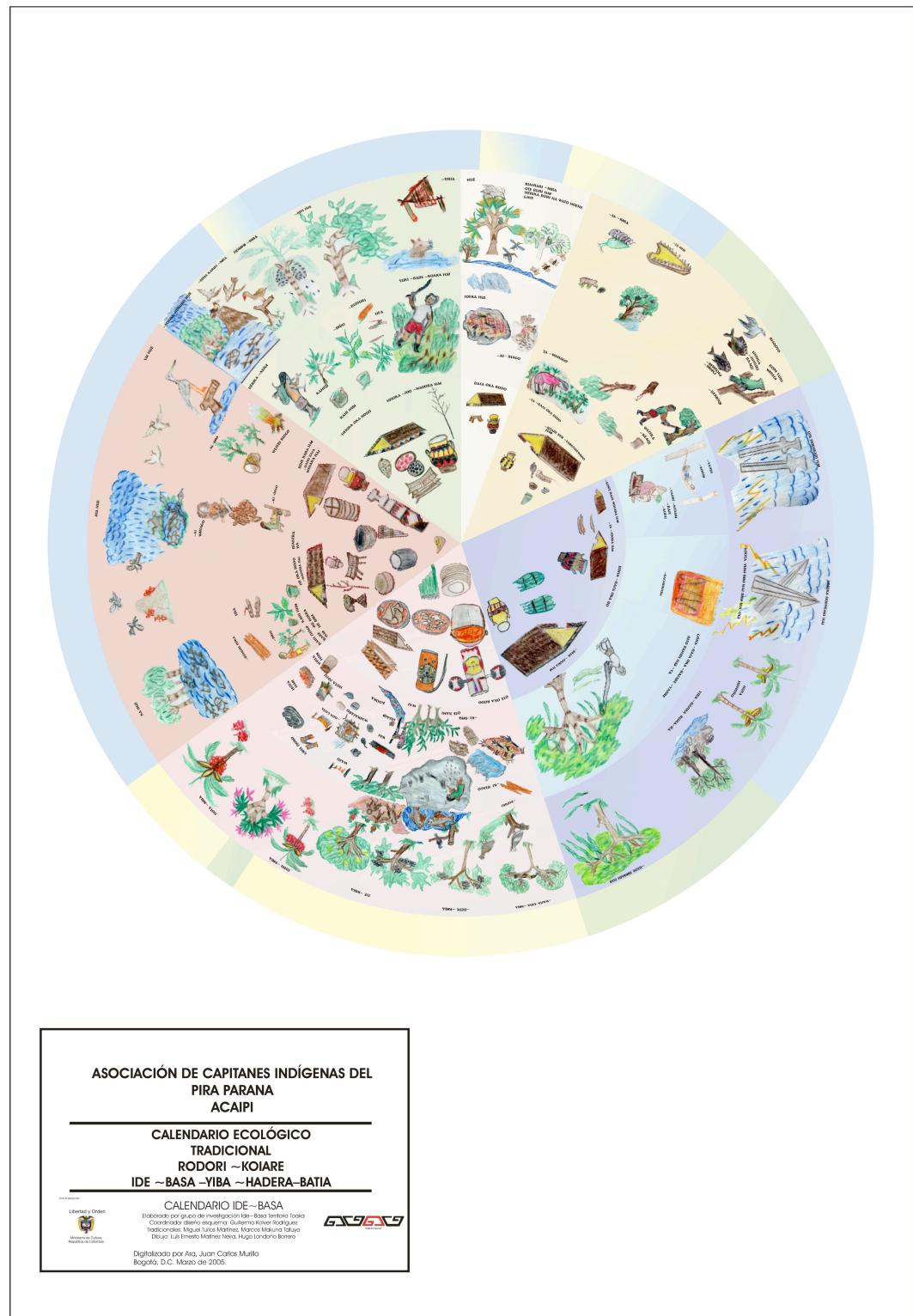
### 3.5 Time and Political-Administration

A final but relevant characteristic that distinguishes AATIs such as the case study ones is that the AATI’s governance system is politically and administratively spatiotemporally framed according to the ‘ecological calendar’. In other words, different tasks of governance are carried out in different moments and spaces according to the ritualistic and subsistence practices that vary according to the specific seasonal changes in the rainforest. This indigenous management of time and governance thus determines the spaces and moments in which ancestral and intercultural politico-administrative activities are to be carried out (such as General Assemblies, workshops, in-class education and non-indigenous health activities, amongst others), thus having a significant effect in decentralisation spaces, times and dynamics.

Chambers refers to the ecological calendar as ‘seasonal diagraming’ which he considers a useful tool to community led/based participation (Chambers, 2005: 100). However, the indigenous community based research (ICBD) carried out through the process of LPs to visibilise and officialise the various ecological calendars (each ethnic group has one) went further than its use to simply plan according to seasons. The ecological calendar has become a political element of resistance to coloniality and of proactive ‘sociology of emergences’ whereby indigenous communities have challenged the notions of

schedules and time that rule public government and administrative systems and forwarded their own systems that respond to socio-environmental and cultural dynamics. Local government planning is thus not anthropocentric nor does it respond to the modernist vision of ‘social problems’ (health, education, poverty, environment) as objectivised elements of planning (Escobar 2010a). Planning in this case engages human and environmental agents, needs and relations. In this sense, adopting the ecological calendar is on the one hand a challenge and counter-hegemonic turn to Western notions of planning, time and space that have been strategic in domination ‘other cultures’ (Santos 2007). On the other hand it visibilises the Amerindian concept that decision-making is determined by humans and nature where the Indians co-decide in co-governance, with nature as an agent and according to seasons and weather cycles in order to successfully adapt and guarantee socio-environmental resilience. This is made through dozens of shamanic rituals as shamans ‘negotiate’ with nature’s ‘guardians’ and Maloca households accompany this decision-making in two-day rituals (this includes diagnosis of ecosystem indicators, social needs and conditions in each season (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1997; Arhem et al. 2004; v.Hildebrand & Brackelaire 2012).

From an analysis of ‘cultural incommensurability and translation’ (Sousa 2007: 37) of the ‘ecology of knowledges’ (*ibid.*) regarding the ecological calendar, it can be argued that although there are notions of shamanistic spirituality and spatiotemporal linkages between humans, the world and cosmos that are incommensurable to dominant Western scientific rationality, however, in decentralisation process there are translatable dimensions: for instance in community based planning for health, education and environmental management which safeguard communal and environmental wellbeing across generation by managing seasonal and yearly dynamics that enhance sustainable livelihoods, poverty prevention, food sovereignty, gender-equity and socio-ecological resilience.



Graph 1: Ecological Calendar of the Ide-Basa ethnic group, Pirá-Paraná, ACAIPI

Source: Fundación Gaia Amazonas, 2012.



## Chapter 4      Life Plans and Education

This Chapter analyses how indigenous communities engaged since the 1990s in the definition and formulation of indigenous formal Education Plans which evolved the decolonial turn against monocultural missionary schools starting in the 1970-1980s communal autonomous schools in the Mirití (Chapter Two) and further advanced since the 1990s in the Life Plans. This chapter focuses on the Mirití case study area (whose acronym is ACIMA), with attention to the indigenous knowledge systems and inter-linkages with Amerindian space-time notions of ‘Ecological Calendars’ underlying indigenous pedagogies and socio-environmental dynamics.

Central to the Life Plans of the three case study areas is the element of education. The impact of monocultural and oppressive education systems enforced by the state and the Catholic Church (See chapter 2) was one of the most destructive processes of coloniality still underway. Public education was first under the Catholic Church’s administration and then was assumed by the Departmental Secretary of Education. However, although the administration of education passed from a religious organization to the government (which is in principle secular), the content and forms of education did not change, continuing thus the oppression and assimilationist project (Sastoque 2012 in v.Hildebrand and Brackelaire, 2012). This monocultural and Judaeo-Christian world-view that extended through the education system considered the diffusion of indigenous values and cosmovision as backward and undesired and replaced it with western culture systems of thought and the Spanish language (*ibid.*). The coloniality was imposed through strategic mechanisms of monocultures of knowledge, time, coloniality of being and of power (Annex 2).

Since the seventies, the community schools set up in the Mirití and later in the Apaporis and elsewhere, served as a strategic move to maintain children from being taken by force to the boarding schools. However, communities had not problematized education *per se*, thus in many ways, the western form of education was still being replicated (that is, classes were in rooms, with topics divided by area and a marginal attention to indigenous knowledge was paid) (Laborde, 2012). The transition from an indigenous organisation to a local government thus offered an opportunity to define an education plan that responded to the indigenous reality. The process of defining such an education program since the early 90s forced communities to question what education meant, which was its objective and what did it imply in terms of the knowledge, spaces and actors involved in the formation of the individual and the collective.

### 4.1 Defining Education

Education for indigenous people has been embedded in socio-environmental and cultural relations. The transfer of knowledge, values and notions, and the construction of the social subject occur in daily spaces through subsistence activities, rituals and ceremonies, mythology and collective nocturnal talks in the mambeadero, amongst others (ACIMA, 2000). The challenge of defining an intercultural formal education plan in ACIMA thus implied engaging several actors (from students, teachers, parents, shamans, Maloqueros, Maloqueras) in a diversity of spaces (classrooms, Malocas, rituals, the forest, chagras, rivers) and in relation to the ecological calendar where an internal practice of the 'ecologies of emergences' (Santos op.cit.) served to construct the social subject according to the indigenous reality and world-view as well as in relation to the interculturality with non-indigenous society.

The resulting intercultural education plan was named the 'Pensamiento Educativo Indígena' (Indigenous Educational Thought) as a re-definition of the official term used by the Ministry of Education, i.e.: 'Proyecto Educativo Institucional' (Institutional Education Project), which shares the same acronym (PEI) (ACIMA 2001). Renaming the official document of intercultural education of ACIMA is not a simple play of words. As Slavoj Žižek states: "Words are never 'only words'; they matter because they define the contours of what we can do." (Zizek 2012); it is thus significant as the power to re-name the world, and its redefinition to be respected by dominant structures of power such as the state, are both a resistance to coloniality and also an indicative of fissures in the monocultural and oppressive relations that characterized the matrices of coloniality.

*"(We) The sons of Tobacco and Coca, understand education as much more than schooling. Its roots are in the laws of origin that have been passed from generation to generation. It is thought and defined collectively from the Maloca, the Mambeadero, the Chagra, Rituals, Ceremonies and each and every space of the every-day life. This knowledge is then further expanded and organised in the spaces of formal education (...)"*

(Official statement of the AATI of ACIMA to the Ministry of Education, 2004)

The Study Plan of the PEI takes the diverse areas of knowledge (linguistics, mathematics, social sciences and arts) and re-defines them according indigenous education criteria while articulating the non-indigenous forms such as literacy and western mathematics (ACIMA 2001). The foundations of the PEI thus rely in the indigenous education but adapted to the new form of formal education, thus using tools, methodologies and spaces that before did not exist in traditional education. This is the case of the classroom, the facilitation by a teacher and writing and numbers (amongst others).

In order to articulate these varied spaces, knowledges and actors involved in education, the PEI presents a methodology that is based in the ecological calendar. The ecological calendar sets both the academic calendar as well as the curriculum for it articulates the diverse knowledges (read mathematics, linguistics, social and natural sciences) to the specific socio-environmental and cultural dynamics particular to each of the seasons of every year (four main categories and around forty micro seasons)(ACIMA 2001). This process of emergence of indigenous knowledge systems and spatial temporal categories is done by the methodology of ‘thematic projects’. Within a particular season, the required changes in social organization and subsistence activities and the indigenous knowledge systems and practices related to them define the topic of research project between the students, teacher, parents and shamans (*ibid.*). Each research project seeks to analyse the events happening within the specific season (social, cultural, environmental) and their associated knowledge while making use of both indigenous and western methodologies to learn, express, record and organize information.

The model of education established in the PEI redefines several key aspects on the production and reproduction of knowledge and of the social subject. On the one hand, education is re-embedded in socio-environmental dynamics, making classrooms one of the many spaces where education occurs and strengthening values of identity, belonging, reciprocity and solidarity (rather than focusing on the individual competition and self-development as the cornerstones for well-being). The articulation of the ecological calendar to the education system not only as reference to administrative aspects but to the production of knowledge itself is represents a clear break from coloniality of time and knowledge and constitutes a pivotal element in the pertinence of community education and of indigenous political stance in challenging public education monopoly over time and knowledge (An administrative and power/political dimension to education). These elements are crucial for indigenous education is socio-environmentally embedded and its disarticulation in previous education models echoed the process of the ‘Great Transformation’ of the economy that Polanyi eloquently analysed (Polanyi 1944) albeit in reference to indigenous knowledge. In this sense, the re-embeddedness of education allows for social and environmental relations to be maintained and strengthened under values of respect, reciprocity, collectivity and solidarity rather than focusing on the individual competition and self-development as the cornerstones for well-being.

Furthermore, writing which has been a major tool for domination of a particular version of history, identity, ontology and governmentality is taken by community schools to construct new forms of knowledge (indigenous history, geography, social sciences, amongst others) within formal education (v.Hildebrand and Brackelaire, 2012). These forms of knowledge resist coloniality and governmentality by empowering and making visible and valuable indigenous ontologies and epistemologies while also consider and adjust western knowledge to the needs of indigenous communities. In a sense, the PEI and its implementation is the practice at the local level of the ‘ecology

of emergences' that Santos calls for as a strategy to re-dress the 'sociology of absences' (Santos 2006). Additionally, the production of knowledge in these dynamics of local 'ecologies of emergences' challenge the monopoly of time and knowledge which is pivotal in restructuring power relations (Gaventa and Cornwall 2001).

Through the PEI, the indigenous communities are making not only different proposals about inter-cultural education in the process of countering the monopoly of knowledge and coloniality done for centuries by missionary schools but also applying "critical interculturality" (Walsh 2002, 2007, 2012) based on "pedagogies of the decolonial" (ibid). This displaces the genocidal and violent socio-economic and political structures linked to schooling and replaces them with pedagogical alternatives based on indigenous solidarity, reciprocity and wellbeing connected to the holistic and long term perspectives of Life Plans focused on social justice and socio-environmental wellbeing and 'Good Life' (Walsh 2012).

In sum, the PEI fulfils two functions: On the one hand, it is an indigenous positioning and 'critical pedagogy' (Walsh 2002) that allows for the emergence, application, respect and valorisation of indigenous knowledge systems and ontologies of being. On the other hand it proposes an interculturality that goes beyond mere horizontal relations with the hegemonic powers and seeks to confront the power asymmetries to resist coloniality and break away from imposed systems of governmentality and coloniality. The PEI thus is also a 'political and epistemic' (ibid.) platform where the monocultural and racist notions and knowledges engaged in the construction of a monocultural state, and the indigenous-state power relations, are questioned while concrete alternatives are presented as a result of 'ecologies of emergences' (Santos) in historically unprecedented proposals for pluriversality that visibilise indigenous cultures and collective agency in the framework of decentralisation.

# Chapter 5      The MPCI

## 5.1 The Establishment of the MPCI

Despite the efforts of AATIs during 1995-2001 to position themselves as legitimate local governments in relation to the Regional Government (RG), the response from the RG was one of refusal and marginalisation if not denial (Laborde, 2012). The legal framework recognised the AATIs (art. 56 CP 1991; Decree 1088 1994), which had been established and registered, thus for the first time in history indigenous governments. However, 'hidden powers' (the power of keeping other actors and/or agendas from being considered/accepted in decision-making spaces) (*ibid.*) from the regional political and economic elites<sup>3</sup> excluded the AATIs from all regional politico-administrative decision-making spaces, thus maintaining 'closed spaces' (decisions made by a set of powerful actors behind closed doors) (*ibid.*). While AATIs continued political and legal pressure in order to redress power relations a significant breakthrough occurred in 2002 when the elected Governor of the Amazon Department was taken out of office due to irregularities in his administration and an interim Governor was sent from the Ministry of Interior (Preciado 2011). The fact that the interim Governor was an outsider, free from ties to political and economic elites of the Regional Department, and his understanding of indigenous rights due to his work in the Ministry of Interior, proved to be a crucial element for change in regional relations between AATIs and the RG (*ibid.*). The temporary diffusion of 'hidden powers' (Gaventa 2006) resulting from the appointment of the interim governor facilitated the AATIs to claim a regional political space for the establishment of an institutional inter-administrative space for coordination which was named the 'Permanent Forum of Inter-Administrative Coordination' (MPCI for its Spanish acronym) (Preciado 2011). In 2002, The MPCI was established as the official space for inter-administrative coordination between the AATIs and the RG for all policies, projects and programs of development and decentralisation that affected or related to the AATIs signatory to the MPCI (*ibid.*). Thus, for the first time in history of indigenous peoples-state relations, indigenous governments (the AATIs) become 'visible powers' as defined by Gaventa: "visible and definable aspects of political power (defining) the formal rules, structures, authorities, institutions and procedures of decision-making" (Gaventa 2006: 29)

The MPCI is composed of the AATIs located in the Department of Amazonas (10 in total; 80% of the Department) and the RG, with a space for NGOs to participate in the quality of advisors (if required by the AATIs)

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<sup>3</sup> Elites include: Authorities of the Catholic Church, Corregidores, Mayors, Governors and merchants.

(Preciado 2011). To the present day there are three main spaces in the MPCI regarding education, health and territory/environment. The MPCI as an institutionalized space for inter-administrative coordination meets twice a year (one week) and in every meeting inter-administrative agreements are reached and signed by all parties (AATIs and RG), which are legally binding (Preciado 2011). The November meeting focuses on evaluation and planning. AATIs such as ACIMA and ACIYA present and coordinate their programs, strategies (based in the Life Plans and sectorial plans such as education) and budgets for the next year with the RG. Reports of the process already underway (such as the administration of education) are also presented and mutual fiscal control implemented (the fiscal resources managed by the AATIs and those managed by the RG in relation to activities in the AATIs, such as health interventions). The MPCI of April is to do follow-up on the commitments and responsibilities of the signatory entities, adjust processes and programs if needed and advance bureaucratic and legal procedures to ensure the adequate execution of projects and programs underway.

## 5.2 Political Decentralisation and the MPCI

Two key elements can be highlighted about the establishment of the MPCI: First, the term “inter-administrative” entails an official recognition of the RG that the AATIs are the legitimate indigenous local governments (ILGs) that represent indigenous communities with politico-administrative autonomy (Preciado, 2011). The MPCI thus institutionalises a political space where more than merely intercultural horizontality there is an articulation (not just an inclusion) of ILGs (AATIs) as counterparts and decision-makers in regional planning for local development. The resulting space of the MPCI can be classified as a politico-administrative space of ‘interactive participation’ (Drydyk 2005) whereby joint analysis and decision-making processes are undertaken by ILGs and RG in relation to development plans and where decentralisation processes and policies are defined with both public entities acting with the same quality of competent Authorities. Additionally, the term “coordination” is interpreted by the Constitutional Court as one implying effective participation in decision-making (MPCI Rules) which implies the decisive participation of indigenous communities through the AATIs in all stages of development plans and programs (Preciado 2011). Furthermore, in the 22<sup>nd</sup> MPCI realised in November 12 2012, the RG ratified its recognition of the AATIs as legitimate indigenous local governments, autonomous and with territorial jurisdiction, and with whom the RG has an obligation to coordinate all development processes with the objective of full devolution. The establishment of the MPCI thus signifies the institutionalisation of ‘political decentralisation’ (Falleti 2005) which although the Constitution had defined since 1991 and the AATIs had implemented at a local level, only until 2002 did the necessary political frameworks and full articulation to the state system came into being. The other significant element is that to date there have been 22 MPCIs held, thus durable or maintaining continuity despite changes in the political scenarios at the regional and national levels. In other words, the

creation of the MPCI, which is unique in Colombia, has effectively transformed the inter-administrative frameworks of decentralisation of the Amazon Department and the terms and spaces for relations between indigenous communities and the state (Preciado 2012).

These two elements thus characterise a historical turn in asymmetrical power relations entrenched in coloniality between indigenous communities (and their indigenous government systems) with the state (here represented by the RG). Furthermore, the MPCI has implied not just a space for innovative and more just intercultural and inter-institutional decision-making but also engages the ‘emancipatory politics of difference’ (Young in Hickey and Mohan 2005). This refers to the political agency of indigenous collective citizenship through the AATIs to combat exclusion through the opening of spaces of multiversality and the option of ‘another development’ particularly articulating ‘relational ontologies’ (Escobar 2010). Applying Hickey and Mohan’s notions of ‘new forms for practising citizenship’ (2005: 252) as indigenous collective citizenship, the AATIs are not merely participating in the MPCI but negotiating in the reconfiguration of democratic systems, and of political and socioeconomic systems while identifying and positioning themselves as Indigenous peoples with collective agency. In the process they are advancing unprecedented participatory mechanisms for decision-making in state-indigenous peoples’ relations.

Cornwall’s concept of ‘spaces of participation’ (Cornwall 2004) is here also relevant as AATIs were not invited to a pre-determined space of participation so as to be ‘included’ in ‘instrumental participation’ (Masuri and Rao 2004) or ‘democratic deliberation’ within predefined government structures. The AATIs were central in the definition of the terms of engagement, the rules of the MPCI and the elaboration of the agendas, concepts, methodologies and control mechanisms (Preciado 2011) thus shaping and transforming the institutions of democratic participation in decentralisation processes. This ‘new democratic space’ and ‘created space’ (Cornwall 2004) implies greater political power for the AATIs as they are not relating with the state in tokenistic processes of democratic participation of decentralisation processes which tend to involve asymmetric power relations and oppressive methods and discourses of inclusion (*ibid.*).

From a perspective of power relations, the MPCI is a ‘claimed space’ (Gaventa 2006). In other words, Indigenous communities, through the AATIs and in use of the legal framework and support networks and agents of change (such as the NGOs and the interim Governor), claimed the space of politico-administrative decision-making (Gaventa, 2006) related to decentralisation and local development process that occurred at the regional level and which were previously ‘closed spaces’ controlled by regional political and economic elites (*ibid.*). Furthermore, by the creation of such inter-administrative space where AATIs and the Regional Government (RG) and Central Government (CG) coordinate policies and programs as counterparts constitutes a turn to what

van Cott terms “radical democracy” (Van Cott 2006) whereby indigenous peoples act through collective citizenship and collective agency through local governments to pursue a cultural-political agenda which involves ‘clusters of solidary indigenous communities’ (ibid.). Although van Cott considers indigenous *political parties* as critical for the recent success of indigenous local governments in negotiating with RG and CG to control and manage their own resources (van Cott 2006), however, in the case study areas there are no indigenous political parties and it is their absence and in turn the presence of community-based AATIs that ensure their legitimacy as well as their negotiation force.

The changes in power relations are not just about the recognition of indigenous local governments as legitimate public entities and the transfer of powers framed in decentralisation. Power relations in the MPCI have deeper transformations that include what Hayward terms ‘the de-facing of power’ which is the acting upon the social (and cultural) boundaries that define ‘what is possible’ and constrain or enable action from all actors (Hayward 1998: 2 in Cornwall and Gaventa 2001: 72). The term cultural is here added in Hayward’s definition for the construction of social boundaries between ‘what is possible’ is culturally relative and in the context of coloniality and power structures and asymmetries enforced through the colonial matrix require the inclusion of a cultural dimensions in order to understand from which/whose perspective ‘social boundaries’ and ‘the ineluctable’ are being questioned. This ‘de-facing of power’ uses and subverts governmentality and counters coloniality through ‘ecologies of emergences’ that can be identified in the education models of the AATIs (PEI), the administrative and planning frameworks based in ecological calendars and decision-making processes that are based in Amerindian socio-cultural and political systems. The political relations between the AATIs and the RG is thus based in what Sieder calls ‘politics of difference’ (2002) where Amerindian and non-Amerindian/Western cultural and political dimensions are co-configure decentralisation processes.

It is relevant how in this context of inter-administrative coordination and power relations between the AATIs and the RG there is a two-way dynamic of ‘invisible powers’ (Gaventa 2006). This notion, as defined by Gaventa, refers to the power not only to keep/put certain decision-making in/out of the table but “also from the minds and consciousness of the different players involved (...). By influencing how individuals think about their place in the world, this level of power shapes people’s beliefs, sense of self and acceptance of the status quo – even their own superiority or inferiority” (Gaventa, 2006: 29). The interesting fact is that while ‘invisible power’ has been historically held and enforced by hegemonic and monocultural power structures entrenched in coloniality and governmentality, today indigenous communities through their AATIs are also exercising a form of ‘invisible power’. This has been done by an unprecedented dynamic where AATIs have challenged conventional notions and power structures regulating and defining education, territory, and health and what is considered possible and accepted while forwarding new intercultural notions into the political agenda and decision-making processes linked to local development and

decentralisation. In this line of argument, these relational ontological and epistemic dialogue that by effect transforms structures of power and development policies and processes is to the political arena what Santos has termed spaces for ‘ecologies of emergences’ (Santos 2006) visibilised and negotiated in inter-administrative spaces of the state. Among the key ‘emergences’ from indigenous proposals is the collective and inter-generational responsibility of achieving equity, solidarity and socio-environmental well-being and resilience as primary objectives of local development in Amazonia.

### 5.3 Education and the MPCI

In relation to education, the achievements of the AATIs in the MPCI are historical albeit not definitive. The education models of the AATIs defined in the PEIs (explained above) have transformed the formal education system of the Department and are today the official framework for public education within the AATIs of the case studies. This transformation includes the use of the ecological calendar, indigenous pedagogies and knowledge systems, critical interculturality and the centrality of Amerindian cultural traditions as part of the official curriculum (Preciado 2012). The AATIs, as public entities provide the ‘integral education service’, in other words, they define education (PEI), hire/fire staff, plan and budget investments, administer the service and provides it within the AATIs. In this sense the AATIs take the political and cultural decisions regarding education and manage its administration within their jurisdiction. The fact that teachers and education staff are hired by the AATIs and evaluated at a community level is significant for it makes the education accountable to communities and not just to the state (Preciado 2012). In this sense, the AATIs have ‘claimed space’ from the central state and the missionaries in relation to the socialisation and organisation of societies through the production of knowledge, memory and identity.

However, although the AATIs have political, cultural and administrative power and autonomy over public education services within their jurisdiction, there has been no full administrative decentralisation in the strict sense of the word. The reason that there has been no full administrative nor fiscal decentralisation is that although the AATIs as public entities are not yet fully defined as Indigenous Territorial Entities’ due to the lack of the macro law of territorial ordering –LOOT- (above explained) (Preciado 2012). The effect is that although there is a political decentralisation in its full definition, the necessary legal framework for fiscal and administrative decentralisation is missing (Laborde 2012). The education service is then transferred to the AATIs through inter-administrative agreements that are signed in the MPCI. However, although the technical, legal and structural aspects of administrative decentralisation are indeed critical, there is a more fundamental impact in terms of education in the Amazon Department: the debate the AATIs have brought to the MPCI is only partially concerned with the technical form in which schooled education is delivered and focuses rather on the issue of the content and purpose of education itself. The definition and implementation of public

education by/for indigenous communities is a cultural and political positioning which by its institutionalisation and provision becomes part of state policy while it challenges cultural and administrative monocultural control of education, knowledge and identity by the state (Muses 2007). The education model established by the AATIs has a political and cultural dimension that attempts to redress discriminatory and oppressive systems of coloniality, thus having an additional importance beyond its administrative status within decentralisation. Hence administrative decentralisation is not just about the structural, normative and technical aspects but require a transformation of social and political relations between state and indigenous peoples. Without transformation in social, political and cultural relations that redress coloniality and forward 'ecologies of emergences', there is no sense for decentralising education for it would imply the expansion of the westernised models of coloniality that are being questioned in the first place.

In sum, the 'created space' (Cornwall 2004) of the MPCi has allowed the AATIs to define the terms, conditions, concepts and methods for engagement in 'interactive participation' (Drydyk 2005) with the RG and CG. Within this space 'heterotopias' (Foucault, 1986) were previously rules and interactions taken for granted have been challenged, disrupted and transformed for new forms of being and behaving in terms of state structures, services, notions of development and power relations between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples. This 'de-facing of power' has been achieved by the socio-cultural resilience and political strength of the AATIs where historical wounds, struggles and achievements as well as opportunities of legal and structural nature have been definitive and whereby the AATIs have acted upon the social and cultural boundaries that define what is possible and accepted within the state. These 'heterotopias' and 'defacing of power' are not just a turn in power relations between a marginalized sector of society and a 'powerful one', it has deeper and historical implications for therein is a turn from the systems of coloniality and governmentality towards real spaces where social and epistemological justice is beginning to be addressed in a context of 'ecologies of emergences' (Santos 2006). In this sense, the 'cultural dimensions' of indigenous peoples and their representative AATIs have influenced in the redefinition of the political decentralisation in terms of a multicultural nation, new forms of institutionalized recognition of indigenous collective citizenship, establishment of legitimate indigenous governments in the public arena and the articulation of government systems with different notions of development for Amazonia

## **Conclusions:**

In the Amazon resguardos, and in particular the case study areas, decentralisation has been a result of bottom-up cultural and political agency of indigenous communities participating as indigenous collective citizenship qua indigenous peoples. The primary motive for indigenous communities to engage in such processes was a direct organized response to centuries of coloniality in the form of monocultures of knowledge and time and monocultural categorization applied to exploit indigenous labour through debt-peonage. This was possible due to first to the collapse of the rubber industry in the Amazon in the 1970s where communities regrouped and self-mobilised to resist other forms of coloniality; and in the late 80s and early 90s due to changing political and legal frameworks and the historical surge of indigenous movements and leaders nationwide and in Latin America.

While the first responses of indigenous communities was to advance decolonial strategies such as the establishment of autonomous community schools to counter the imposition of monocultural missionary education, the legal framework of the 1991 Constitution opened new horizons for indigenous cultural and political struggles. The rights to have their own cultural and linguistic distinctiveness respected in addition of the recognition of their indigenous government system and ownership of their ancestral territories, represented a significant turn in the indigenous-state relations.

The fundamental difference in the decentralisation processes that hence developed was the critical analysis by the part of the communities of what political and administrative decentralisation is, whose notions and ontologies does it refers to and how it relates to culture. The result was the definition of an indigenous Life Plans, local government systems based in Maloca polities and education plans based in critical interculturality and indigenous pedagogies. The cultural dimensions related to government systems, knowledge and education and territoriality thus emerged.

Indigenous local governments are based in Maloca polities and therefore are not associated to the general political system. There are no political parties nor power is delegated to a single authority such as a Mayor. Indigenous cultures of the case study are traditionally not stratified, thus the local government system is based in a parliamentary model where one elected representative and shamans from each community constitute the General Assembly of the AATI. Planning is articulated to the ecological calendar and to ancestral territories including nature as an agent where environmental phenomena are monitored and evaluated and included in decision-making processes. Planning is thus not anthropocentric but socio-environmental and responds to development objectives of resilience and collective wellbeing that sharply contrasts with Western notions of material progress and development.

In this sense, the cultural dimension of political decentralisation in the Amazon region has been in three main levels:

First, the fact that indigenous governments become ‘visible powers’ in the public arena is by itself a historic and unprecedented achievement which, as mentioned above, was product of a bottom-up cultural and political processes.

Second, the establishment of the MPCI is a unique institution in Colombia and has become a model to other departments for the coordination of public entities in decentralisation processes. What makes particular the MPCI is its character of permanent coordination in aspects of decentralisation that do not refer only to technical and normative elements but about content, pertinence and

Third, the process of negotiations of decentralisation and inter-administrative coordination itself has had a crucial impact in redressing the asymmetrical power relations entrenched in coloniality recognising relative autonomy of Amerindians in legal pluralism, multiculturalism, alternatives to development (*desarrollo otro*). This is a fundamental shift in historical power relations and is definitive in the implications that administrative decentralisation may have as the ‘de-facing of power’ of the social boundaries and epistemological frames that define what is ‘thinkable, possible and acceptable’ in development and decentralisation is a prerequisite for redressing coloniality.

In terms of administrative decentralisation of education the cultural dimension of knowledge has been pivotal in two main levels. First, although administrative decentralisation has not occurred in the strict sense of the term, the debate around education has focused more on its content and ontological components rather than on normative and technocratic aspects. In this sense, not only the knowledge systems of Amerindians have been visibilised and valued in the context of decentralisation but the implicit monocultures of knowledge of formal education been exposed too. Thus debate thus have important implications as relational ontologies emerge through what Sousa Santos refers as ‘ecologies of knowledge’ (Santos 2006). Secondly, the education model of the AATIs has not only redefined the contents and objectives of education in relation to the Life Plans but also has restructured the accountability of public education towards the community who select, evaluate, hire and fire education staff at the local level. This model of downward accountability is unique to the Amazon Department and is a result of the struggles on the cultural dimensions related to administrative decentralisation.

The relevance of this research has been to relate cultural dimensions to decentralisation as a pivotal analytical approach necessary to understand underlying power relations, socio-cultural structures and epistemological stakes

in the democratic restructuring of the state in regions largely populated by indigenous peoples. Beyond this being a matter of three mere case studies , it is feasible the relevance and stakes of the achievements of the AATI indigenous local governments in the Resguardo, may also be an example of critical dynamics in decentralisation which may be scaled-up to achieve a critical mass of such types of culture-sensitive and culture-responsive decentralisation process that in themselves may shift the balance between socio-environmental sustainably, social justice, and poverty prevention, and the option of unsustainable development which is also occurring in Amazonia and in parallel decentralisation processes. Not far from the Miriti, Piraparana and Lower Apaporis. This research attempted to explore from Development Studies, how to accompany those populations of Amerindians who in their lifestlye, worldviews, resilience and vitality, have prevented poverty and maintained communal and environmental resilience.

## Notes

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# Appendices

## ANNEX 1

In the case study areas coloniality was violently recreated as Indian children were forced to live in mission boarding schools, violent Westernized monocultural domination was applied as children were forbidden to speak native languages while taught rudimentary Spanish and literacy through catechism and were forbidden their cultural traditions and shamanism (Sastoque 2012 in v. Hildebrand and Brackelaire, 2012). They were taught their cultures were ‘inferior’ and made ashamed of their traditions, communal life in Maloca, while instructed to live like ‘civilized’ ‘rational’ persons and taught ‘how to work’ for White people and buy Western goods in missionary and local merchant’s stores, as missionaries burned Maloca defined as ‘sites of promiscuity’, prohibited shamanism and rituals and destroyed shamanic objects considered ‘diabolic’ as missionaries evangelized Indians and concentrated them in villages (Cabrera. 2012).

The ‘colonial matrix of power’ and coloniality as the ‘imperial/colonial organisation of societies’ (Mignolo 2011) was thus imposed by non-Indian sectors who sought control of Amerindian lands and resources but also of their minds and lifestyles, while defining Indians as savage inferior societies that had to disappear or be educated to be ‘civilised’ as their cultures were labelled as childish, irrelevant, dangerous or diabolic in Amazonia (Pineda 2010). Coloniality as a strategy to ‘colonize the imaginary of the dominated’ repressed indigenous modes of being and producing knowledge and signification, while imposing those of Western elites (Quijano 1992: 2-10). The exclusionary and exploitative system of the ‘coloniality of power’ and the ‘coloniality of knowledge’ as Quijano holds was linked to Westernized capitalist colonisation that silenced indigenous cultures, knowledge, histories, memory and spirituality while imposing dominant forms of mystification and socio-economic and political ordering (Quijano 1987/1992.)

Rubber dealers and merchants controlled the debt-bondage/peonage system to exploit the Indians held in captivity and permanent indebtedness, as no salaries were paid and accounting was falsified to have Indians permanently working to ‘pay back the debt’ from one generation to the next. Whole Maloca households with their chief ‘Captain’ as coerced foreman ‘belonged’ to named rubber merchants (some simultaneously state authorities such as the ‘Corregidor’). Men were worked rubber in forced labor camps in rainforests and rubber traders took women as servants and concubines, while few elders, children and some women stayed in Maloca and maintained the swidden fields and ancestral territories, though Maloca headmen were often co-opted by rubber dealers under systems of patronage and coercion.

The Amerindians of the three case study areas vividly remember in their historical memory and narratives of the relations with non-Indians ‘Blancos’/Whites, the Rubber baron merchants (caucheros) and their

systematic genocidal dynamics and the ways adults resisted forced labour, genocide and violence are recorded in Amerindian myth and history (Hugh-Jones, S, 1988:138-155).

The rubber exploitation during the XIXth and early XXth centuries used slavery and then debt-slavery until the 1970s that physically decimated Amerindians and destroyed many communities. Malocas were raided by rubber dealers in the Miriti, lower Apaporis and Piraparana, Indians were abducted to distant labour camps to work under inhumane enslaved conditions, while in disaggregated families the transmission of knowledge and social-cultural dynamics were disrupted in what is defined as a genocide and holocaust impacting the Colombian Amazon and the case study areas (Hugh-Jones 1988, Pineda 2010).

To this day as indigenous community-based research made in the case study areas indicates, the vivid painful collective memory of the rubber boom era was recorded by indigenous researchers. As a Pirá-Paraná Barasana Indian explained:

“What happened with the two rubber eras was almost the same, in fact, it was the same. They caught the Maloqueros, made them foremen and forced them to wage war to capture people (...). There were no rituals, (...) there was nobody left, many ran away deep into the forest for fear and abandoned our ancestral territories given to us since the origin of times. People would go for over nine months to work and extract rubber in the forest. Many starved to death or were killed for no reason whatsoever; debts never ended, there was no end to it. You worked and worked and debt always rose. You died there, and so did your children”

(Shaman/Maloquero Ricardo Marín. Comunidad de San Miguel, ACAIPI) (ACAIPIa, 2001; pg. 17)

Atrocities committed against Amerindians in the Piraparana and lower Apaporis regions by rubber dealers from the end of the XIXth century peaked in the 1920s which led to indigenous uprisings and resistance amidst decimated and displaced populations (Hugh-Jones X pg 37-38) while in the Miritiparana the atrocities of rubber dealers who divided parts of the Miriti into regions as each rubber baron exploited the Amerindians in these also encountered indigenous resistance to forced labour and debt-bondage (Oostra, 1991). From an analytical perspective of modernity/coloniality a structured system of exploitation based on forced labour extending across generations was used by ‘White people’ to extract wealth as terror and torture forced the Indians to work in exploitative and inhuman conditions. Imposing systematically ‘monocultures’ of power, knowledge and time linked to narratives of progress, modernity and development along with a dominant categorisation whereby Amerindians were labelled an inferior ‘race’ and as subhuman objects for exploitation by the dominant elites, were part of a ‘matrix of coloniality’ and imposed ‘monocultures of power, knowledge and linear time’ as Western hegemonic capitalist’s powerful invisible power structures and knowledge systems underlined the visible domination structures to exclude or destroy

radical alterities while powerful geopolitical domination and ‘ecologies of knowledge’ sought to ‘invisibilise’ the Amerindians according to Quijano (1992 op cit) and Santos’ (1992, 2007) analyses of five centuries of Western colonization of indigenous peoples as also occurred in Amazonia

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The ‘colonial matrix of power’ and coloniality as the ‘imperial/colonial organisation of societies’ (Mignolo op.cit) was thus imposed by non-Indian sectors who sought control of Amerindian lands and resources but also of their minds and lifestyles, while defining Indians as savage inferior societies that had to disappear or be educated to be ‘civilised’ as their cultures were labelled as childish, irrelevant, dangerous or diabolic in Amazonia (Pineda 2010). Coloniality as a strategy to ‘colonize the imaginary of the dominated’ repressed indigenous modes of being and producing knowledge and signification, while imposing those of Western elites (Quijano 1992: 2-10). The exclusionary and exploitative system of the ‘coloniality of power’ and the ‘coloniality of knowledge’ as Quijano holds was linked to Westernized capitalist colonisation that silenced indigenous cultures, knowledge, histories, memory and spirituality while imposing dominant forms of mystification and socio-economic and political ordering (Quijano 1987/1992.)

## ANNEX 2

The following chart summarises the main components of coloniality in the former education system (before the decentralisation of education to the AATIs and according to their own Education Plans).

Type of Coloniality	Form of imposition	Effects
Monoculture of knowledge**	The imposition of western schooling as the only valid and rational education and knowledge. > Enforced by the mechanization and memorisation of the dominant knowledge systems*	Silenced and oppressed the indigenous world-view, ontology and knowledge systems >
	Imposition of external authority as only source of valid knowledge > Represented in the form of books, libraries, the State, the Church and teachers*.	This network of interconnected institutions of governmentality was explicitly detrimental to traditional authorities and indigenous governance and knowledge systems physical and spiritual relations with the territory and to socio-cultural relations.
	Simplification and objectification of reality as a fragmented system with divided areas of knowledge considered more precise and real, therefore more controllable and predictable* >	Categorisation of indigenous knowledge as savage, inferior, superstitious and detrimental to progress. Oppression of indigenous ontology and categorisations of knowledge of indigenous peoples.
Monoculture of time**	Imposition of a linear notion of time > enforced through the division of time in the day and notions of 'holidays' and 'work days' according to the Gregorian calendar.	Negation of indigenous notions of time embedded in socio-environmental and cultural realms and fundamental to indigenous government and knowledge systems of resilience.
Coloniality of being***	Reification of homogeneity, individualism and competition as the superior qualities that drive self-improvement and progress for societies and the state*	Oppression of cultural diversity, collective forms of expression, identity and solidarity as well as communal forms of construction of the social subject and holistic relation with the world. Disembeddedness of the individual from its socio-environmental and cultural contour.
	Imposition of the Spanish language as the only valid and 'modern' idiom. > Use of indigenous languages in schools forbidden and severely punished*.	Oppression of indigenous language as related ontological expressions, representations and relations to indigenous world-views.
Coloniality of power***	The reduction of indigenous peoples as inferior, marginalised and unproductive thus requiring their subordination as a labour force to exploit their territory in order to contribute to the social and economic development of the state*.	This monoculture of power as productivity refuted any concept of alternative modes of production, being and power that could form part of the state from a position of cultural diversity and differentiated development models.

\* (Sastoque, 2012 in v.Hildebrand and Brackelaire 2012: 142-143)

\*\* (Santos, 2006)

\*\*\* (Quijano 2000; Quijano et. al 2007)

