
TERRITORIO
SENTIPENSANTE
Teyuna as a living system of territorial thought
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Territorio Sentipensante

Teyuna as a living system of territorial thought

Supervisor
Prof. Camillo Boano
Politecnico di Torino

Correlator
Prof. Pablo Andrés Gómez Granda
Universidad de Bogotá Jorge Tadeo Lozano

Student
Daniela Andrea González Rueda

Politecnico di Torino 1859

UTADEO UNIVERSIDAD DE BOGOTÁ JORGE TADEO LOZANO

Personal Note

This research is about Ciudad Perdida (Lost City), known as Teyuna by the Kogi people, who continue to serve as its spiritual and territorial guardians. Yet more than an archeological site, this thesis is about a way of understanding space that colonialism attempted to erase, but never fully succeeded in silencing.

In the Kogi world view, territory is not simply a place to be inhabited: **it is thought**. The terraces are phrases, the paths are arguments, water is the voice that connects them.

Writing this thesis from Europe — within an academic tradition shaped by its own frameworks, canons, and geographies of knowledge — has involved a tension that I do not wish to resolve too easily. I prefer to keep it alive, as a fissure through which light can enter. I am a South person writing from the North about forms of knowledge rooted in territories that have been historically marginalized in the South. As a student of architecture, this process has required me to unlearn many ideas about what architecture is and, above all, what else it might become.

This thesis does not seek to speak on behalf of the Kogi people. It is neither an ethnography nor an act of appropiation. Rather, it is a gesture of listening: an attempt to use the tools of architecture and spatial thinking to read a territory that has, for centuries, embodied forms of knowledge that modern academy is only beginning to articulate.

The Indigenous people of Colombia and Latin America are not remnants of the past. They are living communities that continue to defend their territories, cosmologies, and systems of knowledge against displacement, extractive industries, environmental degradation, and the systematic marginalization of their voices within educational and political institutions. In this context, writhing about sentipensante territories is both an academic and political act. It is neither possible — nor honest — to study the spatial logic of Teyuna without acknowledging the conditions of structural violence under which this knowledge must be protected every day.

(Es.)

Esta investigación trata sobre Ciudad Perdida, llamada Teyuna por la comunidad Kogi, quienes continúan siendo sus guardianes espirituales y territoriales. Pero más que sobre un sitio arqueológico, este trabajo trata sobre una forma de comprender el espacio que el colonialismo intentó borrar, aunque nunca logró silenciar por completo.

En la cosmovisión Kogi, el territorio no es simplemente un lugar habitado: **es pensamiento**. *Las terrazas son frases, los caminos son argumentos, el agua es la voz que los conecta.*

Escribir esta tesis desde Europa — desde una academia construida sobre sus propios marcos, cánones y geografías del saber — ha implicado una tensión que no deseo resolver con facilidad. Prefiero mantenerla viva, como una grieta por la que entra la luz. Soy una persona del Sur escribiendo desde el Norte sobre conocimientos nacidos en territorios históricamente marginados del Sur. Como estudiante de arquitectura, este proceso me ha exigido desaprender muchas ideas sobre lo que la arquitectura es y, sobre todo, sobre aquello que también podría llegar a ser.

Esta tesis no pretende hablar en nombre del pueblo Kogi. No es una etnografía ni un ejercicio de apropiación. Es, más bien, un gesto de escucha: un intento de utilizar las herramientas de la arquitectura y del pensamiento espacial para leer un territorio que, desde hace siglos, encarna formas de conocimiento que la academia moderna apenas comienza a formular.

Los pueblos indígenas de Colombia y de América Latina no son vestigios del pasado. Son comunidades vivas que continúan defendiendo sus territorios, sus cosmologías y sus sistemas de conocimiento frente al desplazamiento, las industrias extractivas, la degradación ambiental y la marginación sistemática de sus voces en las instituciones educativas y políticas. En este contexto, escribir sobre territorios sentipensantes es un acto tanto académico como político. No es posible — ni honesto — estudiar la lógica espacial de Teyuna sin reconocer las condiciones de violencia estructural bajo las cuales este conocimiento debe ser protegido cada día.

Acknowledgements

I am deeply grateful to all those who, through their words, ideas, and companionship provided the conceptual and emotional foundations that made this research possible.

To Professor Camillo Boano, for allowing me to develop this research with extraordinary openness and intellectual freedom, for trusting my work and my intuition, and for giving me the encouragement I so often needed to keep moving forward.

To Proffessor Pablo Gómez, for teaching me another way of understanding architecture, for opening my mind to new worlds of thought, and for planting in me a sensitivity that later gave me the courage to expose myself to the world.

To María Paula, a dear friend I found along this path of learning, whose curiosity for nature, art, and the subtler dimensions of experince profoundly enriched my own perspective.

To my mother and my siblings, my greatest source of strength, whose love sustains me despite any distance. To my family, filled with immensely kind people, and to the women who have woven our family's story with courage, tenderness, and perseverance, becoming the example that guides my path.

To my classmates, friends, and fellow exchange students, for their support, their laughter, and the unforgettable moments we shared.

And finally, to my country and to Indigenous communities whose enduring commitment to protecting their territories, cosmologies, and ancestral knowledge offers an invaluable lesson in care, resistance, and sensitivity. Their steadfast defense of life and of the profound relationships that sustain it has been a constant source of inspiration throughout this work.

(Es.)

Agradezco profundamente a todas las personas que, con sus palabras, ideas y compañía, me brindaron las bases conceptuales y emocionales que hicieron posible esta investigación.

Al profesor Camillo Boano, por permitirme desarrollar esta investigación con una apertura y libertad intelectual extraordinaria, por confiar en mi trabajo y en mi intuición, y por ofecerme el impulso que muchas veces necesité para seguir adelante.

Al profesor Pablo Gómez, por enseñarme otra manera de entender la arquitectura, por abrir mi mente a nuevos mundos de pensamiento y por sembrar en mi una sensiblidad que más tarde me dio el valor de exponerme al mundo.

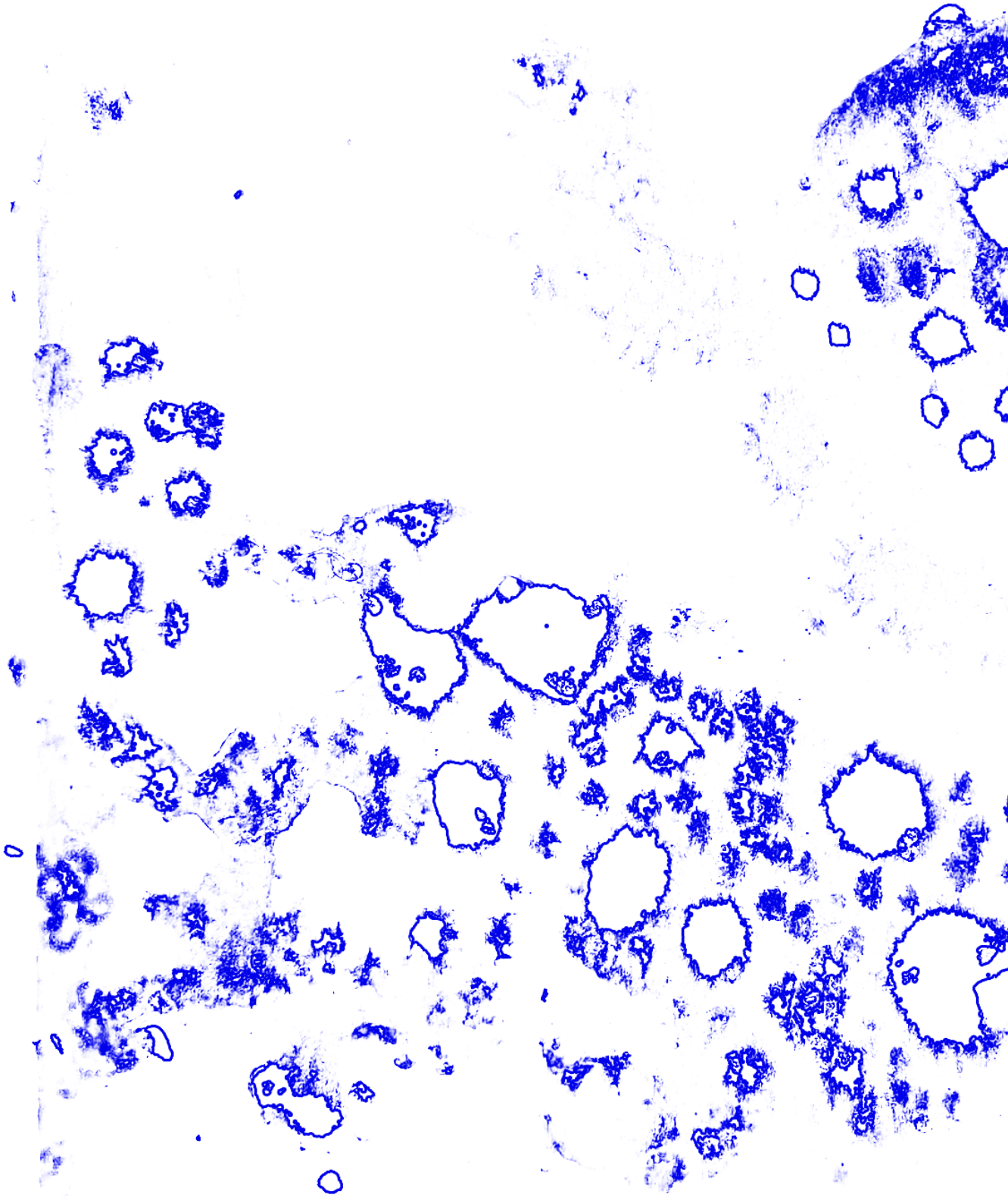
A María Paula, una gran amiga que encontré en este camino de aprendizaje, cuya curiosidad por la naturaleza, el arte y las dimensiones más sutiles de la experiencia enriqueció profundamente mi propia mirada.

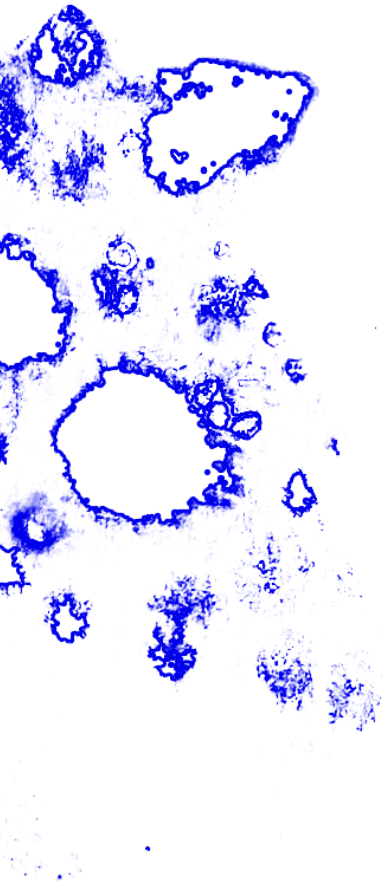
A mi madre y a mis hermanos, mi mayor fuente de fortaleza, cuyo amor me sostiene a pesar de cualquier distancia. A mi familia, llena de personas inmensamente bondadosas, y a las mujeres que han tejido nuestra historia con valentía, ternura y perseverancia, convirtiéndose en el ejemplo que guía mi camino.

A mis compañeros de universidad, amigos y compañeros de intercambio, por su apoyo, sus risas y los momentos inolvidables que compartimos.

Y, finalmente, a mi país y a las comunidades indígenas, cuyo compromiso inquebrantable con la protección de sus territorios, cosmologías y conocimientos ancestrales ofrece una valiosa lección de cuidado, resistencia y sensibilidad. Su firme defensa de la vida y de las profundas relaciones que la sustentan ha sido una fuente constante de inspiración a lo largo de este trabajo.

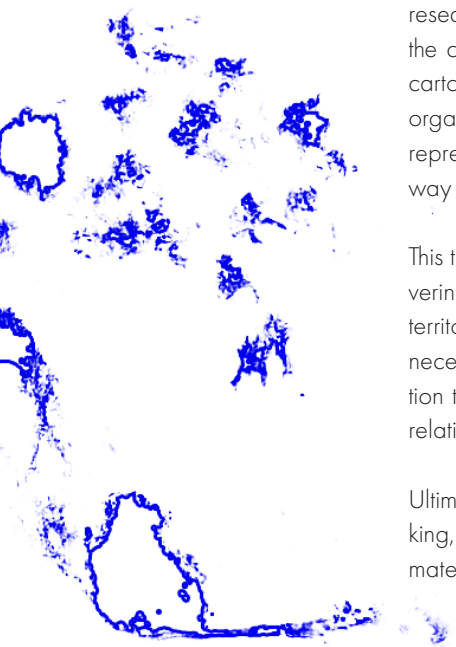
Abstract





This research explores the territorial logic of Ciudad Perdida (Lost City), known as Teyuna by the Kogi people, beyond conventional archaeological, functional, and architectural interpretations. Drawing from Kogi understandings of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta in Colombia, the research approaches territory through the concept of **territorio sentipensante** (feeling-thinking territory), in which territory is understood not as a fixed background or empty space, but as a living network of relationships between body, water, topography, memory, spirituality, and other forms of life.

The research is based on the concept of sentipensar (feeling-thinking), developed by Orlando Fals Borda (2009), which understands knowledge through the interaction of reason, emotion, and lived experience. This perspective challenges modern and colonial approaches that have gradually transformed territory into space: something measurable, classifiable, and representable as an object. Teyuna is approached instead as a living territory, shaped by relationships between human and non-human elements.



Through a process of territorial interpretation, cartographic experimentation, and visual research, the study first examines the spatial relationships of Teyuna and then questions the conventional systems used to represent them. The research moves from analytical cartography towards an experimental process involving drawing, watercolor, water, organic materials, and the direct interaction of the body with the image. In this process, representation becomes not only a means of communicating the research, but also a way of experiencing and producing knowledge.

This transition leads to a broader reflection on decolonization. Rather than simply recovering an Indigenous way of seeing, the research questions the position from which the territory is being represented, recognizing that coming from the Global South does not necessarily mean thinking outside colonial systems of knowledge. The final representation therefore does not seek to reproduce Teyuna as a fixed image, but to express its relational, changing, and living character.

Ultimately, the thesis proposes representation as a practice of sentipensar: a way of thinking, feeling, and constructing spatial knowledge through the interaction between body, material, territory, and memory.

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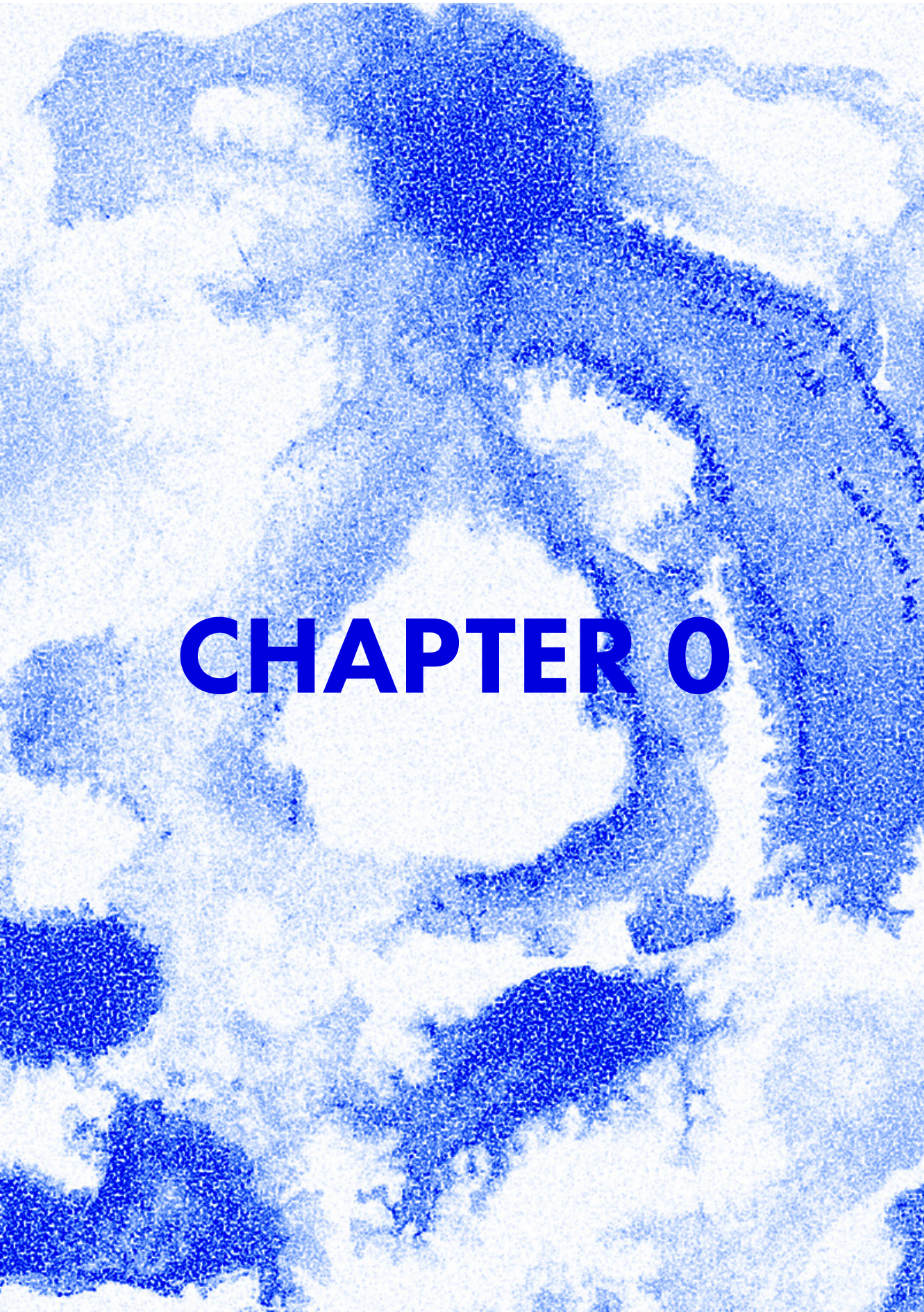
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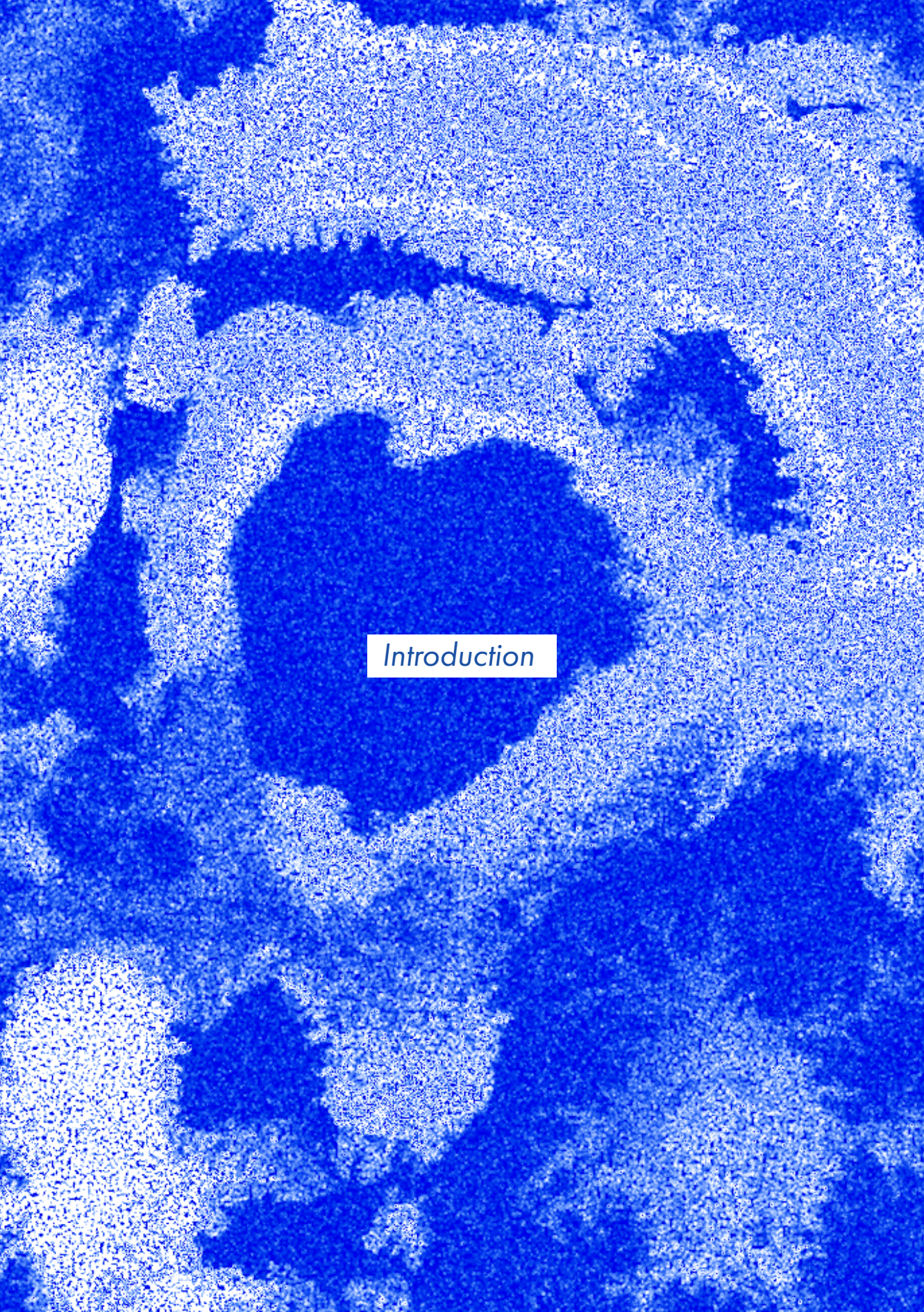
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CHAPTER 0


Introduction

0.1 The problem of naming "Ciudad Perdida"

In 1976, a group of *guaqueros*—illegal looters engaged in the extraction and trafficking of pre-Columbian goldwork—led Colombian archaeologists to one of the largest and most complex pre-Hispanic settlements in the Americas. Shortly thereafter, the site was declared protected by the Colombian Institute of Anthropology and History (ICANH) and officially designated as *Ciudad Perdida*, or "The Lost City." This event marked the incorporation of the site into the archaeological and heritage frameworks of the Colombian state and the broader institutional mechanisms of modern knowledge.[1]

For Indigenous people of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta—the Kogi, Arhuaco, Wiwa, and Kankuamo—the site **had never been lost**. Known as *Teyuna*, it continues to be understood as one of the sacred centers of an ancestral territorial system that remains alive and in need of constant care. Teyuna is not conceived as an archaeological ruin or as a vestige of a disappeared civilization, but as an active node within a broader cosmological network in which mountains, rivers, stones, animals, and human communities participate in the maintenance of life.

The contrast between the names Ciudad Perdida and Teyuna reflects two different ways of understanding the place. Calling it "Lost City" suggests that its value and meaning become recognized once it is documented, classified, and made legible to institutions. Naming, in this sense, is not a neutral act of description, but a way of giving authority to certain forms of knowledge while placing others in a secondary or invisible position.[2] Teyuna, on the other hand, refers to a territory that is already known, inhabited, and continuously understood through a living cosmology. The name does not point to a place waiting to be discovered, but to a territory that thinks and communicates so that the world as a whole can remain in balance.

The coexistence of these two names raises a more complex question: how can the same place be understood as both a lost archaeological site and a living center of territorial knowledge? The answer is not only found in cultural differences, but also in the historical conditions that have shaped and identified different ways of knowing, inhabiting, and relating to territory.


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LA CIUDAD PER

DESEN

1 - *The first detailed archaeological accounts of Ciudad Perdida were published shortly after its official recognition. Soto Holguín, A. (1988). La Ciudad Perdida de los Tayrona.*

2 - *Foucault, Michel. Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977. New York: Pantheon Books, (1980).*

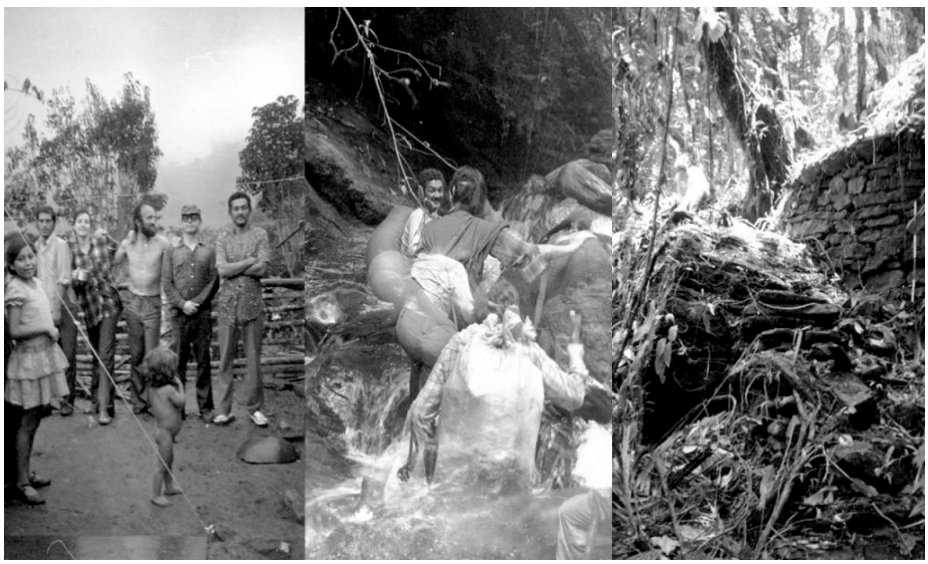
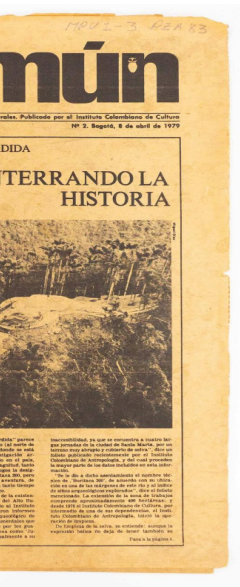


Fig. 1
Archaeological expeditions and field research in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta
Source: Universidad de los Andes, Viaje al corazón de la Sierra. Photographs from the archaeological expeditions to Ciudad Perdida, 1970s.


mún

...rales. Publicada por el Instituto Colombiano de Cultura

Nº 2. Bogotá, 8 de abril de 1979

...DIDA

...TERRANDO LA HISTORIA


guaquero

Vuelve la magnificencia

guda di... Norte

Hace 400 años la Ciudad Perdida tuvo una población de por lo menos 2 mil personas. Hoy un indio Kogui recorre la rendidiosa fortaleza ilítica y recuerda que ahora en Ciudad Perdida los muertos son de todos los muertos

Entre una densa selva tropical, en plena Sierra Nevada de Santa María, la Ciudad Perdida se levanta como la obra precolombina con mayor infraestructura urbana descubierta hasta más de 400 años floreció allí en alcanzó un significativo nivel cultural

RELACIONES

CENTRAL INTERNA

QUIMIC... ARMACEU...

Empresa de...

...ra trabajar en P...

...eriencia de dos a...

...nificas condicione...

...excelentes posibi...

progreso.

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...sueldo deseado...

...dor Nº 411, de...


Después los Sepúlveda Llegaron a la Ciudad Perdida...

Por BERNARDO VALDERRAMA

En una de las terrazas de la Ciudad Perdida, en la Sierra Nevada, fue Sepultado el cuerpo de Julio César Sepúlveda, el primero en llegar al lugar. Lo asesinaron los guaqueros dos meses después del hallazgo en plena selva. (Fotos de Arturo Vargas).

Fig. 2
Newspapers with the Teyuna discovery
Source: Biblioteca Nacional de Colombia. Edwin Ruiz – Investigador BNC

Fig. 3
Contextual Map, Teyuna.

The Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta holds a particular place in the colonial history of the Americas. Rising sharply from the Caribbean coast to snow-capped peaks above 5,700 meters, the mountain range brings together an extraordinary variety of ecological zones within a relatively small territory (*Figure 3*). Its geography made direct colonial penetration more difficult and allowed Indigenous communities to maintain forms of territorial organization, ceremonial practices, and knowledge transmission that were deeply transformed in other parts of the Americas under Spanish rule. The region **was never completely separated from colonial processes, but it was also never fully incorporated into the spatial, political, and knowledge systems through which colonial power sought to reorganize Indigenous life**.[3]

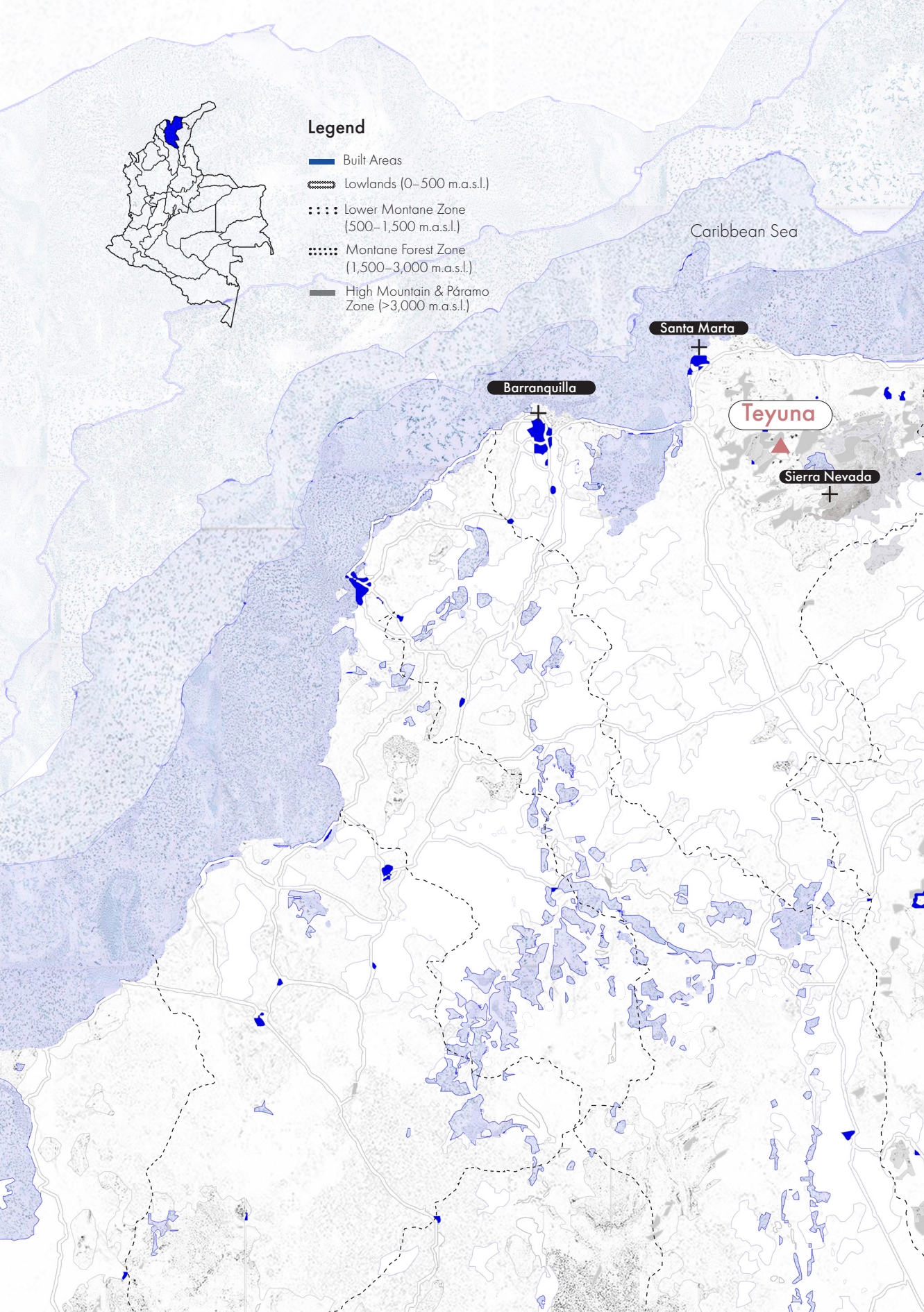
This relative autonomy did not mean that the Sierra was free from colonial violence. Since the sixteenth century, Indigenous communities in the region have faced missionary intervention, forced displacement, the fragmentation of their territories, and the arrival of new economic interests. These pressures continued during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with the expansion of agriculture and extractive activities, and later armed conflict, that changed how Indigenous communities lived and related to the territory. Still, the Kogi, Arhuaco, Wiwa, and Kankuamo have continued to preserve forms of knowledge and practices that connect communities with ancestral sites, rivers, mountains, and other living beings.[4] These relationships have allowed important parts of their territorial knowledge to remain alive and to be passed on across generations.

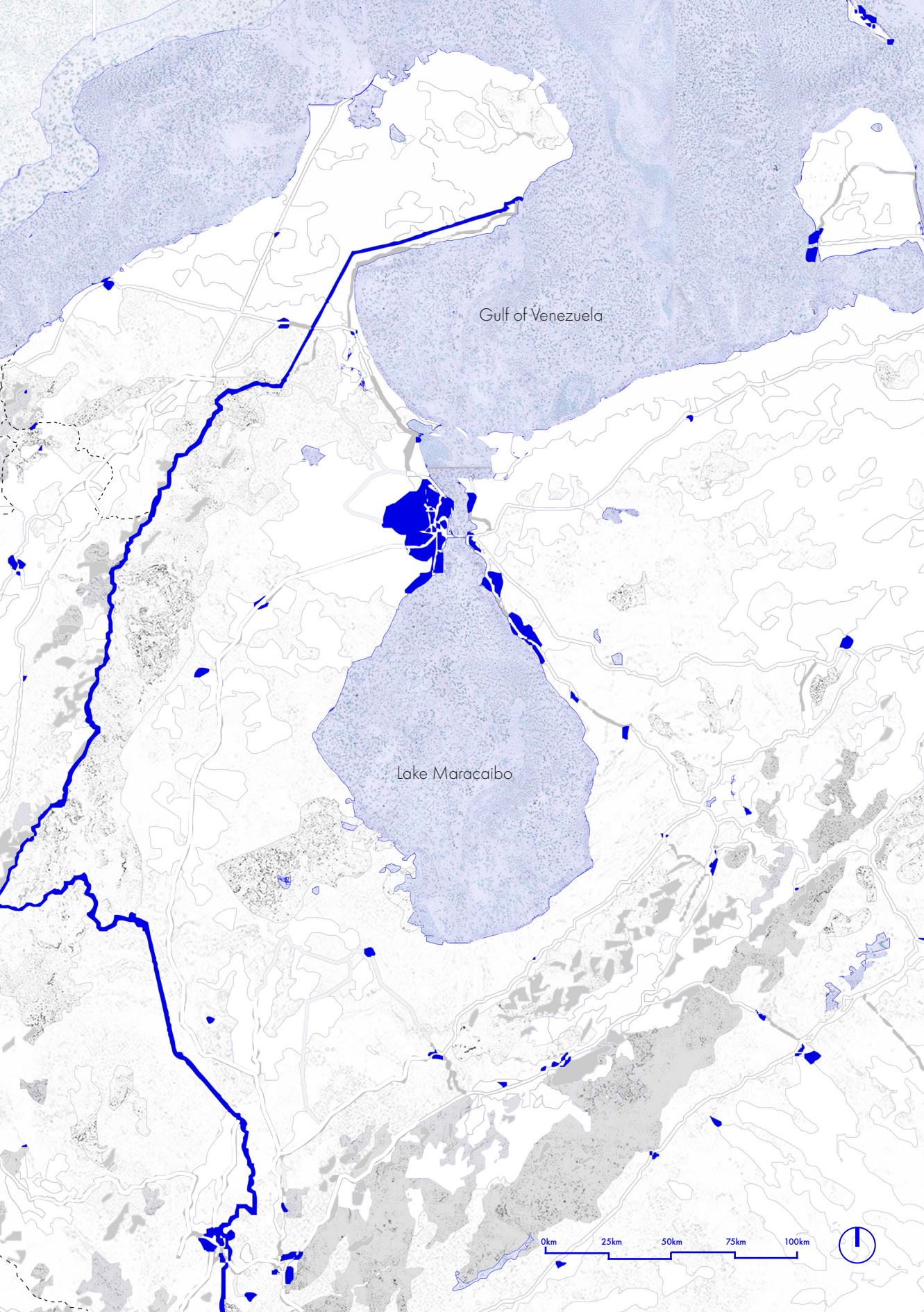
The archaeological recognition of Ciudad Perdida emerged from a way of producing knowledge that developed alongside modern science and its institutions. Within this framework, territory is gradually transformed into space: something that can be observed, measured, classified, and represented.[5] Knowledge is produced by documenting the world and translating territory into forms that can be mapped and managed. Archaeology, cartography, territorial planning, and heritage conservation have largely developed within this way of understanding space. Through this process, territory becomes an object of knowledge that can be incorporated into institutional systems of protection and management.

3 - *Carl Henrik. Los Herederos del Pasado: Indígenas y Pensamiento Criollo en Colombia y Venezuela. Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes, (2009).*

4 - *The four Indigenous people who today inhabit the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta*

5 - *Harley, J. B. "Deconstructing the Map" (1989): 1–20.*


Legend
Built Areas
Lowlands (0–500 m.a.s.l.)
Lower Montane Zone (500–1,500 m.a.s.l.)
Montane Forest Zone (1,500–3,000 m.a.s.l.)
High Mountain & Páramo Zone (>3,000 m.a.s.l.)
Caribbean Sea
Santa Marta
Barranquilla
Teyuna
Sierra Nevada


Gulf of Venezuela
Lake Maracaibo
0km
25km
50km
75km
100km

Teyuna is understood from a different perspective. Territory is not seen as something separate from the person observing it, but as a **living network of relationships** in which people are also part. Knowledge is built through these relationships and through the exchange between people and their surroundings. Mountains, rivers, forests, animals, stones, and sacred sites are not simply elements of the landscape. They take an active part in sustaining life. Territory is therefore more than a physical ground where culture takes place. It is where thought, memory, spirituality, and material life come together.

This distinction points to what is meant here by epistemological frameworks. An epistemological framework is not merely a body of knowledge but a set of **assumptions about how knowledge is produced, validated, and transmitted.**[6] It determines what counts as evidence, who is recognized as a legitimate knower, and how relationships between humans and the world are understood. Different epistemological frameworks do not simply generate different interpretations of reality; they shape different ways of inhabiting and engaging with it.

Within the dominant Western tradition, knowledge is often based on a **separation between subject and object**. The observer stands outside the world and understands it as something that can be measured, represented, and classified. In this way, territory becomes a defined and mappable surface that can be documented and managed. Time is also understood as linear and progressive, separating the past from the present and turning early settlements into archaeological remains.

From this perspective, a place can be considered "lost" when it disappears from documented history and "found" when it is brought back into institutional systems of knowledge. The Kogi understand territory through a different relationship between knowledge, humans, and the living world. Through the concept of *Aluna*—often understood as thought, memory, or spiritual consciousness—knowledge is formed through an ongoing relationship with the world around us. Aluna does not separate land from material reality; it describes the connections that keep different forms of life together.[7] To know a place, then, is not only to observe or describe it, but also to take part in caring for it. Knowledge is therefore connected to responsibility, and responsibility is expressed through practices of care.

The contrast between Ciudad Perdida and Teyuna therefore shows more than two ways of interpreting the same place. It points to a deeper difference in how territory, history, and knowledge are understood. The first approach gives importance to representation, classification, and institutional recognition, while the second is based on relationships, reciprocity, and responsibility towards the territory. These differences also shape how a place is inhabited, cared for, and represented.[8]

This tension is the starting point of this thesis. The difference between Ciudad Perdida and Teyuna is not only a matter of names; it reflects two different ways of understanding territory. If contemporary practices of heritage, architecture, and territorial representation have largely developed from one of these ways of thinking, what happens to the forms of knowledge that do not fit within it? How does representation change when territory is understood not as something to be measured and mapped, but as a living network of relationships sustained through thought, care, and reciprocity?.[9]

By engaging with Kogi understandings of territory and exploring other ways of representing it, this research contributes to discussions on heritage, decolonial knowledge, and the relationship between representation and territory.

6 - *Santos, Boaventura de Sousa. Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, (2014).*

7 - *Reichel-Dolmatoff, Gerardo. 1985. Los Kogi: una tribu de la Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. Bogotá: Procultura, pp. 39–52.*

8 - *Mignolo, Walter D. 2011. The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options. Duke University Press.*

9 - *Escobar, Arturo. 2018. Designs for the Pluriverse: Radical Interdependence, Autonomy, and the Making of Worlds. Duke University Press.*

Kogi knowledge is not treated as an addition to existing frameworks, but as a way of understanding the world that can challenge the systems through which territory is usually seen and represented. This perspective also opens the possibility of developing forms of representation that respond to territory as something living, relational, and constantly changing.

0.2 Research position and Thesis structure

This thesis begins with a critical question about how architecture, heritage studies, and other spatial disciplines understand territory. Modern approaches have often treated space as something abstract, measurable, and functional, relying on observation, classification, and control. While these approaches have provided useful tools for understanding space, they can leave aside the relationships, emotions, spirituality, and ecological processes through which territories are lived, remembered, and sustained.

Beyond these disciplinary questions, there is also a personal reason behind this research. Choosing Colombia, the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, and the Kogi people was not simply an academic decision. It comes from my own connection to Colombia and from the belief that the Sierra represents a powerful example of territorial and cultural resistance in contemporary Latin America, where other ways of understanding and relating to territory have persisted.

For centuries, Indigenous communities of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta have maintained forms of knowledge that have survived colonial conquest, missionary intervention, territorial dispossession, armed conflict, and, more recently, globalization and mass tourism. What is remarkable is that these forms of knowledge are still part of how the territory is understood and cared for today. In a world increasingly characterized by the homogenization of landscapes and the standardization of knowledge, the Sierra remains one of the few places where alternative ways of understanding the relationship between humans, territory, and life itself continue to be actively practiced and transmitted across generations. This thesis emerges from the **need to critically reconsider how architecture, heritage studies, and spatial disciplines conceptualize territory**.

The Sierra has played an important role in this history of resistance. Colonial power never fully managed to bring the region into the systems used to map, administer, and control Indigenous territories. Its geography made this more difficult, but it does not—on its own—explain why these forms of life and knowledge have continued. What has remained is a way of understanding the territory that connects people with ancestral sites, rivers, mountains, animals, and other forms of life. This continuity also shows that resistance in the Sierra has occurred at the level of knowledge, as local ways of understanding and relating to the territory have persisted despite the influence of external systems.

This research focuses on Teyuna because it reflects this continuity. For the Kogi and other Indigenous communities of the Sierra, Teyuna is not simply an archaeological site. It is a sacred center within a living territorial system, with a meaning that goes beyond the categories commonly used by heritage institutions to define cultural value. The site brings together memory, knowledge, territory, and responsibility. These relationships also challenge some of the assumptions through which architecture, planning, and heritage management usually understand space.

At the same time, Teyuna stands at the center of contemporary tensions. The growth of tourism has transformed the site into one of Colombia's most visited cultural destinations, increasing its visibility while also subjecting it to processes of commodification. A territory understood by Indigenous communities as sacred and alive is increasingly framed through the logic of heritage consumption, reducing complex relationships of memory, responsibility, and care to experiences designed for external audiences.[10]

With this context in mind, this thesis explores how Teyuna challenges dominant ways of understanding and representing territory. It looks at how the site's terraces, paths, water systems, and relationship with the surrounding landscape express a way of understanding the territory in which architecture, topography, water, memory, and spirituality are closely connected.

Related to this, the central research question guiding this study is:

How can understanding the territorial logic of Teyuna contribute to new ways of representing territory beyond dominant colonial models of space?

The main aim of this thesis is to explore how Indigenous ways of understanding territory can expand current approaches to its representation. More specifically, the research examines Teyuna as a territory shaped by relationships between people, landscape, water, memory, and spirituality, while also exploring other ways of representing these relationships through architecture and cartography. To develop these ideas, the thesis is organized into four interconnected parts.

The **first part** introduces the main ideas behind the research. It looks at coloniality, territory, Indigenous knowledge, and other ways of understanding the world, drawing mainly on the work of Orlando Fals Borda, Arturo Escobar, Catalina Mejía, and other authors who question the modern separation between nature and culture. These ideas provide the basis for understanding territory not as a neutral geographical surface, but as a living network of ecological, social, affective, and spiritual relationships.

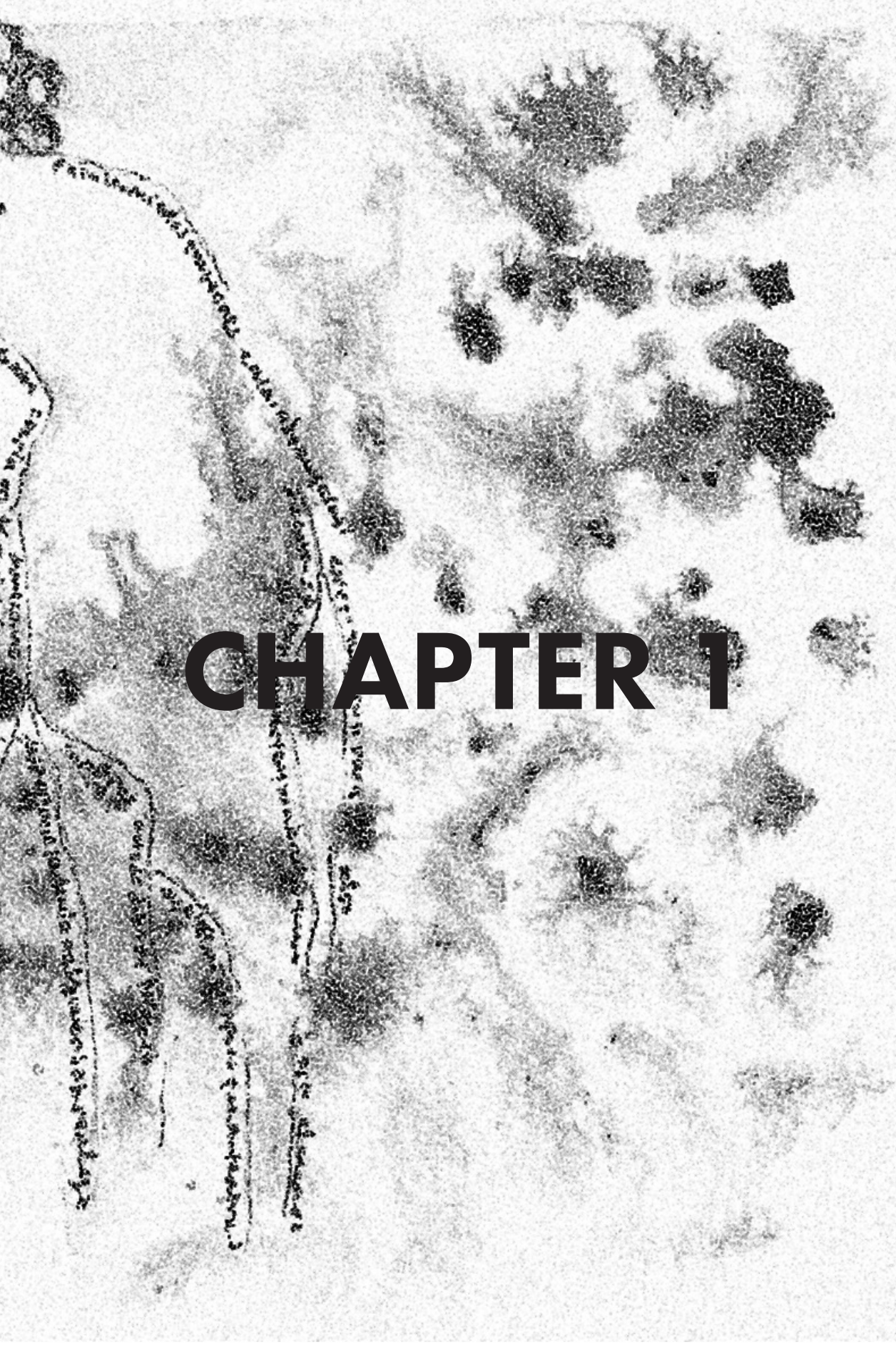
The **second part** develops a methodological study of representation. Rather than treating representation as a neutral technique, it approaches visual language as a cultural and epistemological construction. A comparative analysis is undertaken between three representational registers: nineteenth-century colonial scientific images, Indigenous Latin American visual traditions—including Kogi weaving and the Cerro Azul rock paintings—and contemporary decolonial artistic practices represented through the work of Carolina Caycedo, Lina Puerta, and Gustavo Caboco. These three registers are systematically compared through a common set of visual parameters—including line, geometry, composition, colour, materiality, texture, scale, body–territory relations, spatial organization, temporality, and the function of the image—in order to identify recurring visual logics and alternative modes of constructing territorial knowledge. The resulting comparative matrix becomes the methodological basis for the project's own representational language.

10 - *Vega Osorio, F. (2017). Turismo y posconflicto. Una reflexión a partir del escenario del Camino a Teyuna (Ciudad Perdida). Turismo y Sociedad, 21, 165–192. https://doi.*

The **third part** moves from representation towards a closer reading of Kogi cosmology. Drawing on ethnographic, archaeological, and Indigenous sources, it explores how the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta is understood as a living territory. It focuses on the structure of the Kogi universe, the role of water, the relationship between body and territory, and the connections between mountains, rivers, plants, animals, and ancestral beings. These ideas help explain Teyuna beyond Western categories of space and provide the basis for the representational experiments developed later in the thesis.

The **fourth part** develops the experimental process through which the final representation was produced. It begins with a conventional architectural drawing of Teyuna, which helped identify both the possibilities and the limits of the ways architecture usually represents territory. From there, the research gradually moves away from these conventions through a series of material experiments with watercolor, earth pigments, mineral salts, botanical elements, handmade textures, and layered techniques. These experiments build on the visual analysis developed in the previous chapters and on the Kogi understanding of territory as something living and relational. **The final sentipensante representation grows out of this process**. It expands architectural drawing by exploring how affect, materiality, memory, ecological relationships, and cosmological connections can also become part of the way a territory is represented.

The reach of the thesis is interpretative rather than ethnographic. **It does not seek to provide a definitive explanation of Kogi knowledge**, nor to speak on behalf of the communities whose territorial practices sustain Teyuna. Instead, it establishes a dialogue between Indigenous territorial epistemologies, critical representational theory, and architectural practice in order to explore how **new graphic languages may emerge from the encounter between different ways** of knowing, inhabiting, and representing territory.



CHAPTER 1



Contexto Histórico y Etnohistórico

1.1 Pueblos indígenas y su conservación en América Latina

Latin America is home to one of the greatest concentrations of Indigenous cultural and biological diversity on the planet. Prior to the European conquest, the continent was inhabited by an estimated 40 to 60 million people organized into hundreds of distinct societies, each with its own language, cosmological system, territorial logic, and accumulated body of knowledge about the natural world.[11] These knowledge systems—developed over millennia of intimate observation, experimentation, and adaptation—constituted sophisticated frameworks for understanding ecological processes, managing landscapes, regulating social relations, and maintaining the conditions necessary for long-term human and non-human life.

The Spanish and Portuguese conquests of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries caused major disruptions to these forms of knowledge and life. Military violence, disease, forced labour, evangelization, and the destruction of Indigenous cultural practices deeply affected the communities and the ways in which knowledge was shared and passed on. The demographic collapse that followed contact—estimates suggest population losses of fifty to ninety percent in many regions within a century of conquest—also affected the transmission of languages, ceremonial practices, ecological knowledge, and memories of the territory.[12] What was lost was not only material heritage, but also **knowledge and practices that had been developed and passed between generations over centuries**.

The colonial project did not end with political independence in the nineteenth century. The new Latin American republics inherited many of the legal and political structures that had placed Indigenous people in an inferior position, and in some cases continued to reinforce them. Liberal land reforms in the mid-nineteenth century, presented as a way to promote individual property and national integration, gradually weakened the collective land protections that had provided some territorial security to Indigenous communities under late colonial law. During the twentieth century, national education systems, missionary programs, and development projects continued these efforts in the name of modernization and progress, often putting pressure on Indigenous cultural practices and ways of life.[13]

The consequences of this extended process of dispossession extend far beyond the communities directly affected. **Latin America today contains approximately 826 recognized Indigenous groups, representing around 45 million people**—roughly eight percent of the continental population—**and occupying territories that are home to approximately eighty percent of the region's remaining biodiversity**.[14] Yet these communities are increasingly perceived, within dominant national cultures, as peripheral, archaic, or simply irrelevant to the concerns of modern life. Their material culture is often reduced to objects displayed in museums, while their languages are studied as academic subjects. Their cosmological knowledge is also sometimes used for spiritual tourism or pharmaceutical research, even as these communities continue to face dispossession, discrimination, and violence.

This marginalization did not happen by chance. It is the result of long historical processes through which Indigenous people were pushed away—physically, legally, and symbolically—from the center of national life. Their territories were taken, their forms of knowledge were often dismissed, and their ways of living were presented as obstacles to modernization and development. Over time, Indigenous communities were increasingly represented as objects of curiosity, as populations in need of integration, or as subjects of outside intervention, while the knowledge they had developed through long relationships with their territories was treated as secondary or invisible.

11 - *Denevan, W. M. (1992). The Native Population of the Americas in 1492 (2nd ed.). University of Wisconsin Press.*

12 - *Cook, N. D. (1998). Born to Die: Disease and New World Conquest, 1492–1650. Cambridge University Press.*

13 - *Mignolo, W. D. (2005). The Idea of Latin America. Blackwell Publishing.*

14 - *CEPAL. (2014). Los pueblos indígenas en América Latina: Avances en el último decenio y retos pendientes para la garantía de sus derechos. Naciones Unidas.*

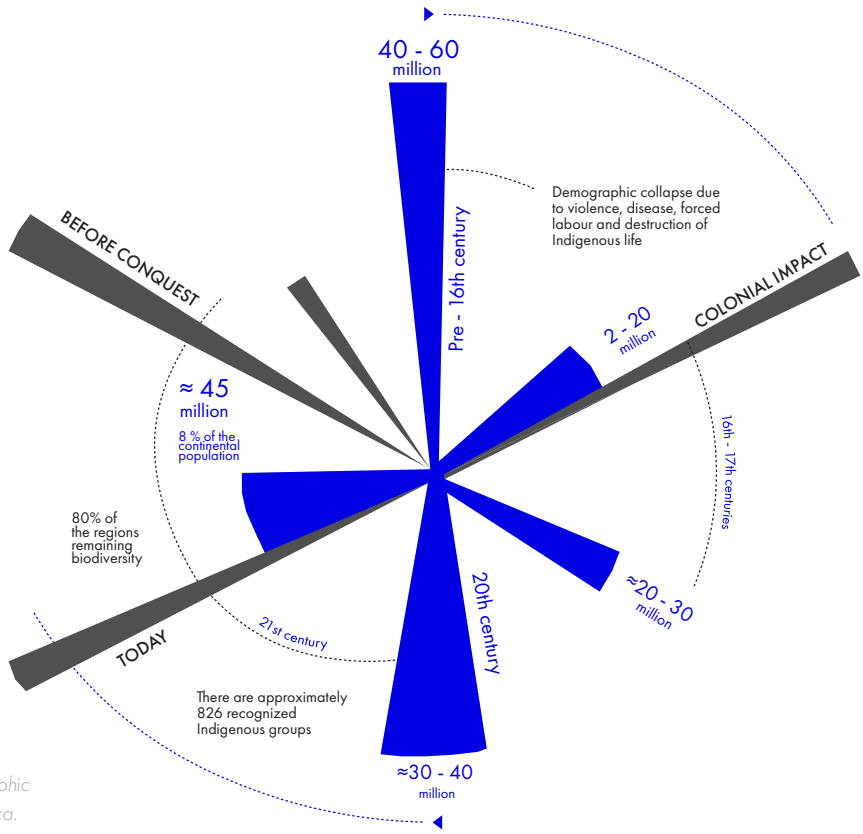


Fig. 4
Indigenous demographic studies in Latin America. Daniela González, 2026. Source: CEPAL

The objects displayed in museums, the ceremonial pieces kept behind glass, and the photographs stored in ethnographic archives are often treated as traces of cultures that belong to the past. Once removed from their original context, these objects can lose the relationships and knowledge that gave them meaning and become simply things to be observed. Understanding the current situation of Indigenous communities in Latin America therefore also means recognizing a history in which their ways of knowing have been repeatedly devalued or pushed aside. This history continues to affect how Indigenous knowledge is understood today, even though it still offers important ways of thinking about how people can live and care for the territories on which they depend.[15]

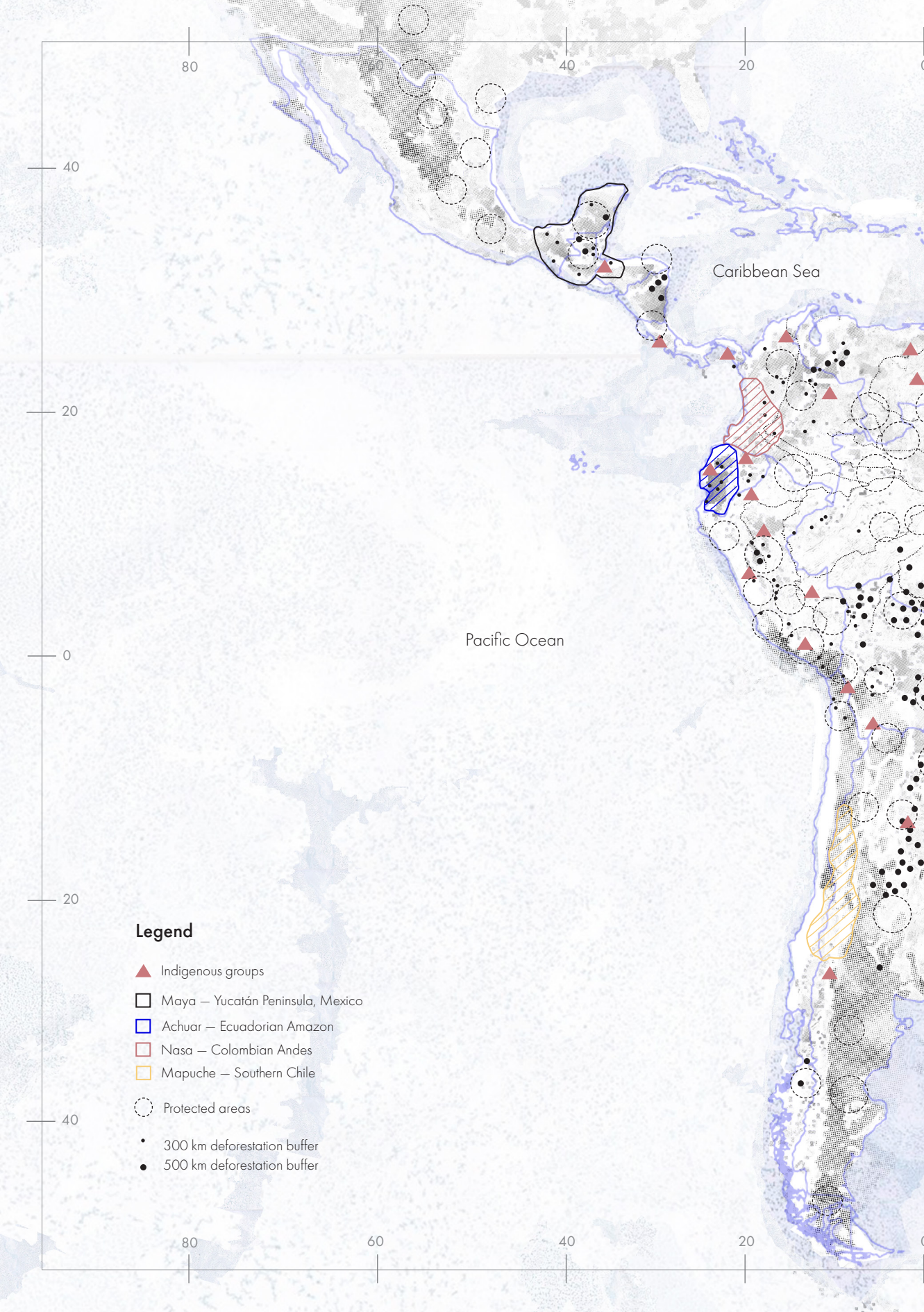
The relationship between Indigenous communities and biodiversity conservation has become increasingly important in discussions about environmental protection in Latin America. Across the continent, many **Indigenous territories have preserved ecosystems with high levels of biodiversity, often maintaining them over long periods of time**. Research by the Amazon Conservation Association, the World Resources Institute, and other organizations has found that Indigenous-managed territories can have higher levels of biodiversity and lower rates of deforestation than many formally protected areas managed by the state.

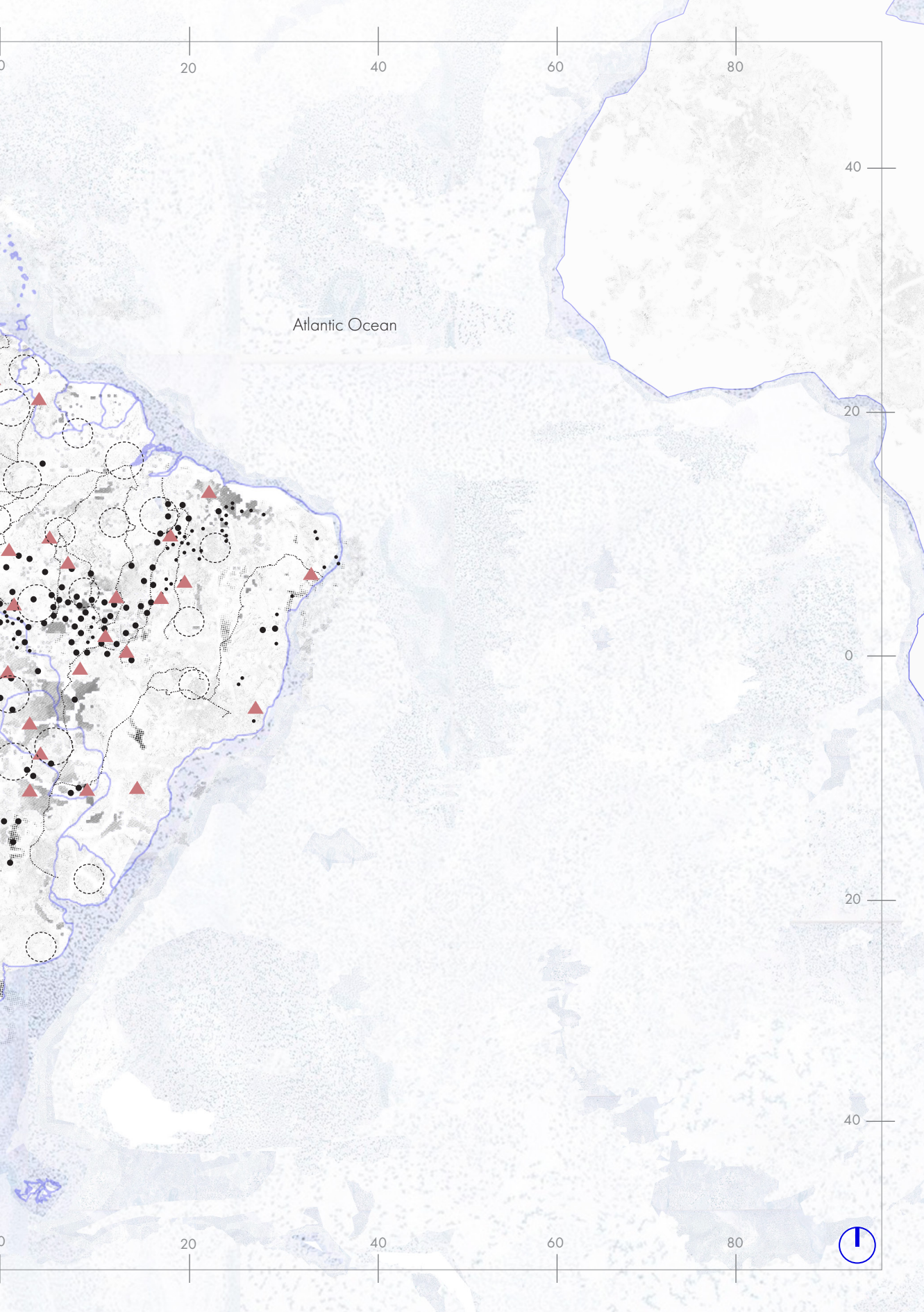
In the Amazon basin alone, Indigenous territories covering approximately 2.5 million square kilometers store an estimated 58 billion tons of carbon above ground, representing a critical buffer against the release of greenhouse gases.[16] In Mexico, Guatemala, Peru, Bolivia, and Colombia, Indigenous communities have developed and maintained management systems—variously described as agro-ecological, biocultural, or ethnoecological—that integrate detailed empirical knowledge of local ecosystems with cosmological principles governing the relationship between human communities and the natural world.[17]

15 - *De Sousa Santos, B. (2014). Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide. Paradigm Publishers.*

16 - *Walker, Wayne S., et al. (2020). "The Role of Forest Conversion, Degradation, and Disturbance in the Carbon Dynamics of Amazon Indigenous Territories and Protected Areas." Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences 117, no. 6.*

17 - *Toledo, Víctor M., and Narciso Barrera-Bassols. (2018). La Memoria Biocultural: La Importancia Ecológica de las Sabidurías Tradicionales. Barcelona: Icaria Editorial, 2008; Berkes, Fikret. Sacred Ecology. 4th ed. New York: Routledge.*


80
40
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Caribbean Sea
Pacific Ocean
Legend
Indigenous groups
Maya — Yucatán Peninsula, Mexico
Achuar — Ecuadorian Amazon
Nasa — Colombian Andes
Mapuche — Southern Chile
Protected areas
300 km deforestation buffer
500 km deforestation buffer
80
60
40
20


Atlantic Ocean
0
20
40
60
80
40
20
0
20
40
0
20
40
60
80

This relationship can be seen across very different Indigenous communities. From the Achuar of the Ecuadorian Amazon to Maya communities in the Yucatan Peninsula, and from the Mapuche of southern Chile to the Nasa of the Colombian Andes, Indigenous peoples have developed ways of living with and caring for territories with complex ecosystems.[18] Their knowledge and practices have increasingly attracted the attention of governments, international organizations, and environmental NGOs, which are now looking for ways to include Indigenous land rights and knowledge in conservation policies. The Convention on Biological Diversity, the Nagoya Protocol, and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, adopted in 2022, all recognize the importance of Indigenous peoples and local communities in biodiversity conservation.

In Latin America, this recognition exists alongside a very different reality. Indigenous communities continue to face land dispossession, the criminalization of environmental defenders, and the expansion of extractive activities into their territories. Between 2012 and 2022, Latin America had the highest number of environmental defender killings in the world, and Indigenous people protecting their land and water were among those most affected.[19]

At the same time, their knowledge and ways of caring for the territory are increasingly being included in discussions about biodiversity conservation. This raises an important question: **how can Indigenous knowledge be recognized as valuable while the communities who hold this knowledge continue to face threats to their territories and autonomy?** The problem is therefore also connected to the way these territories are represented and governed, and to the systems of knowledge through which they continue to be understood.[20]

18 - *Garnett, Stephen T., et al. (2018). "A Spatial Overview of the Global Importance of Indigenous Lands for Conservation". Nature Sustainability .New York: Routledge.*

19- *Global Witness. (2023). Standing Firm: The Land and Environmental Defenders on the Frontlines of the Climate Crisis. London: Global Witness.*

20 - *Escobar, Arturo. (2018). Designs for the Pluriverse: Radical Interdependence, Autonomy, and the Making of Worlds. Durham: Duke University Press.*

Fig. 5
Communities in Latin America.
Daniela González, 2026. Source: Pueblos Originarios. (n.d.). Culturas indígenas de América del Sur & Adapted by the author from BirdLife International (2020); UNEP-WCMC and IUCN (2020).

1.2 Comunidades indígenas en Colombia

Colombia is the Latin American country with the second highest number of Indigenous peoples after Brazil, with 115 officially recognized groups speaking sixty-five languages from twenty-two distinct linguistic families.[21] These communities inhabit territories distributed across the full range of the country's ecological zones, from the Amazonian lowlands and the Pacific coast to the high Andes and the Caribbean foothills. Collectively, Indigenous resguardos—collectively titled territorial units recognized under Colombian law—cover approximately thirty-two million hectares, representing approximately twenty-nine percent of the national territory.

Despite this legal recognition, Colombian Indigenous communities have faced, and continue to face, some of the most severe territorial and human rights pressures on the continent. Decades of armed conflict between guerrilla groups, paramilitary organizations, and state forces have had a strong impact on Indigenous communities. Many Indigenous territories have also been affected by armed groups and illicit economies. This has made life in these territories more difficult and dangerous for Indigenous communities. Between 2016 and 2022, Colombia recorded more killings of Indigenous environmental defenders than any other country. Community leaders, territorial monitors, and traditional authorities were among those most affected.[22]

It is within this context of simultaneous legal recognition and material vulnerability that the territorial framework of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta must be understood. The Four Peoples of the Sierra—Kogi, Arhuaco, Wiwa, and Kankuamo—articulate their territorial claims not through the language of property rights alone, but through a cosmological geography that extends far beyond the mountain massif and covers a system of sacred sites distributed across three departments: Magdalena, Cesar, and La Guajira.

This territorial system is known today as the ***Black Line*** (Línea Negra, or Sé Shizha in Kogui language; Shetana Zhiwa in Wiwa; Seykutukunumaku in Kankuamo). Although the name Línea Negra may sound like a clear territorial boundary, its origin is more complex. It does not come from the type of mapping used to establish state borders or property divisions. For the Indigenous communities of the Sierra, **it refers to an ancestral territory and to the network of sacred sites connected to it**. The way it was later defined in official documents was part of an effort by the Colombian state to understand this territorial system through its own legal and administrative framework.[23]

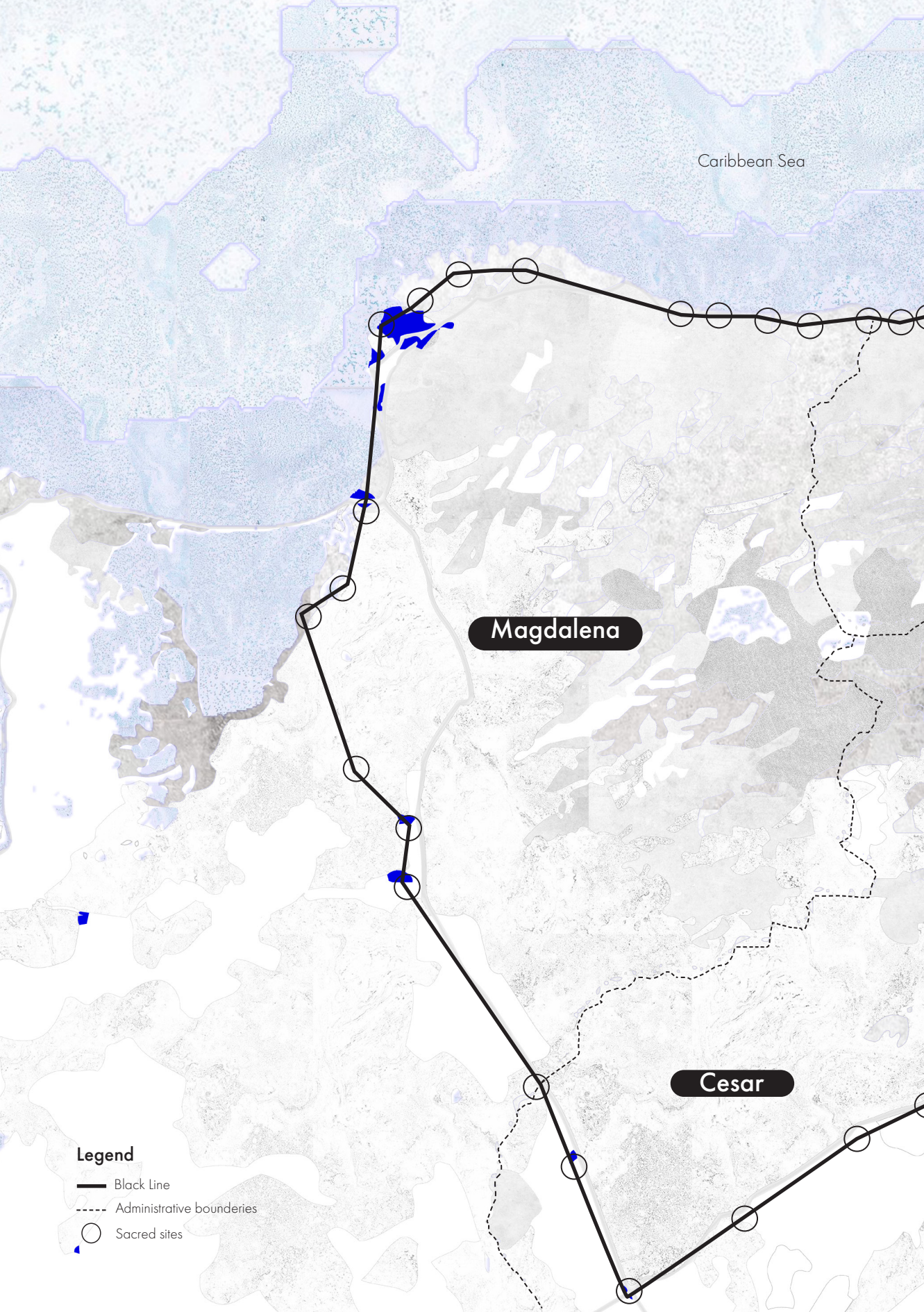
For the Four People of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta the territory had long been organized through what they describe as lines of origin: invisible radial connections linking sacred sites distributed across mountains, rivers, coastal areas, and marine environments to the center of the Sierra, represented by ***Gonawindúa*** (Pico Bolívar and Pico Colón). These connections were not understood as property boundaries. They were part of a network of sacred places connected through spiritual and ritual practices. According to Indigenous authorities, maintaining life depends on performing ***pagamentos*** at these sites.[24] Through these practices, communities maintain their relationship with the territory and with the wider living world.

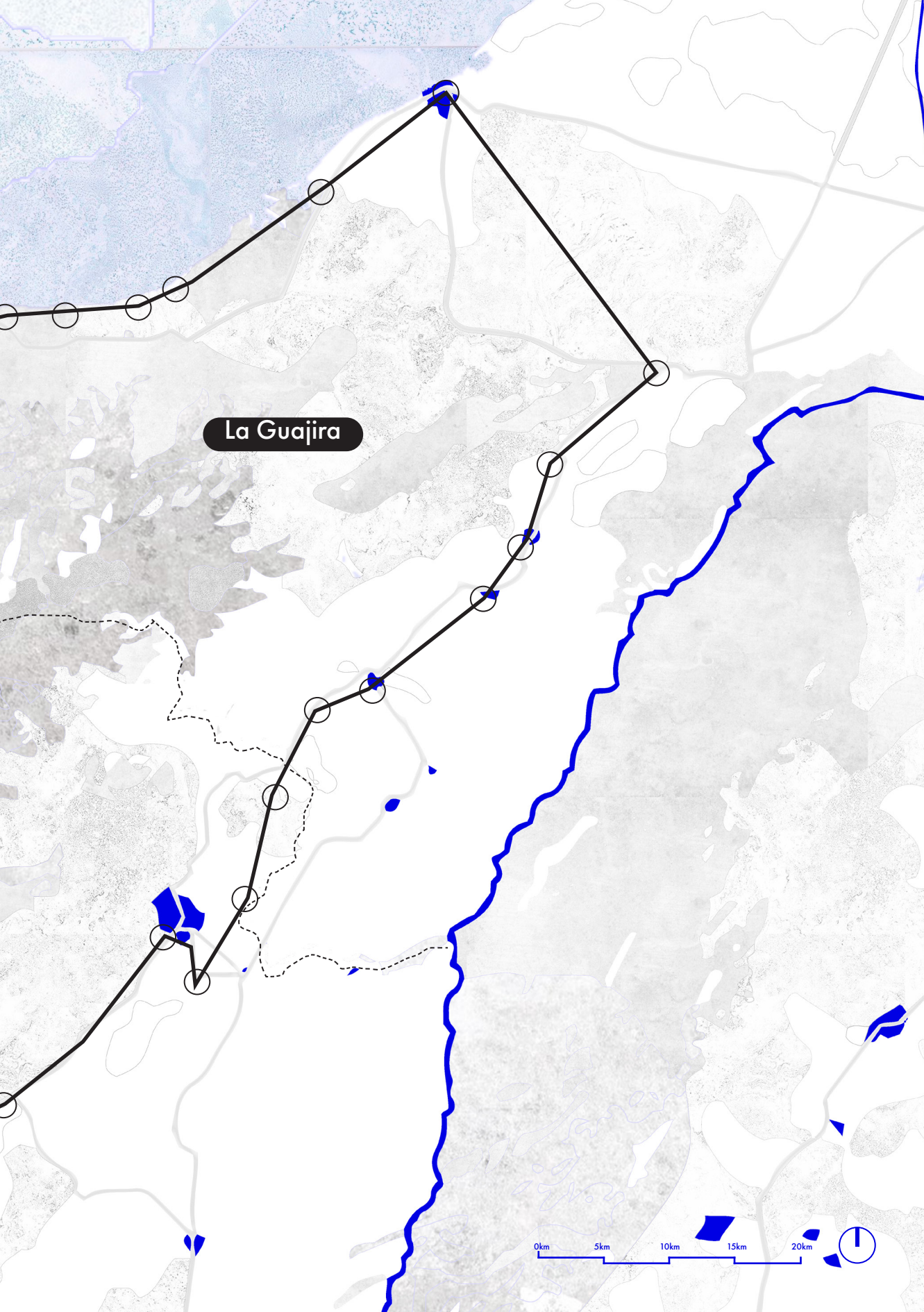
21 - *DANE. (2019). Pueblos indígenas de Colombia: Resultados del Censo Nacional de Población y Vivienda 2018. Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística.*

22 - *Global Witness. (2022). Decade of Defiance: Ten Years of Reporting Land and Environmental Activism Worldwide. Global Witness*

23 - *Leandro Alberto López Rozo. (2020). La Línea Negra como reconocimiento de territorios ancestrales de las comunidades indígenas de la Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, IUSTA 53, 45–67.*

24 - *Pagamentos are ritual offerings performed to maintain reciprocity and balance between human, ecological, and spiritual worlds.*


Caribbean Sea
Magdalena
Cesar
Legend
Black Line
Administrative bounderies
Sacred sites


La Guajira
0km
5km
10km
15km
20km

The need to give this territorial understanding a formal boundary became more evident during the second half of the twentieth century, as the Colombian state expanded its systems of territorial administration, agrarian reform, infrastructure, and environmental regulation in northern Colombia. During the 1960s and 1970s, new settlements, roads, agricultural expansion, and other development projects began to reach areas used for Indigenous ceremonial practices, many of which did not appear on official maps. Indigenous authorities increasingly called for these sacred places and their connections to be formally recognized. This did not mean that they understood the territory as a fixed boundary. Legal recognition had become necessary to protect the places and practices that sustained their ceremonial life.[25]

This process led to Resolution 002 of 1973, issued by the Ministry of Government. It was the first official document to establish what was then called the "Theological Zone" (Zona Teológica), also known as the Black Line of the Indigenous communities of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. The resolution connected a series of sacred sites around the mountain and recognized Indigenous access to them, although the area it covered was still limited.[26]

After the constitutional reforms and the recognition of Indigenous rights through ILO Convention 169, Indigenous authorities and Mamos—the Kogi spiritual and community leaders—met in Bunkwangeka in 1994 to discuss and document a larger network of sacred sites. This work led to Resolution 837 of 1995. The new resolution described the Black Line as a "spiritual, dynamic, and holistic delimitation of territory" and identified fifty-four principal sacred sites. It also created a space for dialogue between Indigenous understandings of territory and the Colombian legal system.[27]

For the Four Peoples, however, the Black Line is not a territorial boundary in the modern sense. It does not define where the territory begins or ends. **It connects sacred places and helps organize the relationships between them.** Mountains, rivers, lagoons, coastal areas, and marine environments are all part of this network, and their connection is important for maintaining the balance of life. The Black Line therefore shows that the Sierra cannot be understood as an isolated territory. Its relationships extend beyond the mountain itself and include the surrounding landscapes and ecosystems on which life depends.

25 - *López Rozo (2020); Indigenous Peoples and Territorial Rights in Colombia, Cambridge University Press.*

26- *Resolución No. 002 del 4 de enero de 1973 del Ministerio de Gobierno; síntesis histórica disponible en fuentes jurídicas y académicas.*

27 - *The Black Line was initially recognized in 1973 and later updated through several legal instruments, including República de Colombia (2018). Decreto 1500 de 2018 ; Resolución 837 de 1995.*

Fig. 6
Black Line Map.
Daniela González, 2026.
Source: IGAC

1.3 La Sierra Nevada y su conquista

The Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta rises from the Caribbean coast of northern Colombia to 5,775 meters above sea level. The mountains are only about 42 kilometers from the coast, which makes the Sierra the highest coastal mountain system in the world. The change in altitude happens over a very short distance, creating many different ecosystems within the same region. Coral reefs and mangroves are found near the coast, followed by tropical dry forests, cloud forests, páramos, alpine lakes, glaciers, and snow-covered peaks higher up in the mountains. Because of this extreme altitudinal compression, the Sierra functions as a condensed microcosm of tropical American ecosystems. It has been identified by The Nature Conservancy as **one of the most biodiverse regions globally**, and in a global assessment of conservation priorities published in Science, it was classified as **the most irreplaceable protected area on Earth for threatened species**.[28]

In addition to its cultural and political significance, the Sierra plays a critical ecological role at regional and global scales. Its river systems originate in high-altitude glaciers and páramos and descend through successive ecological belts toward the Caribbean Sea, supplying freshwater to approximately 1.5 million people across the departments of Magdalena, Cesar, and La Guajira. The Sierra therefore functions as a **key hydrological infrastructure for northern Colombia**, where water security is directly dependent on the integrity of its upper ecosystems. At the same time, the rapid retreat of its glaciers—documented since the mid-twentieth century—positions the massif as a sensitive indicator of climate change in tropical high-mountain environments, with significant implications for both biodiversity and regional human populations.[29]

Before the Spanish arrived, different groups lived across the Sierra and had their own forms of political and territorial organization. Later, colonial records and archaeological research brought many of these groups together under the name *Tairona*. The term is useful, but it can also give the impression that the people living in the Sierra formed a single, unified society. Early colonial records, for example, refer to groups such as the Posigüeica, Betoma, Arhuaca, Macongana, and Tairona. Langebaek has also pointed out that the idea of a unified Tairona civilization comes from the way the archaeological record has been interpreted in modern times and may not describe how these groups were actually organized.[30]

At the same time, archaeological remains in river valleys such as Buritaca show highly developed forms of territorial organization. Stone terraces, roads, and ceremonial structures point to complex ways of inhabiting and organizing the mountain, although they do not necessarily indicate that the different groups across the Sierra shared the same political or cultural identity.

The Spanish conquest changed this landscape significantly. Military campaigns and forced relocations during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, including those carried out under Juan de Borja (1599–1605), led to a major decline in the Indigenous population and the abandonment of many settlements in the foothills and lowlands. Epidemic diseases made the situation even worse. As populations declined and communities were displaced, the connections between the coast, the lower valleys, and the higher parts of the Sierra also began to break apart. Spanish control became stronger in the lower regions, and many surviving Indigenous communities moved towards the more difficult-to-reach areas of the mountains. At the same time, their access to coastal and lowland territories became increasingly limited.[31]

28 - Le Saout, S., Hoffmann, M., Shi, Y., Hughes, A., Bernard, C., Brooks, T. M., ... & Rodrigues, A. S. L. (2013). Protected areas and effective biodiversity conservation. Science, 342(6160), 803–805. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1239268

29 - Langebaek, C. H. (1995). Regional Archaeology in the Muisca Territory. University of Pittsburgh Memoirs in Latin American Archaeology.

30 - Herrera Ángel, M. (2002). Ordenar para controlar: Ordenamiento espacial y control político en las Llanuras del Caribe y en los Andes Centrales Neogranadinos, siglo XVIII. Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia.

31 - Mazuera Nieto, Santiago. "La fortaleza de los llanos de Bonda. Conquista de una frontera del reino español en el siglo XVI." Trashumante.

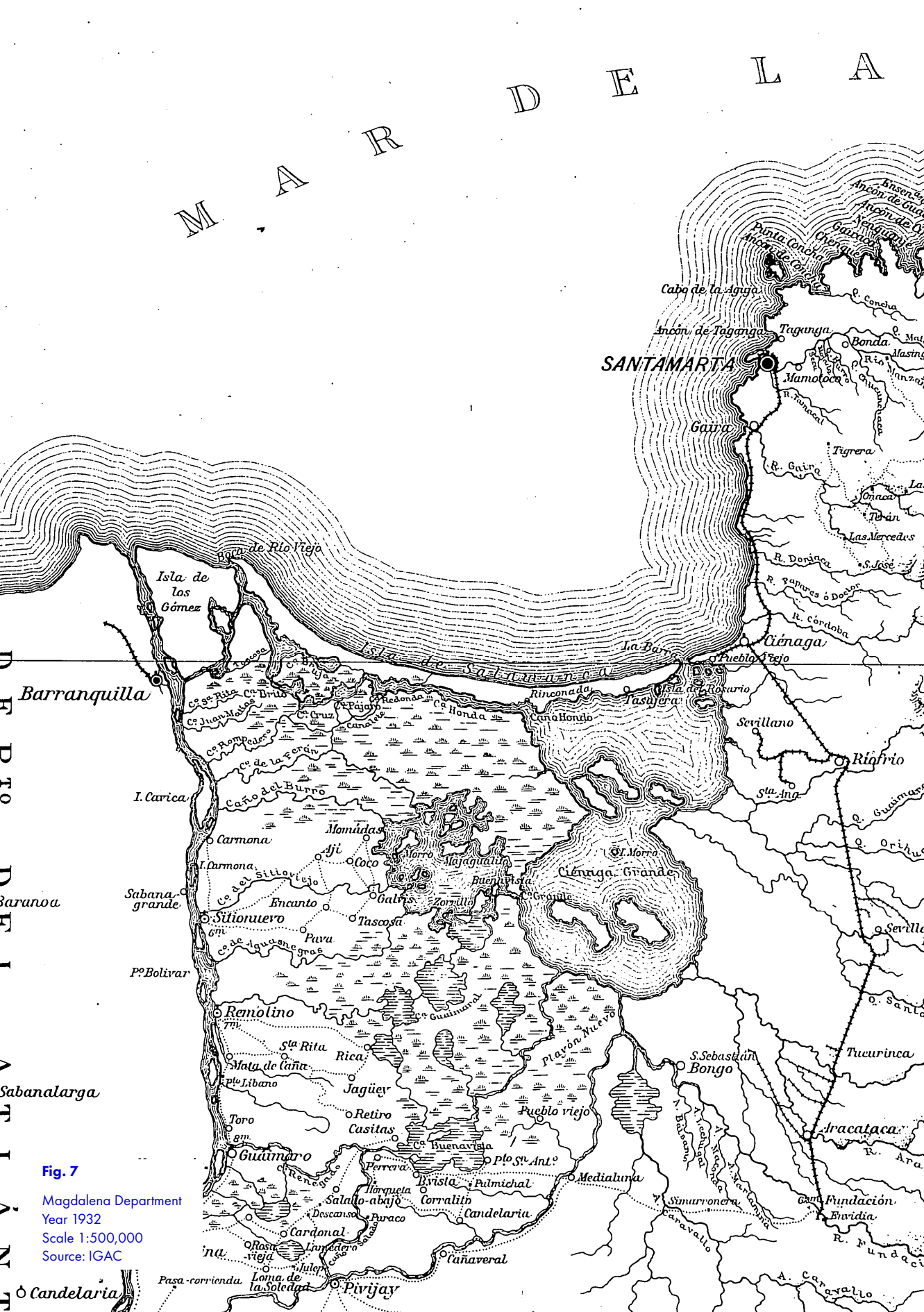
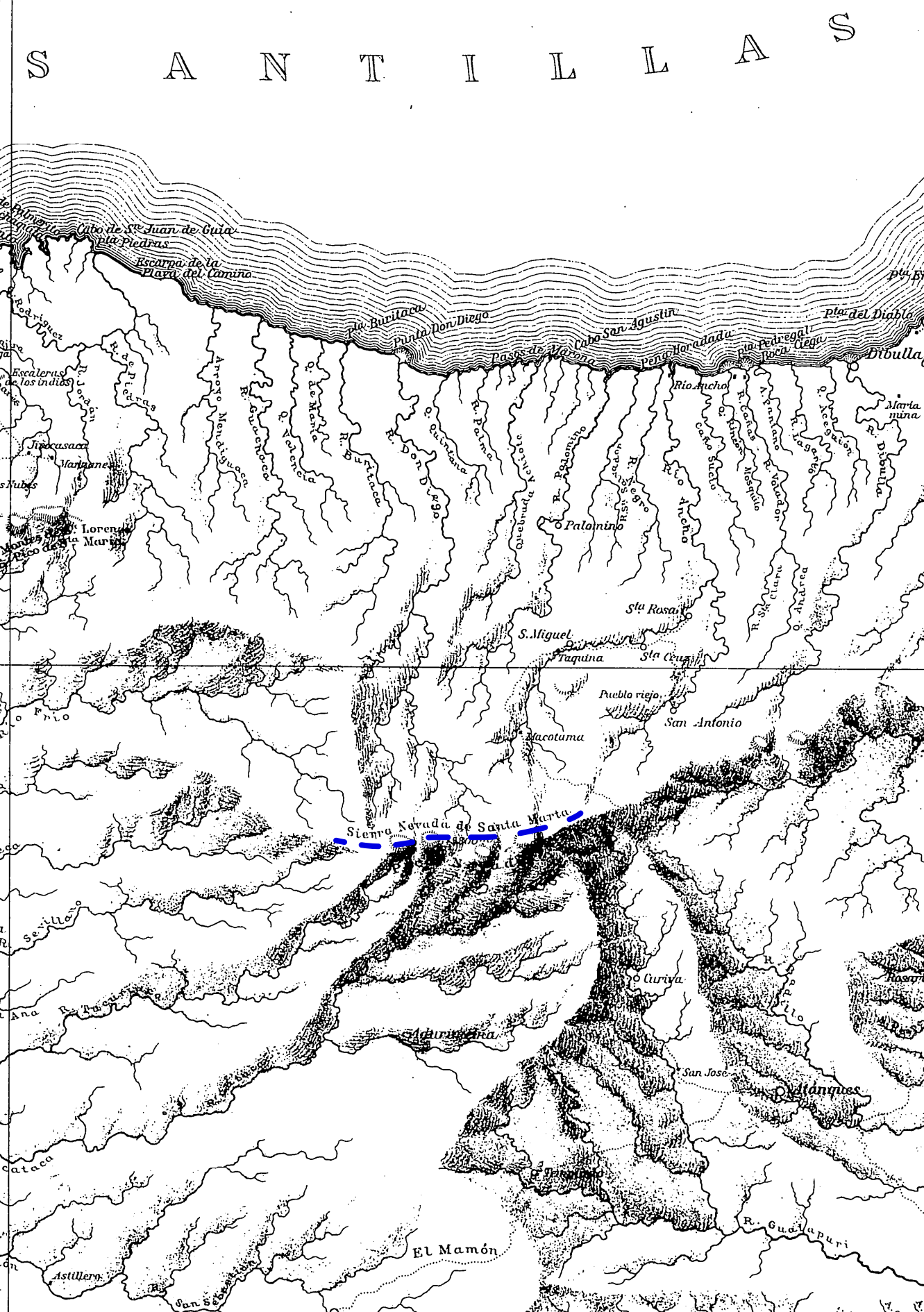
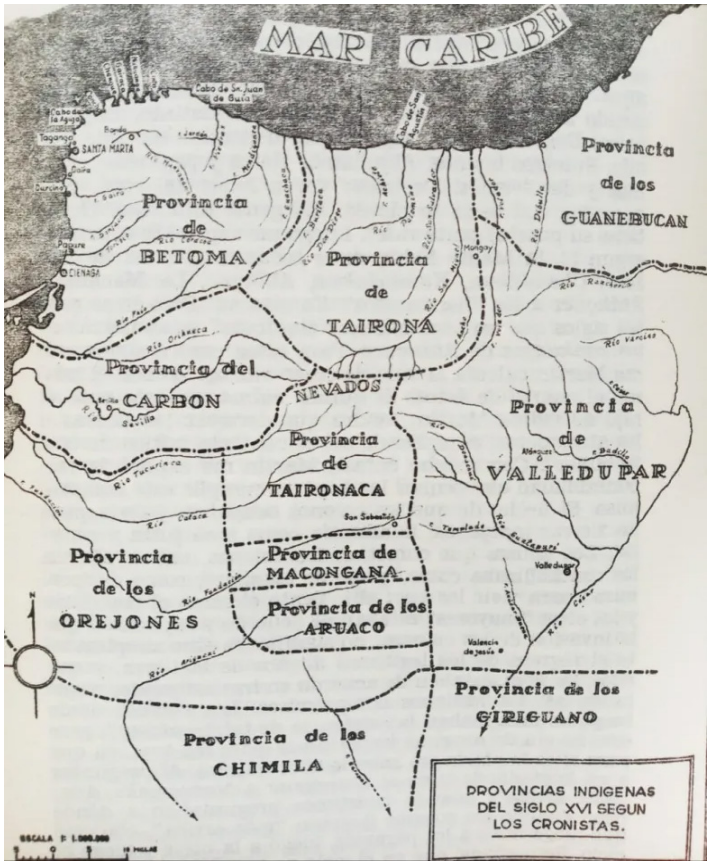


Fig. 7

Magdalena Department
Year 1932
Scale 1:500,000
Source: IGAC


S A N T I L L A S
Cabo de Sn Juan de Guia
pta Piedras
Escarpa de la Playa del Camino
Punta Don Diego
Cabo San Agustin
Pta del Diablo
Dibulla
Rio Ancho
Palomino
Sta Rosa
S. Miguel
Taquina
Sta Cruz
Pueblo viejo
San Antonio
Macotama
Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta
Curiva
San Jose
El Mamón
Astillero
R. Guadalapuri
R. Palomino
R. Don Diego
R. Palma
R. Buritaca
R. Guachaca
R. Mendiguaca
R. Piedras
R. Rodriguez
R. Tapias
R. Cañas
R. Valencia
R. Dibulla
R. Jerez
R. Sevillano
R. Tucurinca
Escaleras de los indios
Jipacasaca
Mariane
Marta mina



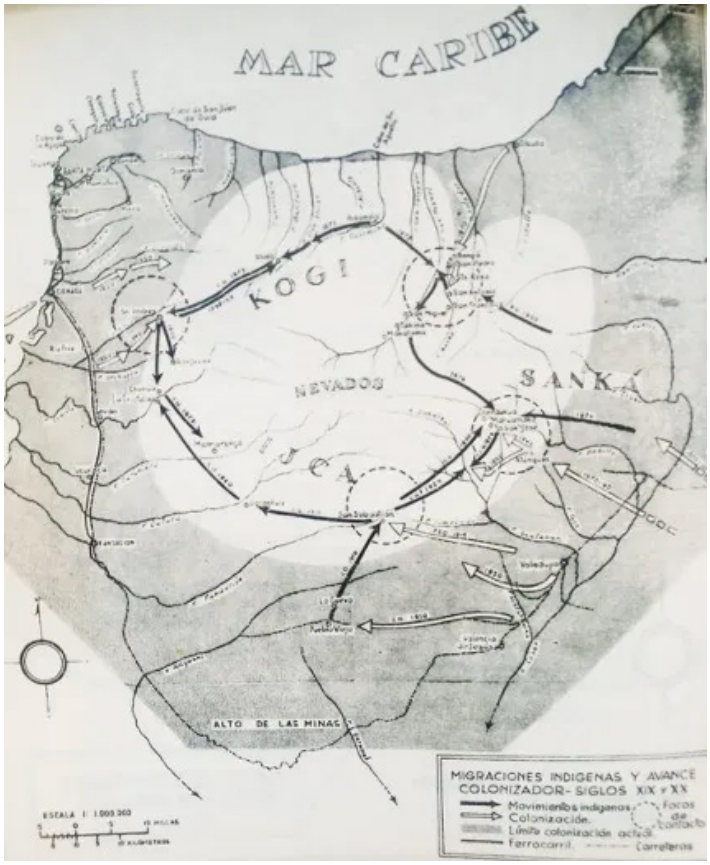


Fig. 8
Indigenous provinces in the 16th century by Reichel-Dolmatoff.
Source: Periodico La Silla Vacía, 2020

Fig. 9
Indigenous migrations and colonization advance in the 19th and 20th centuries by Reichel-Dolmatoff.
Source: Periodico La Silla Vacía, 2020

Military conquest was only one part of the colonial presence in the Sierra. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, missionaries, settlers, and colonial authorities also became increasingly present in the region. They brought new forms of religious practice, agriculture, and administration that gradually changed the way Indigenous territories were used and organized. However, establishing permanent control over the higher parts of the Sierra was difficult, so these changes did not happen in the same way everywhere. Indigenous forms of territorial organization continued to exist alongside colonial settlements and institutions.[32] The Sierra was therefore not divided into a clearly Indigenous interior and a colonial exterior. Over time, different ways of occupying and understanding the territory began to overlap in the same landscape.

These changes continued during the nineteenth century, when the new Colombian state encouraged agricultural development, private land ownership, and migration as part of its efforts to integrate the region into the national economy. New settlers and agricultural businesses moved into areas around and within the Sierra, and coffee production became increasingly important towards the end of the century. Foreign entrepreneurs and migrant families established farms around Santa Marta, Valledupar, and Villanueva, bringing new forms of production and land ownership with them. As a result, the colonization of the Sierra continued over time, changing how people settled, cultivated, moved through, and related to the mountain environment. [33]

During the twentieth century, new waves of migration continued to change the Sierra. Agricultural colonization reached areas that had previously been less occupied, while cattle ranching, commercial agriculture, illicit crops, and later armed conflict created new conflicts over land and territorial control.[34] **These changes affected Indigenous communities as well as the ecological connections across the mountain.** As the lower and middle parts of the Sierra became more occupied, Indigenous communities were increasingly concentrated in the higher areas. At the same time, their access to the different ecological zones that connect the mountains with the Caribbean coast became more limited. This created a kind of territorial compression, in which Indigenous life was pushed towards the higher parts of the Sierra while the historical connection between the mountain and the sea became increasingly fragmented.

The displacement of Indigenous communities did not erase their knowledge of the territory. Some of the practices described in sixteenth-century sources can still be connected to practices documented among Indigenous communities centuries later. Reichel-Dolmatoff, for instance, found similarities between early colonial descriptions of Indigenous religious practices and those he observed among the Kogi. He mentions ritual fasting, divination, beliefs related to the flood, and periods of isolation during the training of religious specialists. He also pointed to a possible connection between ***aluno***, a term used by colonial chroniclers for Indigenous ritual specialists, and the Kogi concept of ***Aluna*** generally understood in relation to thought and spiritual consciousness.[35]

These connections do not mean that the same cultural system remained intact for five centuries. The Kogi have also experienced profound changes and disruptions. What they suggest is that some ways of understanding the territory and the relationship between humans, spirituality, and the living world have continued through these changes.

32 - *Viloria De La Hoz, Joaquín. En busca de nuevas tierras y vecinos: Proceso de colonización en la Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Serranía de Perijá y Zona Bananera del Magdalena (siglos XVII–XIX). Cuadernos de Historia Económica, no. 49. Banco de la República, 2018. DOI: 10.32468/chee.*

33 - *Viloria De La Hoz, Joaquín. "El café en la Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta: aspectos históricos." Historia Caribe 2, no. 3 (1998): 9–38.*

34 - *Banco de la República. Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta: Economía de sus recursos naturales.*

35 - *Reichel-Dolmatoff, Gerardo. Los Kogui: una tribu de la Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Colombia. Bogotá: Procultura, 1985.*







Among the Indigenous peoples of the Sierra, the Kogi have maintained a strong connection with the upper watersheds of the northern and western parts of the mountain. Many of their territorial and cosmological practices also have roots that go back to before the Spanish conquest. The name Kogi comes from the Spanish rendering of ***Kággaba***, which Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff translated roughly as "people" or "person." The term refers to the way the community names itself and understands itself as fully human, a practice that can also be found in other Indigenous societies.[36] The Kogi also describe themselves as the Elder Brothers (Hermanos Mayores) and refer to non-Indigenous society as the Younger Brother (Hermano Menor). This distinction is connected to different responsibilities toward the territory and the world, rather than to a simple idea of ethnic superiority.

This distinction points to an important idea in Kogi thought: Indigenous communities have responsibilities and forms of knowledge that are connected to maintaining the balance of the world. Non-Indigenous society, in contrast, is often described as having become more distant from these relationships of reciprocity. Reichel-Dolmatoff's work also shows how connected the different parts of Kogi thought are. What might appear from outside as an isolated society in the mountains is part of a broader system in which the Sierra Nevada is understood as the "Heart of the World". In this context, the **Sierra connects ecological processes, social relationships, and the order of the wider world**.

From this perspective, the Sierra Nevada operates as an integrated territorial system extending beyond its physical boundaries. Its hydrological networks, ecological zones, and sacred sites are understood as interconnected components of a single relational structure that links mountain, coast, and sea. Contemporary Indigenous governance practices in the region—including restrictions on resource extraction, the protection of key ecological zones, and the regulation of external interventions—are grounded in this systemic understanding of territorial interdependence, in which environmental disruption is not only material but also relational, affecting the continuity of life-supporting connections across the landscape.

36 - *Reichel-Dolmatoff, G. (1990). The Sacred Mountain of Colombia's Kogi Indians. E. J. Brill.*

Fig. 10

Aerial photograph of Teyuna
Source: ExpoTour Colombia (2026).

Fig. 11

Old Town Settlement (Kogi community).
Source: Defensoría del Pueblo, periodico El Tiempo (2021).

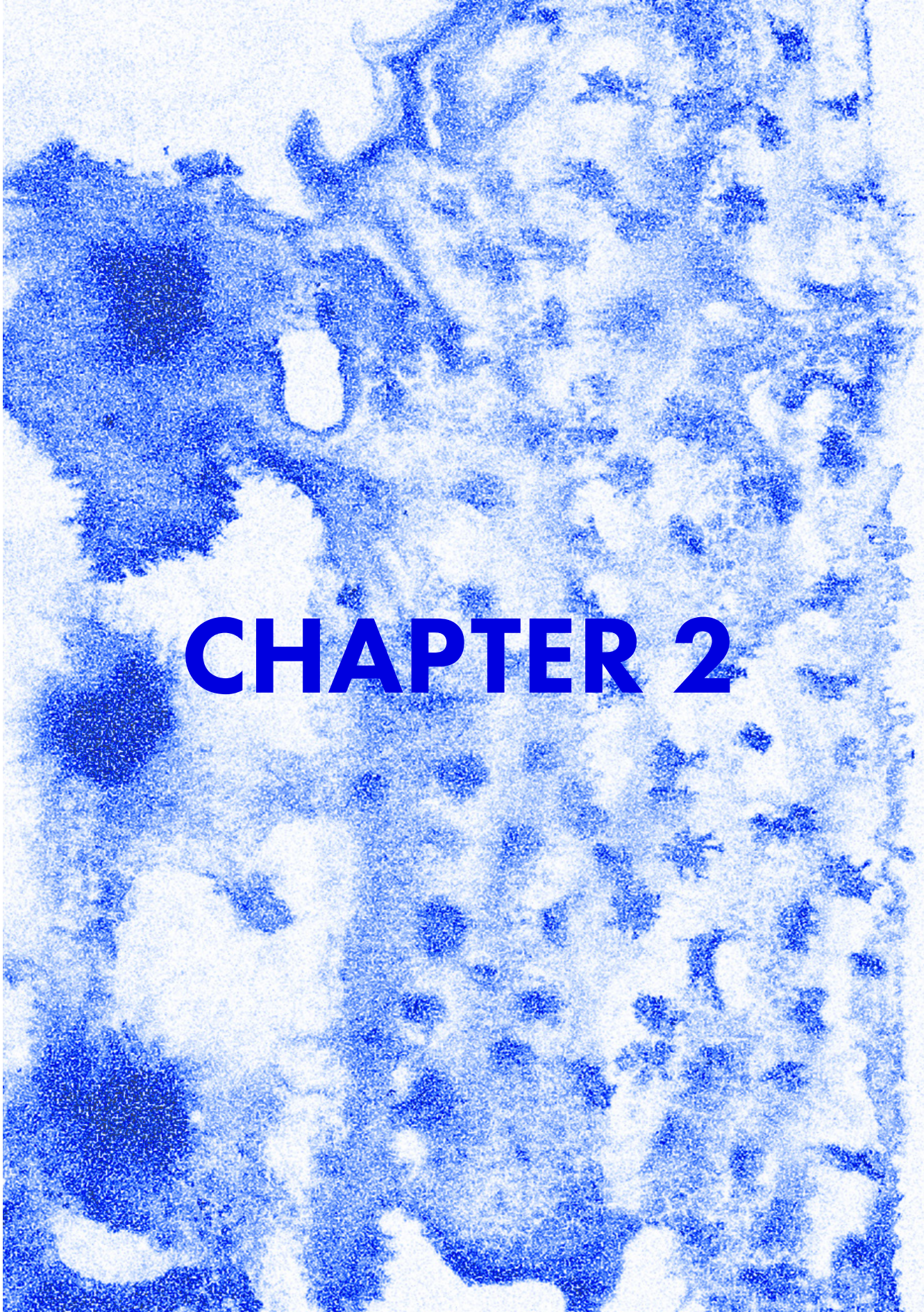
Fig. 12

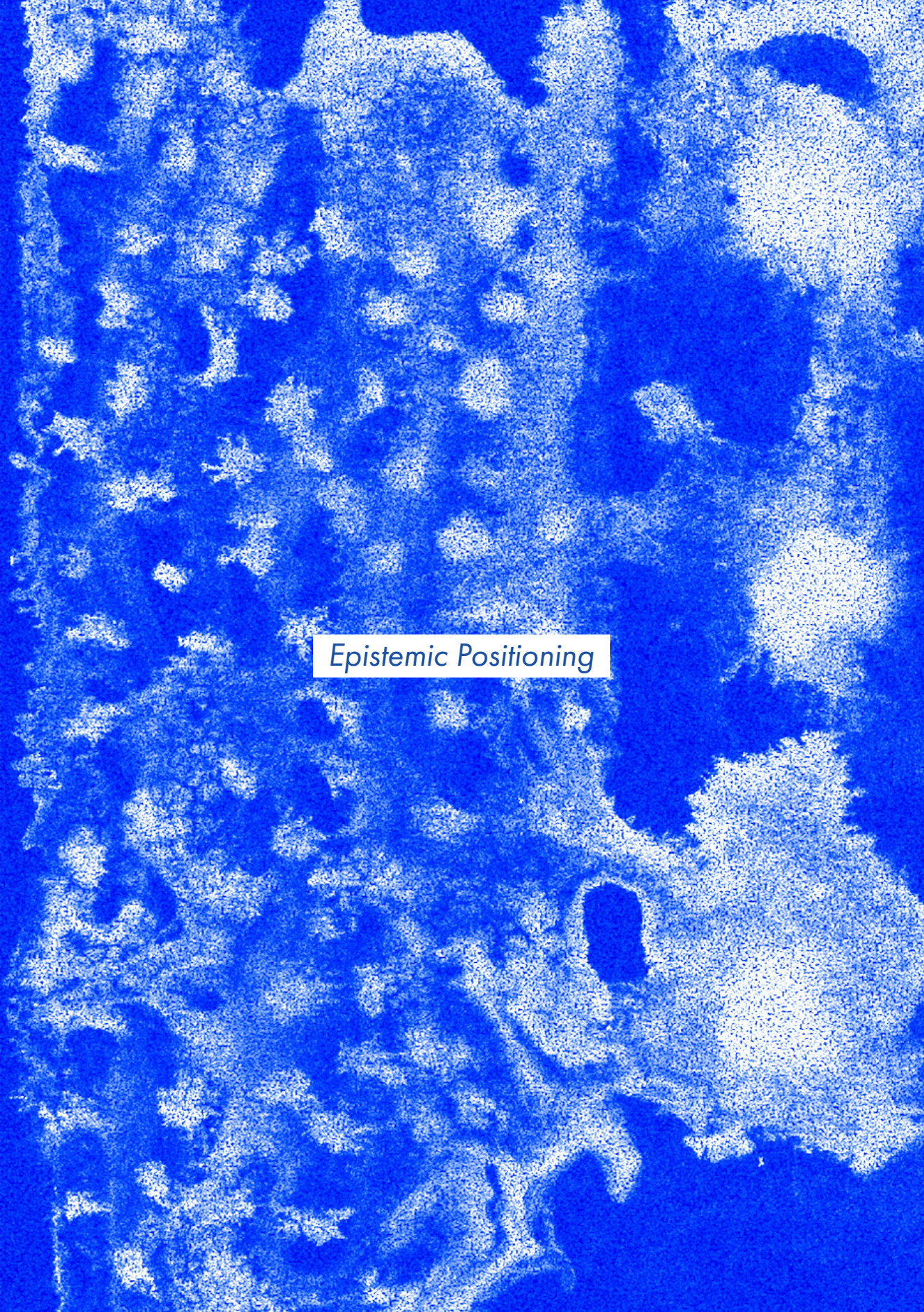
Photograph of Teyuna
Source: César Martínez, for ExpoTour.

Fig. 13

Indígenas Koguis.
Source: Fotografía de Milcíades Chaves, (1946)




CHAPTER 2


Epistemic Positioning

2.1 The Cartesian Territory:
From Universal Standpoint to Colonial Location

The way territory is understood in the West has been shaped by ideas that developed over several centuries. One of them comes from the philosophy of René Descartes and his distinction between ***res cogitans*** and ***res extensa***, or thinking substance and extended substance. This distinction placed the thinking subject apart from the material world. The world could then be observed from the outside and described through measurable and geometric properties. Land became part of this material world: something that could be measured, divided, represented, and controlled.[37] Knowledge was therefore closely tied to what could be quantified and described through clear geometric forms. Things that could not be measured or represented in this way were more easily placed outside what was considered legitimate knowledge.

Territory was increasingly understood in terms of measurable features and fixed locations. The relationships people had with a place, including affective, social, and spiritual ones, became less visible within this way of representing space. What remained was a surface that could be divided into points and lines, measured, mapped, recorded, and assigned to different forms of ownership or control. But this loss was not simply a philosophical abstraction; **it was the epistemological expression of a deeply gendered and hierarchical structure of power**. The emergence of Cartesian rationalism coincided with—and was inseparable from—the consolidation of European colonial expansion and a specific model of political authority organized around control, conquest, and the administration of resources. Within this model, what mattered was the capacity to dominate outcomes: in war, in territorial invasion, in the extraction of riches from distant lands. Knowledge that served for geometric, quantitative and instrumental ends was elevated as rigorous and universal. Knowledge that did not such as relational, affective, embodied, ecological, was systematically devalued as soft, subjective, or pre-scientific.

Silvia Federici, in her analysis of the transition from feudal to early modern Europe, shows how this change in the way of producing knowledge was closely connected to the suppression of forms of knowledge associated with women, the body, and the organization of community life. The great witch trials of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were not only episodes of religious persecution, but also involved the suppression of an entire tradition of knowledge. This knowledge was based on a close understanding of plants, the body, ecological cycles, and relationships within the community. These forms of knowledge were increasingly placed against a new system based on rationality, measurement, and the control of knowledge by individuals. Federici describes this process as a **"patriarchal reorganization of space and knowledge"**, which helped establish the figure of the neutral, rational, and disembodied knower: the subject that would later become central to modern science. In this process, the relational and affective dimensions of knowledge were progressively excluded from what was considered legitimate intellectual practice.[38]

Val Plumwood, approaching the same problem from ecofeminist philosophy, describes this operation as the construction of a series of interconnected dualisms (reason/nature, mind/body, culture/emotion, male/female, human/non-human) in which the first term of each pair is considered the source of valid knowledge, while the second is treated as a passive object.[39] Within this dualistic framework, territory is placed on the side of the object: nature, body, and passivity, the surface on which the rational subject of Western modernity imposes its projects. Its relational, affective, and spiritual dimensions are therefore overlooked, as land is understood primarily as a resource rather than as a participant in life, memory, and relations of care.

37 - *Descartes, R. (1641). Meditations on first philosophy (J. Cottingham, Trans., 1996). Cambridge University Press.*

38 - *Federici, S. (2004). Caliban and the witch: Women, the body and primitive accumulation. Autonomedia. pp. 142–198*

39 - *Plumwood, V. (1993). Feminism and the mastery of nature. Routledge. pp. 41–68.*

The consequence of this architecture was a conception of territory grounded in four interdependent assumptions: that **space is homogeneous**, the same in every direction and for every observer; that **it can be measured and reduced to quantitative relationships** expressed through a universal system of coordinates; that **it can be represented through two-dimensional** projections that accurately preserve its geometric properties; and that **it can be separated from the communities that inhabit it**, as if its meaning existed independently from the relationships through which people come to know, experience, and sustain it. Together, these assumptions constitute what might be called the Cartesian territorial imaginary: the deep epistemological grammar through which modern states, spatial disciplines, and heritage institutions have learned to see, govern, and manage land.

During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, new techniques such as perspective drawing, cartographic projection, and cadastral surveying changed the way land could be represented. Maps were no longer used only to locate places. **They also became useful for defining land, setting limits, and supporting claims over it**. A territory could be drawn as a collection of lines, points, and measured areas, even when the people making the map had never been there themselves. John Brian Harley pointed out that **maps always reflect the people and institutions behind them**. What appears on a map depends on what they consider important enough to record, while other things may be left out. This was especially significant in colonial contexts, where Indigenous relationships to land and their own ways of describing territory were often not included in the maps being produced.[40]

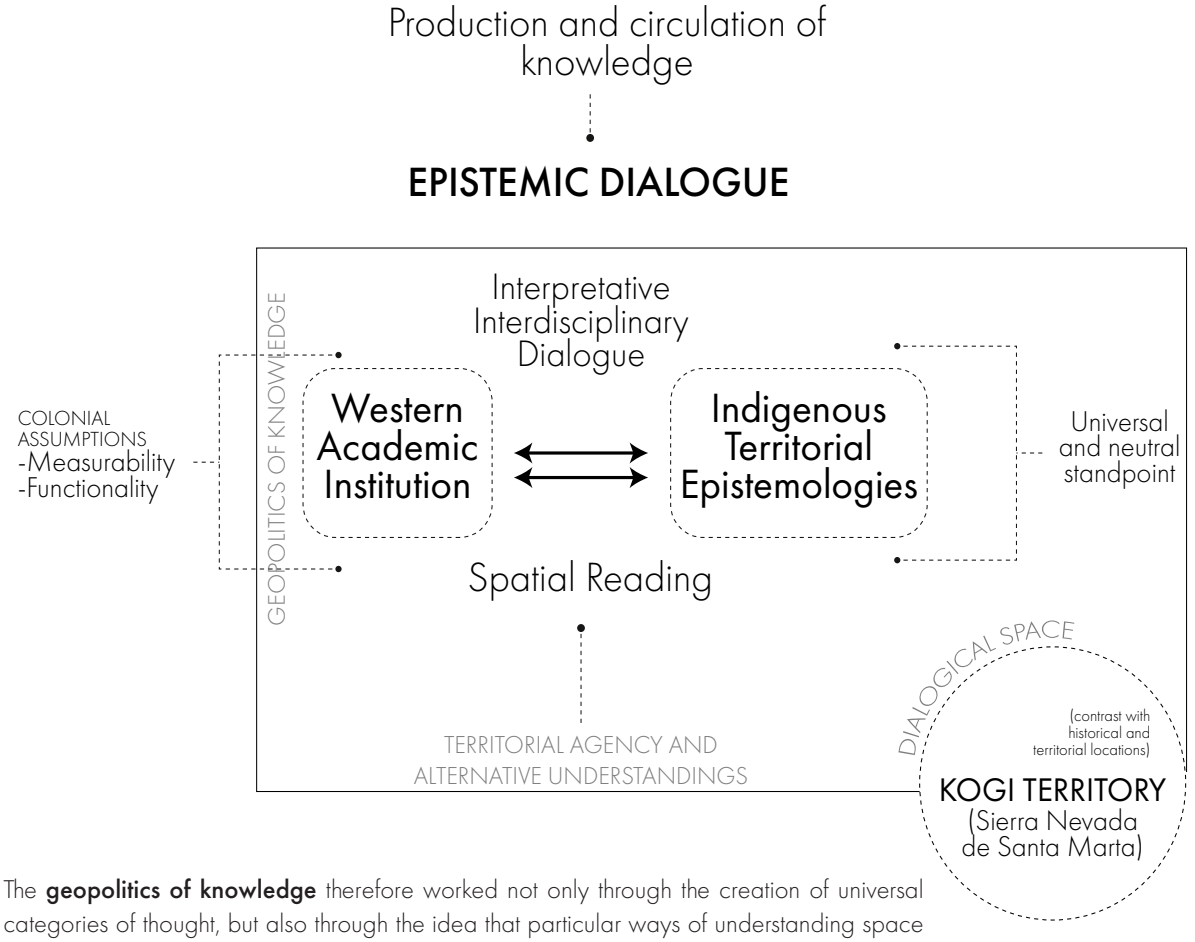
The Cartesian territorial imaginary did not remain limited to European philosophy and cartographic practices. It spread—violently and systematically—through colonial expansion, revealing something that its own logic tried to hide: it was never truly universal. It was always a form of knowledge produced from a particular place, within a particular historical context, and in relation to particular interests. It is precisely in response to this historical claim of universality that decolonial thought emerged as a critical field. Rather than proposing a new universal system to replace the Western one, decolonial thinkers seek to make visible the historical, geographical, and political conditions that allowed one particular way of knowing to become dominant. In this sense, the decolonial canon is concerned not only with what knowledge says, but with where knowledge comes from, who produces it, and which forms of knowledge have been excluded in the process. This perspective is particularly relevant to the study of territorial representation, since maps, drawings, and spatial systems are not separated from the positions and power structures from which they are produced.

Walter Mignolo's concept of the geopolitics of knowledge helps explain how this Cartesian way of understanding territory came to be presented as universal. Mignolo argues that **all knowledge comes from a specific historical and territorial position, what he calls a locus of enunciation**. The idea that knowledge can be universal is itself historically situated. It became possible because colonial power created the conditions for one particular regional tradition to become the standard against which other forms of knowledge were measured. Mignolo calls this the **zero-point epistemology**: the idea of a viewpoint that appears to stand outside history, geography, and personal interests, a God's-eye view of the world that, in reality, always comes from somewhere, but is presented as if it could speak for everyone.[41]

Within this framework, Cartesian thought played an important role in shaping the idea of space as something abstract, homogeneous, and measurable, understood through geometry and detached observation. As this way of thinking became connected to colonial expansion, it provided not only a way to represent the world, but also a way to organize, classify, and control it.

40 - *Harley, J. B. (1989). Deconstructing the map. Cartographica, 26(2). pp. 1–20.*

41 - *Mignolo, W. D. (2000). Local histories/ global designs: Coloniality, subaltern knowledges, and border thinking. Princeton University Press. pp. 3–48.*



The **geopolitics of knowledge** therefore worked not only through the creation of universal categories of thought, but also through the idea that particular ways of understanding space could be presented as universal. What appeared to be a neutral description of reality was, in fact, the projection of a specific historical way of understanding the world, one that separated subject from object, culture from nature, and knowledge from territory.

This critique also opens a broader question concerning the position of the researcher and the conditions under which knowledge is produced. While Mignolo approaches this problem through the colonial difference and the geopolitics of knowledge, Rosi Braidotti develops a complementary perspective through her work on situated thought. Her approach emphasizes that knowledge is always produced from a particular position, shaped by the experiences, institutions, bodies, and relationships involved in the process. Recognizing this position does not make research less rigorous; rather, it makes the conditions of knowledge production more visible. [42]

Together, these perspectives provide an important methodological basis for this research. They shift the question from simply asking how territory has been represented to asking from where, by whom, and through which epistemological system it has been represented. This distinction becomes particularly important when examining the encounter between European representational systems and the territories of the Americas. From this perspective, what happened when the Cartesian territorial imaginary encountered the Americas through colonial conquest becomes clearer. What was presented as universal language of space—geometry, cartography, and the grid—was actually **the imposition of a specific way of understanding territory onto lands that were already known, organized, and sustained through very different systems of knowledge**. The colonial map did not simply discover an unmapped territory; it imposed a new system of legibility over existing territorial understandings, transforming land into something that could be measured, classified, administered, and controlled.

42 - *Braidotti, R. (2019). Posthuman knowledge. Polity.*

Fig.14
Conceptual diagram. Epistemic Positioning

2.2 Naming as Conquest: Colonial Suppression in Latin America

One of the clearest examples of the colonial character of the Cartesian territorial imaginary can be found in its naming practices. **Colonial names were not simply descriptive; they also functioned as mechanisms of power, shaping how territories were understood by replacing the names, categories, and spatial systems already used by the people who lived there**.

The term "Middle East" is a clear example of this process. The name does not describe the region from a neutral geographical position; instead, it defines it in relation to Europe and, more specifically, to the political and imperial position of Britain. During the expansion of the British Empire, the region became strategically important because of its position between Europe, Asia, and the routes connecting Britain to India. Calling it the "Middle East" therefore placed the region within a European system of reference: it was "middle" because it was understood from the position of a European imperial centre. From Cairo, Baghdad, or Tehran, however, there is nothing inherently "middle" about the region. The term only makes sense from a particular European viewpoint that places itself at the centre of the geographical system. Naming the territory in this way helped establish a particular way of seeing, organizing, and governing it. Its continued use after decolonization shows how these mechanisms of power can remain embedded in geographical language even after political colonialism has formally ended.[43]

The same logic operates with even greater structural violence in the naming of "Latin America" itself. The term was designated in the mid-nineteenth century, partly in the context of French imperial interests and competition with Anglo-Saxon influence. It grouped an enormous diversity of Indigenous, African, and mestizo territories and cultures under a single name, defining them mainly through their relationship to European languages and histories. In this sense, the name did not simply describe an existing region; it also created a geographical and political category through which its diversity could be understood from an external perspective.[44]

Leopoldo Zea described the epistemological dimension of this process in 1953 by arguing that the **Americas were not simply "discovered" but "covered"**: their existing histories and forms of knowledge were placed under a European narrative of progress and superiority. Octavio Paz developed a similar idea by describing America, within the colonial imagination, as "geography, pure space, open to human action"— a land without historical substance, without established institutions or social memory, where reality presented no obstacles other than natural ones. And wherever a historical obstacle appeared—an Indigenous society, a complex territorial system, a living cosmological order—it was "erased from history, reduced to a mere natural fact, and dispensed with accordingly".[45]

What is particularly significant is that this logic did not disappear with colonial administration. Fernando Luiz Lara shows how the idea of Latin America as a land with a "very short memory" continued to shape intellectual and disciplinary understandings of the continent. The problem was not that memory was absent, but that **colonial power had displaced and weakened the forms of memory through which Indigenous and Afro-diasporic communities maintained their relationships with territory**. This "short memory" was therefore not a natural condition. It was produced through a long process of epistemological violence and was later reproduced within the academic and architectural frameworks used to study, organize, and represent the built environment of the Americas.[46]

43 - Gregory, D. (2004). The colonial present: Afghanistan, Palestine, Iraq. Blackwell. pp. 16–25

44 - Zea, L. (1953). América como conciencia. Cuadernos Americanos. pp. 12–31.

45 - Paz, O. (1950). El laberinto de la soledad. Fondo de Cultura Económica. Press. p. 178.

46 - Lara, F. L. (2008). Spatial theories for the Americas. University of Pittsburgh Press. pp. 1–22.

WAVES OF EPISTEMOLOGICA

DURATION - HORIZONTAL LENGTH

PRESSURE INDEX
LOW

1500 1600 1700 1800

1. TERRITORIAL RESTRUCTURING

CONQUEST + COLONIAL GRID

1530 - 1800 → Territory standardized, Spatial hierarchy imposed, Cosmological order displaced

DECREASE + FORCED RELOCATION

1550 - 1750 → Sacred geographies fragmented, Intergenerational transmission interrupted

PRIVA

1800 -

2. EPISTEMIC / COSMOLOGICAL VIOLENCE

EVANGELIZATION

1520 - 1900 → Ritual suppression, Destruction of cosmological legitimacy

DESTRUCTION OF SACRED SITES

1550 - TODAY → Collapse of spatial memory, Fragmentation of ceremonial continuity

3. SIERRA NEVADA — CASE STUDY

MISSIONARY PENETRATION

1550 - 1700

AGRA

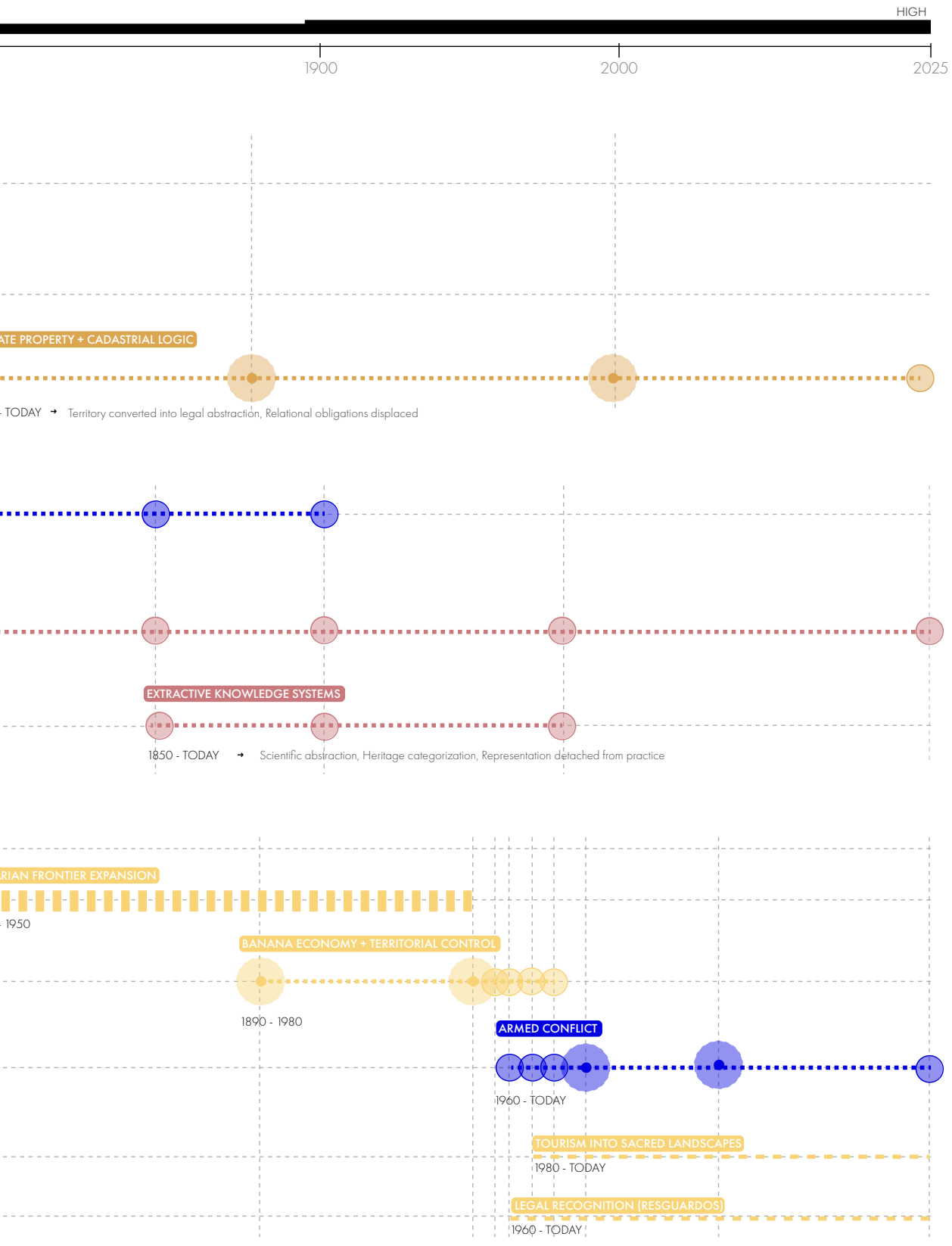
1800 -

DEGREE OF EPISTEMIC DISPLACEMENT

- REGIONAL DISRUPTION
- TERRITORIAL DISRUPTION
- LOCAL DISRUPTION

L VIOLENCE IN LATIN AMERICA

THICKNESS - DEGREE OF DISPLACEMENT



The effects of colonialism were not limited to physical violence. They also changed the ways in which territory and space were understood. One example was the introduction of the colonial grid, or traza, described in the Laws of the Indies. The grid was more than a way of organizing colonial cities. It introduced a different idea of how settlements should relate to land, based on regular streets, clear divisions, and a central order. This approach often ignored the ways Indigenous communities had organized their settlements in relation to topography, cosmology, and the specific conditions of their territories.[47]

Evangelization changed Indigenous life in other ways as well. Missionaries did not only try to introduce Christianity. They also challenged the beliefs and practices through which Indigenous communities understood their territory, cared for their surroundings, organized community life, and passed knowledge from one generation to another. **Sacred places were destroyed or restricted, ceremonies were prohibited, and communities were often moved into reducciones, where colonial authorities could more easily control their lives**. These changes affected much more than religious practice. They also disrupted the relationships between communities, their land, their ancestors, and the other forms of life with which they shared the territory. *(Figure 15)*

Colombia provides a clear example of this process. The Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta was never completely incorporated into the colonial administrative system, but Indigenous communities in the region continued to face outside pressure over the centuries. Missionaries entered the Sierra from the sixteenth century onward, followed later by agricultural and commercial expansion. During the twentieth century, the region was also affected by the expansion of banana production and by armed conflict. More recently, tourism has brought new pressures to areas that remain important to Indigenous communities.

The creation of Indigenous resguardos has provided legal protection for parts of this territory, but it has also meant defining Indigenous land through the legal categories of the Colombian state. This creates a tension: the law recognizes Indigenous territories and certain collective rights, while the way territory is understood within Kogi thought does not necessarily fit those same categories.[48] Legal recognition has therefore been important, but it does not fully reflect the knowledge and relationships through which the territory is understood by the communities themselves. It is necessary to understand more precisely what that expansion displaced—not merely as a cultural tradition, but as an epistemologically coherent and deeply sophisticated way of knowing territory. **The risk of decolonial critique, if it remains at the level of political denunciation, is that it names the violence of displacement without adequately reconstructing what was erased.** To understand what was lost—and what, in places like the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, has been partially preserved against enormous pressure—it is necessary to engage with the internal logic of Indigenous territorial epistemologies on their own terms.

Indigenous ways of understanding territory across the Americas are very different from one another, but many place less emphasis on the separation between the observer and the world being observed. This is particularly clear in Kogi thought. The territory is not understood simply as something outside human life that can be observed and measured. Knowing the territory therefore involves more than collecting information about it. I**t also means learning from what happens within it and responding to it**. For the Kogi, this includes paying attention to signs, maintaining relationships with sacred places, and carrying out the practices and responsibilities that keep the territory in balance. Knowledge is thus connected to the way people live with the territory rather than being produced from a distance.

Fig.15
Timeline of Waves of Epistemological Violence
Daniela González, 2026

47 - *Mundigo, A., & Crouch, D. (1977). The city planning ordinances of the Laws of the Indies revisited. Town Planning Review, pp. 48(3), 247–268.*

48 - *Collectively owned and state-recognized Indigenous territories in Colombia, where land tenure is communal and governance is exercised according to Indigenous customary law.*

This epistemological orientation has a name in the Kogi framework: ***Aluna***. Often translated as thought, memory, or spiritual dimension, aluna designates something more fundamental than any of these English equivalents suggest. It is the capacity for meaning that is intrinsic to the world itself—not a human projection onto a meaningless material base, but the living intelligence of reality as such. **Everything that exists participates in aluna**: the mountain thinks, the river remembers, the stone carries ancestral intention, the arrangement of the stars encodes knowledge about the conditions of life on earth. The *Mamas*—the spiritual authorities who are trained from childhood in the interpretation of aluna—are not priests who mediate between a human community and a supernatural land; they are specialists in reading a world that is already full of meaning, and in translating that meaning into the practical guidance that the community needs to maintain its relationships with the living territory.[49]

This framework generates a fundamentally different understanding of what knowledge is and what it is for. Western scientific knowledge is, in its Cartesian form, extractive: it takes information from its context, abstracts it into general principles, and applies those principles in new contexts independently of the relational networks from which the original information was drawn. **Indigenous territorial knowledge develops through a long relationship with a particular place**. It is built over generations through observation, ceremony, daily practices, and forms of care, but also through the responsibilities that people have toward their territory. Knowing a place therefore means more than being able to describe or represent its physical characteristics. It involves knowing its changes and rhythms, understanding what is needed to care for it, and maintaining the relationships that allow the territory to remain alive.

This way of understanding knowledge also changes the relationship between knowledge and the person who holds it. Knowledge cannot always be separated from the people, places, and practices through which it has been learned. This can be seen in the Kogi idea of ***zaku***, which is often understood in relation to aluna and to practices that involve the body, ritual, and the care of the land. Knowledge is not only something that can be explained with words. It is also present in the act of planting, in walking to a sacred place, and in carrying out the ceremonies connected to the Línea Negra. **This is knowledge that cannot be extracted from its context of practice and inscribed in a map or a heritage inventory without being fundamentally transformed**—without losing precisely the relational and performative dimensions that constitute its significance.[50]

Time is also understood differently within Kogi territorial thought. It is not simply a sequence in which the past is left behind and the future comes next. Events, ancestors, and places from the past can remain part of the present and continue to have meaning for the people who live in the territory. Sacred sites in the Sierra are therefore not only places that preserve memories of what happened before. They are still part of contemporary life and require care and ceremonies to maintain the relationships connected to them. This also changes the way Teyuna can be understood. It is not simply a ruin belonging to a finished historical period. The relationships and practices connected to the site continue to matter in the present, which means that its significance cannot be explained only through what happened there in the past. The site remains connected to the wider territorial system in which these relationships continue to be maintained.

49 - *Reichel-Dolmatoff, G. (1990). The sacred mountain of Colombia's Kogi Indians. E.J. Brill. pp. 23–47)*

50 - *Zalabata Torres, L. (2019). Sabiduría ancestral y territorio: La voz de los Mamas. ICANH.pp. 89–112.*

This understanding of time and memory is not unique to the Kogi. The Andean concept of Pacha—often translated as both space and time, emphasizing their inseparability in Quechua cosmology—designates the world as a living, rhythmically organized totality in which spatial and temporal relationships are aspects of a single fabric of meaning. The Aymara metaphor of walking backward into the future—the past is what one can see ahead, because it is known; the future is what is behind, because it is not yet visible—encodes a relationship to temporal experience that is not merely a cultural curiosity but an epistemologically distinct orientation toward the relationship between knowledge, memory, and action.[51]

What all of these frameworks share is a conception of territory as a living, intelligent, temporally layered relational network—**not a surface to be measured but a conversation to be participated in, not a resource to be managed but a relationship to be tended**. This is not a less sophisticated version of the Cartesian territorial imaginary; it is a different epistemological framework with its own internal coherence, its own methods of knowledge production and transmission, and its own criteria of validity. It is a framework that has, moreover, demonstrated its practical adaptation across millennia of sustained habitation in some of the most ecologically complex environments on earth—an adaptation that the Cartesian territorial imaginary, with its extractive logic and its indifference to the relational dimensions of territory, is now demonstrably failing to achieve.

2.3 The Decolonial Turn:
Returning to Living Knowledges

The decolonial project that has emerged across Latin American critical thought over the past several decades represents more than a political demand for Indigenous rights. It represents an epistemological insistence: that the knowledge systems suppressed by five centuries of colonial and postcolonial power are not inferior versions of European science but coherent, sophisticated, and often more adequate frameworks for the most pressing questions of the present.

Aníbal Quijano's concept of the coloniality of power provides the structural framework. Colonialism did not end with formal political independence; it survived within the institutional forms of the nation-state and global capitalism, continuing to organize the hierarchies of race, knowledge, and labor that conquest had installed. The coloniality of knowledge—the persistence of Eurocentric epistemological frameworks as the default standard of legitimate knowledge—means that to decolonize knowledge is not a retrospective gesture but **an ongoing critical practice directed at the present conditions of knowledge production**. [52]

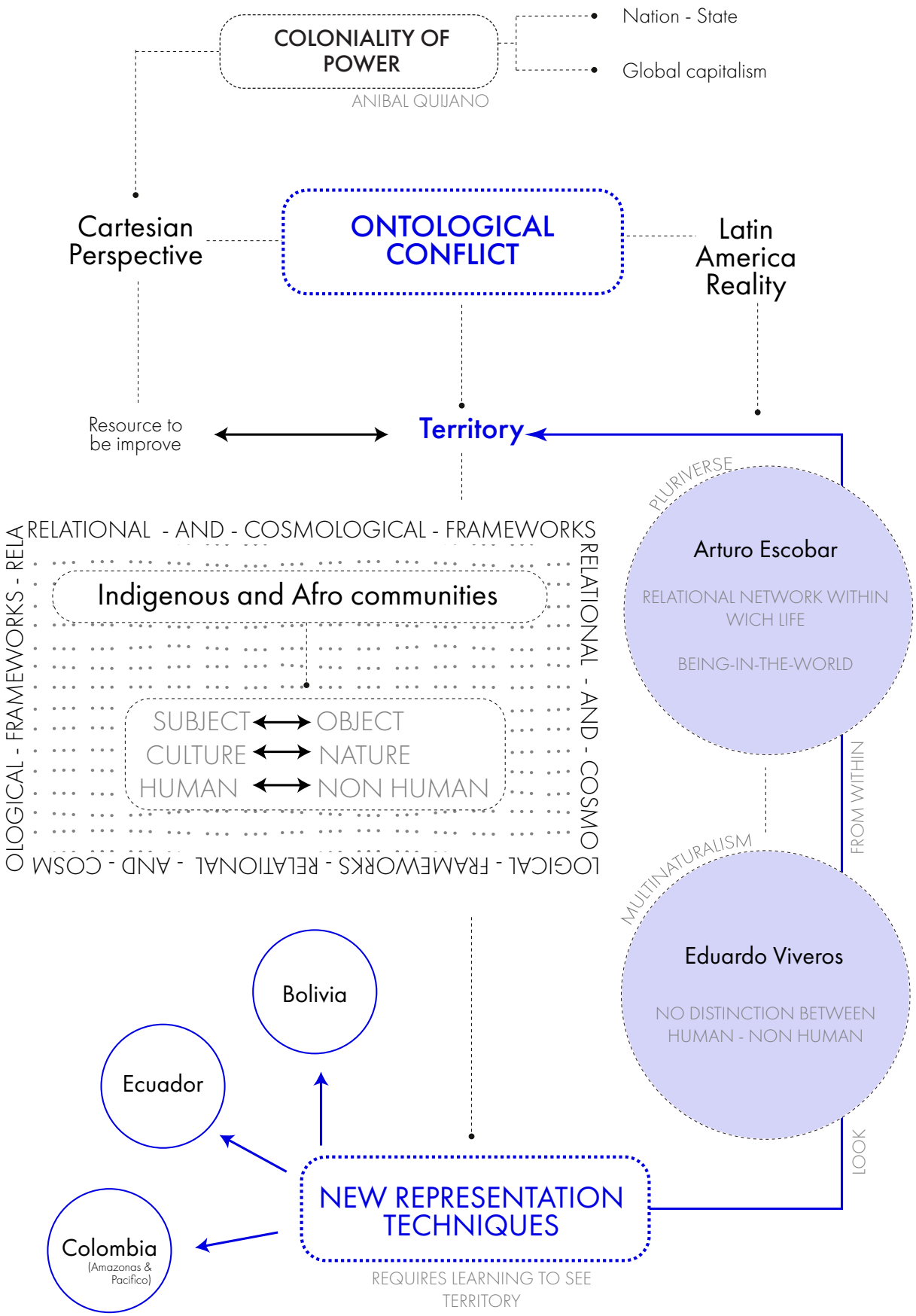
Arturo Escobar's concept of territorial ontologies is particularly significant for spatial disciplines. The struggle over territory in Latin America is not merely a political conflict over land rights; it is an ontological conflict over the nature of territory itself. For communities like the Kogi, the Nasa, the Zapatistas, or the communities of the Colombian Pacific, territory is a relational network within which life—human and non-human, material and spiritual—is continuously constituted. These are what Escobar calls **relational worlds**: ontological frameworks in which the boundaries between human communities, their territory, and the more-than-human world are continuously negotiated through practices of reciprocity, ceremony, and ecological care.[53] But the decolonial argument is not only about recovering suppressed knowledge systems in the abstract. It also points to something more immediate and experiential: that the way one inhabits and lives territory is itself shaped by epistemological frameworks, and that the difference between a **European and a Latin American territorial sensibility is not simply a matter of cultural preference but of structurally different modes of being-in-the-world**.

51 - *Estermann, J. (1998). Filosofía andina: Estudio intercultural de la sabiduría autóctona andina. Abya-Yala., pp. 185–210*

52 - *Quijano, A. (2000). Coloniality of power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America. Nepantla: Views from South, 1(3), pp. 533–580.*

53 - *Escobar, A. (2008). Territories of difference: Place, movements, life, redes. Duke University Press. pp. 23–67.*

Fig.16
Conceptual diagram. Ontological Conflict
Daniela González, 2026


COLONIALITY OF POWER
ANIBAL QUIJANO
Nation - State
Global capitalism
Cartesian Perspective
ONTOLOGICAL CONFLICT
Latin America Reality
Resource to be improve
Territory
RELATIONAL - AND - COSMOLOGICAL - FRAMEWORKS
Indigenous and Afro communities
SUBJECT ⟷ OBJECT
CULTURE ⟷ NATURE
HUMAN ⟷ NON HUMAN
PLURIVERSE
Arturo Escobar
RELATIONAL NETWORK WITHIN WICH LIFE
BEING-IN-THE-WORLD
FROM WITHIN
MULTINATURALISM
Eduardo Viveros
NO DISTINCTION BETWEEN HUMAN - NON HUMAN
LOOK
Bolivia
Ecuador
Colombia
(Amazonas & Pacifico)
NEW REPRESENTATION TECHNIQUES
REQUIRES LEARNING TO SEE TERRITORY

The way territory has been understood in Europe has been shaped by ideas about property, enclosure, development, and the control of nature. These ideas have influenced how people use and transform space, especially through urban and industrial development. Within this way of thinking, land is often seen as something that can be improved or made more productive. Problems in the territory are then approached as things that can be solved through planning, technology, and physical intervention.

The relationship to the non-human world—to landscapes, ecosystems, rivers, mountains—is fundamentally instrumental: nature exists as a backdrop to human projects, as a supplier of raw materials, or, in its more contemporary and benign forms, as a resource to be preserved for recreational or aesthetic purposes. Even the most progressive European spatial traditions—those that speak of ecological urbanism, green infrastructure, or biophilic design—tend to approach the non-human world as an object of management rather than a subject of relationship. **The urgency is always developmental**: how to build better, more efficiently, more sustainably—but always to build, always to produce, always to transform.

This way of thinking about territory did not appear on its own. It developed alongside major changes in European society, including the enclosure of agricultural land, the growth of cities and industry, and the expansion of colonial extraction. These changes also influenced the ideas used to understand the relationship between people and their surroundings. The separation between nature and culture, or between the people living in a place and the place itself, was therefore not only a philosophical idea. It was also connected to a society increasingly organized around private property, wage labor, markets, and institutions that managed land and natural resources.

The Latin American territorial sensibility—or more precisely, the Indigenous and Afro-diasporic territorial sensibilities that the colonial and republican periods tried to suppress but could not fully extinguish—operates from a fundamentally different experiential base. Here, the relationship to the non-human world is not primarily instrumental but relational and obligatory. From the Kogi perspective, **land is part of the life of the community rather than simply the place where life happens**. It has its own history and is involved in the relationships that connect people, water, animals, plants, and other parts of the territory. Living in a place therefore also means paying attention to it and taking care of the relationships that make life possible. This includes recognizing responsibilities toward the territory and maintaining the practices through which those responsibilities are carried out.

This difference in inhabitation produces a difference in perception. For the European observer—trained, even unconsciously, within the Cartesian territorial imaginary—what is visible in a landscape is primarily its physical and functional properties: its topography, its buildable area, its resource potential, its scenic value. The spiritual, relational, and cosmological dimensions of the same landscape are either invisible, because the epistemological framework provides no categories for perceiving them, or they are translated into cultural curiosities, interesting beliefs that local communities hold about the land, without epistemological standing of their own. **The territory is seen from outside**: as an object of observation, analysis, and potential intervention.

For communities whose understanding of territory is based on relationships and cosmology, the same landscape can be understood in very different ways. People are not considered separate from the territory, but part of the relationships that connect its different elements. Mountains, rivers, animals, plants, and sacred places all have a place within this system.

For the Kogi, for example, the mountain is connected to ancestral knowledge and requires particular forms of care and attention. Rivers are also part of the wider system that supports life, rather than being understood only in terms of the water they provide. These ideas are not simply symbolic ways of describing nature. They are connected to everyday practices and responsibilities that have allowed communities to live within these ecosystems over generations.

Eduardo Viveiros de Castro's concept of Amerindian perspectivism offers a theoretical framework for understanding the depth of this perceptual difference. In many Amazonian Indigenous cosmologies, Viveiros de Castro argues, **the distinction between human and non-human is not a fixed ontological boundary but a perspectival one**: different beings occupy different subject positions within a shared world, and what appears as nature from a human vantage point may appear as culture—as social, intentional, relational life—from the vantage point of other beings. This is not animism in the nineteenth-century sense, the idea that humans simply project their thoughts and feelings onto a passive natural world. Instead, it is a different way of understanding reality, in which different forms of life have their own agency and are connected through relationships that make up the living territory.[54]

The consequence for territorial representation is fundamental. If territory is experienced as a relational network populated by multiple subjects—each with its own perspective, its own forms of agency, its own claims upon the community—then the map, the plan, and the section cannot capture it. These tools are designed to represent a world of objects seen from a single, external vantage point. They are instruments of the view from outside. **To represent a territory that is itself a subject—that looks back, that communicates, that places obligations upon those who inhabit it—requires fundamentally different conceptual and representational tools, tools that spatial disciplines are only beginning to imagine**.

This is where the encounter between decolonial approaches to territory and architectural thinking becomes challenging. The problem is not only how to represent territory differently, but also how to understand it differently. This requires moving away from the idea that the observer can always remain outside what is being studied. In Kogi thought, relationships with the territory involve care, responsibility, and attention to the different forms of life that make up the landscape. For architecture, engaging with this perspective means questioning the distance from which territory is usually observed and represented, and considering what changes when the person studying a place is understood as part of it.

Similar ideas can be found in other parts of the Americas, although they take different forms in each context. The idea of Pachamama, for example, has influenced constitutional debates in Ecuador and Bolivia by giving legal recognition to nature and questioning the idea that land exists mainly as property. In the Amazon, communities such as the Yanomami and Waorani have developed detailed knowledge of the relationships between people, animals, plants, rivers, and forests. Afro-Colombian communities in the Pacific region also have ways of organizing and caring for territory that are closely connected to family histories, community practices, and ecological relationships. **These examples show that territory can be understood through relationships that do not fit easily within the logic of individual property**.[55]

What unites these diverse knowledge systems—and what distinguishes them most fundamentally from the European territorial imaginary—is not a shared cosmological content but a shared epistemological orientation: the insistence that territory is constituted through relationships of mutual obligation between human communities and the living world of which they are part, and that to know a territory is not to stand outside it and measure it but to dwell within it and tend it.

54 - *Viveiros de Castro, E. (1998). Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism. pp. 469–488)*

55 - *Escobar, A. (2014). Sentipensar con la tierra: Nuevas lecturas sobre desarrollo, territorio y diferencia.*

2.4 The Discipline's Blind Spot:
Architecture and the Limits of Representation

The return of decolonial thought, and the renewed visibility of Indigenous territorial epistemologies, poses a specific challenge to spatial disciplines—to architecture, urbanism, landscape, and cartography—that is only beginning to be acknowledged within those disciplines. The challenge is this: that the representational tools through which spatial disciplines claim to know, analyze, and design territory are not neutral instruments but specific epistemological technologies, shaped by the Cartesian territorial imaginary and therefore constitutively unable to capture the relational, cosmological, and living dimensions of territories like Teyuna.

Fernando Luiz Lara's call for spatial theories rooted in the Americas speaks to this problem. He argues that architecture has been part of the way Eurocentric ideas about the Americas were established, from the introduction of colonial forms of space to modernist development projects that displaced Indigenous and local communities. **Architecture has also contributed to an academic tradition in which European spatial theories are often treated as universal, while Indigenous knowledge is reduced to something to be studied**. For Lara, developing other spatial theories requires more than adding new examples to the existing discipline. It also means asking whether the concepts, methods, and forms of representation used in architecture are actually suited to the territories they seek to understand.[56]

The cartographic map is a clear example of this problem. Turning the surface of the earth into a flat and measurable plane is not simply a technical process. It also reflects a particular way of understanding territory, one based on measurement, fixed limits, and the idea that spatial form can be separated from social and cosmological relationships. The Línea Negra of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta makes this difference especially clear. For the Indigenous peoples of the Sierra, it refers to a network of sacred sites and the relationships that connect them, extending from the Caribbean coast to the high parts of the massif. It cannot be fully understood as a line in the same sense as a cadastral boundary. When this territorial system is represented through state cartography, many of the relationships that give it meaning are difficult to preserve. What remains visible is mainly the boundary itself, which can then be used within systems of administration, jurisdiction, and property.

A similar limitation can be identified within architecture, although this does not mean that architecture has historically been separated from cosmology. Many architectural traditions, including Christian architecture, have been deeply shaped by cosmological and religious ideas. The problem identified in this research is therefore more specific: **the difficulty of recognizing Indigenous cosmologies in Latin America as forms of spatial and architectural knowledge in their own right.** In the case of Teyuna, its cosmological relationships are often treated as cultural beliefs surrounding an archaeological site rather than as systems that actively organize territory, space, and material practices.

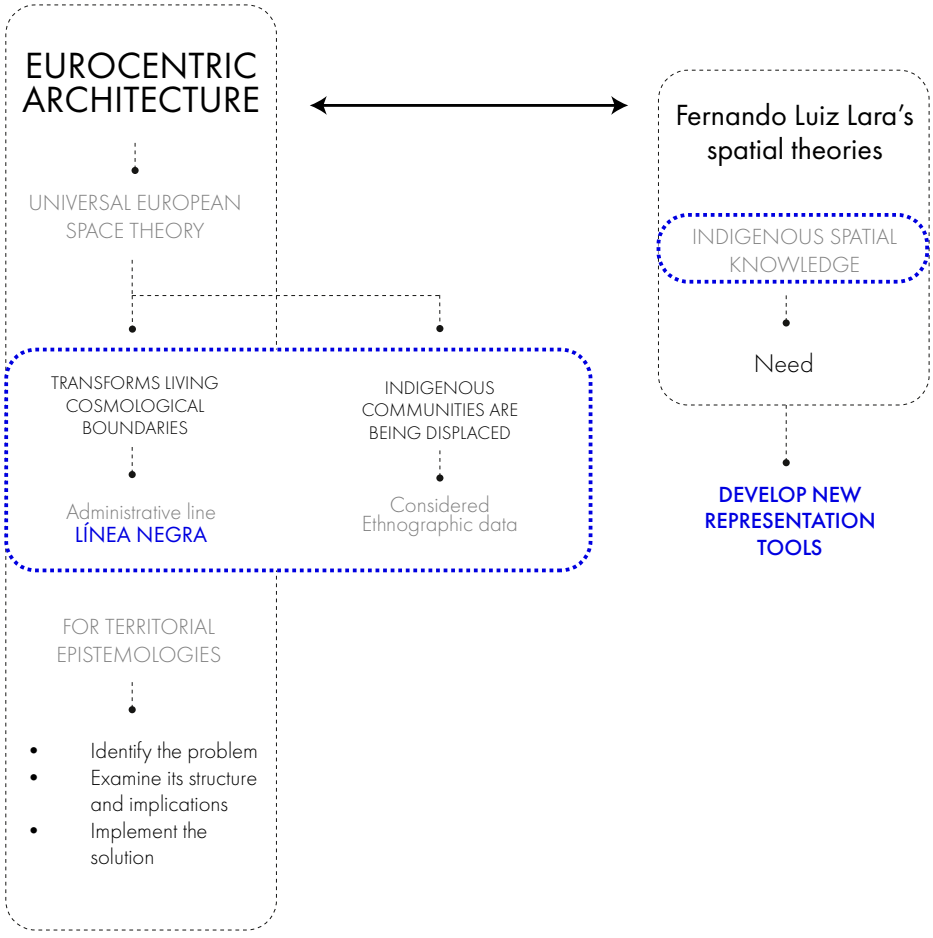
This produces a particular form of disciplinary reduction. Teyuna can be documented as an archaeological settlement, measured as a spatial configuration, classified as cultural heritage, or represented through plans and sections. These approaches are valuable and necessary, but they do not exhaust what the territory is within Kogi understanding. The problem therefore does not lie in architecture representing Teyuna incorrectly, but in the possibility that the categories through which architecture represents it are already too limited to recognize some of the relationships that constitute the territory itself.

56 - *Lara, F. L. (2008). Spatial theories for the Americas. University of Pittsburgh Press. pp. 1–22.*

This raises a broader question about what architecture can represent. If understood not only as the production of buildings and measurable spaces, but also as a way of reading and communicating relationships between bodies, materials, landscapes, memory, and forms of life, architecture can approach territory as an active spatial system. In this sense, Teyuna challenges the separation between architecture and territory: its built elements cannot be understood apart from the mountains, water, paths, vegetation, sacred sites, bodies, and cosmological relationships that give them meaning.

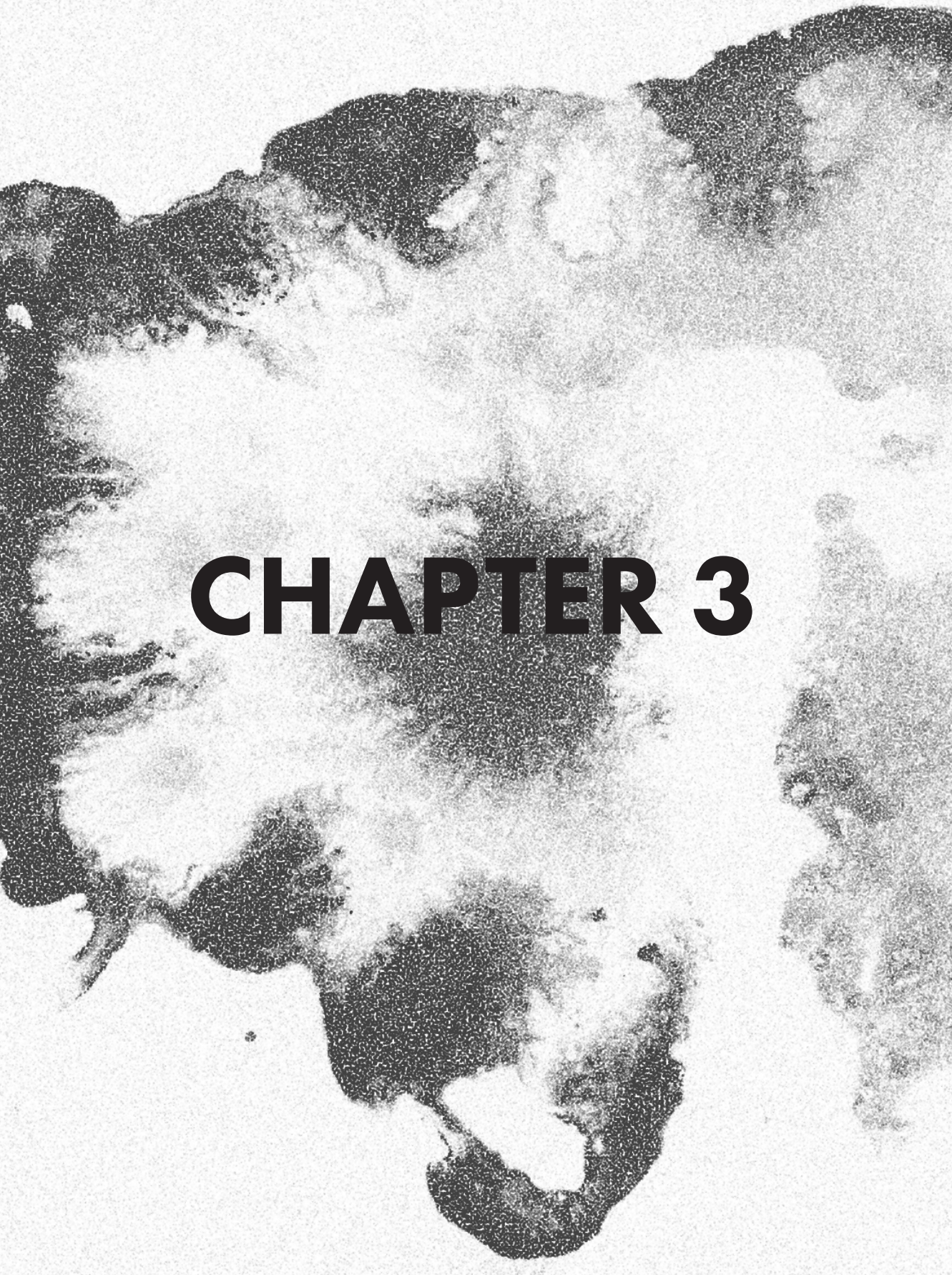
As Krista Sykes argues, theory's most important function is to expose "the gaps and holes in our discipline and our discourse"—the limits of current capacity to see. The gap that decolonial thought opens within spatial disciplines is therefore not simply a technical deficiency. It reveals a structural limitation in the categories through which architecture has learned to understand space. The question it forces upon architecture and cartography is not only how to represent Teyuna better within existing frameworks, but whether those frameworks are adequate to the different ways in which Teyuna is understood and lived.[57]

This thesis follows this approach by considering Teyuna as both an architectural and cosmological territory. Rather than replacing conventional architectural representation with an Indigenous system, it explores what happens when architectural practice enters into dialogue with a territorial epistemology that does not separate material space from cosmology and lived experience. The aim is therefore to expand the representational possibilities of architecture and make visible relationships that conventional spatial drawings often leave unarticulated.



57 - *Sykes, A. K. (Ed.). (2010). Constructing a New Agenda: Architectural Theory 1993-2009. Princeton Architectural Press.*

Fig.17
Conceptual diagram. Representations of limits in architecture.
Daniela González, 2026


CHAPTER 3


Methodology

This research takes a methodological approach in which thinking and feeling are considered together, as are understanding and inhabiting. Territory is not treated as something separate from the person studying it. Instead, knowledge develops through the relationship between places, bodies, histories, and the ways in which territory is represented. The theoretical framework also developed gradually alongside the research. It brought together the study of the territory, Indigenous understandings of space in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, and the search for concepts and forms of representation that could engage with these ideas without forcing them into categories that do not belong to them.

For this reason, the chapter is divided into two related parts. The first focuses on the sources and concepts that shaped the research. It explains how the sources were selected and read, distinguishes between primary and secondary materials, and describes how the theoretical framework was put together. The aim is not to treat these sources simply as information, but to consider how different forms of knowledge lead to different ways of understanding territory and how some disciplines have gained greater authority in defining what territory is and how it should be understood.

This approach also affects how knowledge is treated within the research. Kogi cosmological knowledge is not used only as material to study, but as a way of understanding territory in its own right. This requires looking critically at the distinction between academic knowledge and Indigenous knowledge, and recognizing that Indigenous systems can also contribute to theoretical discussions about territory. Three perspectives are especially important in this framework: **Orlando Fals Borda's idea of territorio sentipensante (feeling-thinking territory), Arturo Escobar's concept of the Pluriverse, and Catalina Mejía Navarrete's work on body–territory–earth.** Together, they provide the main concepts used to understand Teyuna as a living territory, where ecological, material, affective, and spiritual relationships are closely connected.

Building from these foundations, the second part of the chapter shifts from the study of sources toward the study of representation itself. If the first section asks how territory is understood, this second section asks how territory becomes visible. Through a comparative visual analysis, the research examines three representational registers: **colonial representation, Indigenous Latin American representation, and contemporary decolonial artistic practice.**

The images were not treated only as illustrations of ideas developed elsewhere in the research. They were also studied as part of the way those ideas could be understood and communicated. The comparison looked at recurring elements such as line, geometry, composition, color, material, texture, scale, form, spatial organization, time, and viewpoint. This made it possible to see how each type of representation shapes what can be seen and how territory can be understood. The aim was not to decide which system represents territory more accurately, but to understand how each one relates the body to the environment, memory, and ways of understanding the world.

This comparison also informed the development of the final representation. The intention was not to copy Indigenous or decolonial visual languages, nor to discard conventional architectural drawing. Instead, the different approaches were used as reference points for developing another way of representing territory. Their visual and conceptual elements helped shape a representational language specific to this research and to the particular way Teyuna is understood here.

3.1 Theoretical Foundations: Primary Sources

The bibliographic framework of this research was constructed through two complementary categories: primary and secondary sources. This distinction does not establish a hierarchy of value but reflects different degrees of proximity to the concepts and territorial realities under examination.

Primary sources consist predominantly of books and theoretical works produced within Latin American critical thought that contribute to establishing the conceptual foundations of the research. Rather than functioning solely as descriptive references, these texts provide interpretative tools capable of questioning dominant territorial paradigms and opening alternative ways of understanding space, representation, and knowledge production.

3.1.1 Sentipensar and Territory as a Living Construction

Among these sources, the work of Colombian sociologist Orlando Fals Borda is particularly important to this research. The concept of sentipensar emerged from his work with fishing communities on the Colombian Caribbean coast. As Patricia Botero describes it, ***sentipensar***—or "feeling-thinking"—means "acting with the heart while using the head," bringing together experience, emotion, and thought rather than treating them as separate forms of knowledge.[58] In this sense, sentipensar challenges the modern separation between mind and body, reason and emotion, people and nature, and the human and non-human worlds.

Within this framework, knowledge is produced through involvement with territory, through the body, collective memory, and lived experience. Territory is therefore not something outside the observer that can simply be measured and classified, but something that is experienced, inhabited, cared for, and continuously transformed. This understanding is also connected to Fals Borda's concept of bioespacio, which describes territory as an environment where human and non-human life remain constantly connected. Territoriality is therefore shaped not only by ownership or control, but also by the memories, meanings, relationships, and forms of care that develop over time.[59]

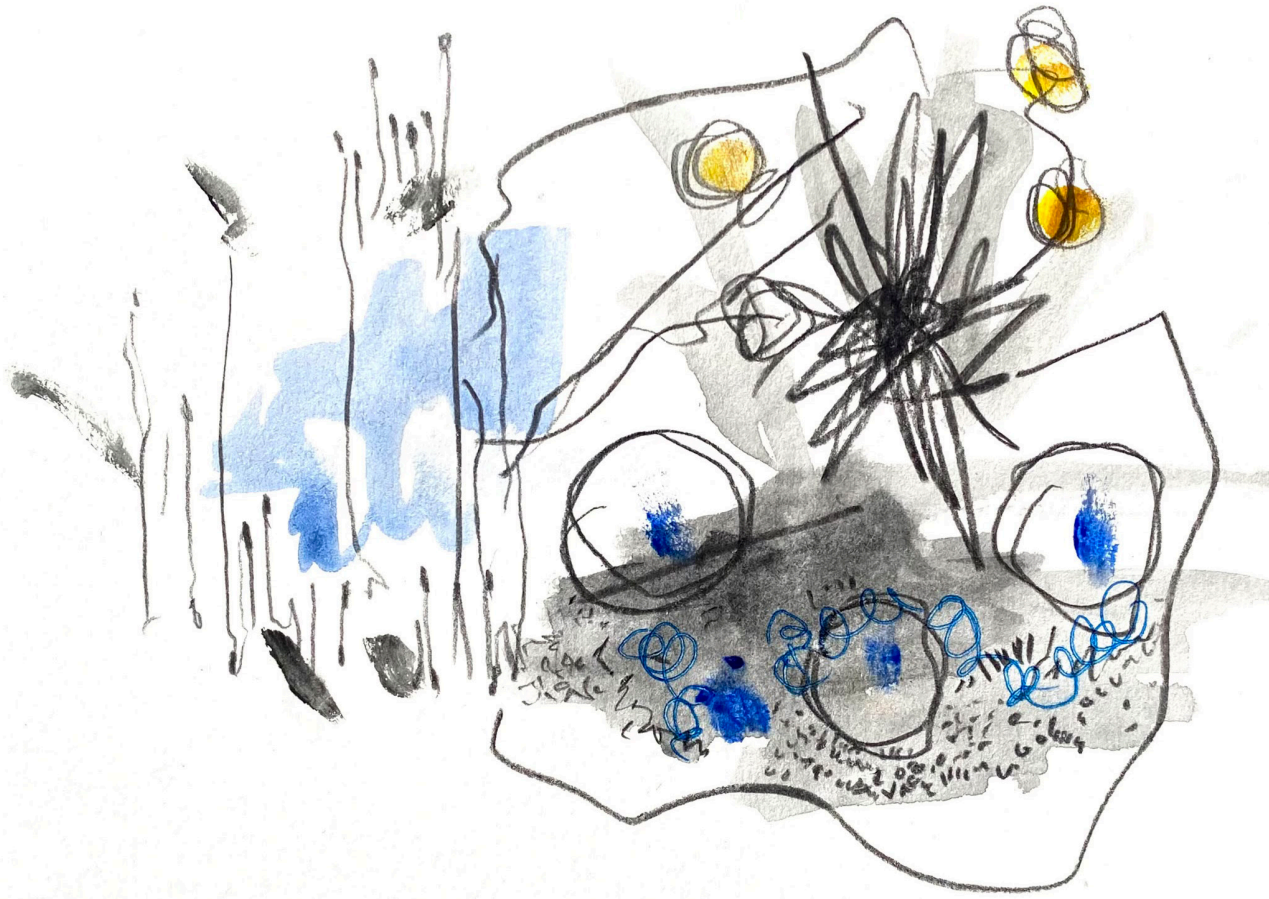
This perspective also connects with Fals Borda's understanding of identity as a process of ir siendo, or "becoming." Identity is not fixed, but develops through experience and relationships with others. Difference is therefore not external to identity, but part of the process through which it is continually formed. Together, these concepts allow territory to be understood as a living and changing construction rather than a fixed spatial container.

> ***"El sentipensar combina la lógica con la afectividad, el corazón con la cabeza, para orientar la acción y darle sentido" (Fals Borda, 1986, p. 43).***

This understanding establishes a productive point of dialogue with Kogi cosmology. This thesis does not propose sentipensar as a translation of Kogi epistemology, but understands both as distinct traditions that converge around a shared recognition: that knowing cannot be separated from inhabiting, and that thinking remains inseparable from forms of caring for and sustaining territory.

58 - *Botero Gómez, P. (2020). Sentipensar. IDEA, (56). https://idea.ro/revista/ro/article/X9-WfB-MAANX-5e5p/sentipensar.*

59 - *Fals Borda, O. (2009). Una sociología sentipensante para América Latina. Siglo del Hombre Editores / CLACSO.*



The concept of sentipensar does not remain solely as the theoretical lens through which the Sierra Nevada is interpreted; it also becomes an operative principle guiding the representational practice developed in this project. If territory is understood as a living construction formed through relationships between bodies, water, mountains, memory, and non-human beings, then its representation cannot be limited to the conventions of architectural drawing based on precision, measurement, and visual control. The project therefore approaches representation as an embodied practice in which thinking and feeling operate together.

This approach begins with a **process of deconstruction**. After studying colonial, Indigenous, and decolonial forms of representation, as well as Kogi understandings of territory and cosmology, the project moves away from literal or descriptive ways of depicting Teyuna and asks instead **what aspects of the territory can be experienced and communicated through the body and through material processes**. This question is particularly relevant because the project was developed from a distance, without direct physical experience of the Sierra Nevada. The territory is therefore approached through sustained study, interpretation, imagination, and personal sensory response rather than through a claim of direct experience. In this sense, **sentipensar becomes a way of engaging with the territory through the relationship between knowledge and embodied perception**.

The body and water become two central elements in this process. Water is understood not only as one of the fundamental structures of the Sierra Nevada but also as a material through which the representation itself can be produced. Watercolor allows **water to become an active participant in the drawing**: pigment flows, dissolves, accumulates, and creates forms that cannot be completely controlled.

Fig 18.
Sentipensar Diagram
Daniela González, 2026

Working directly with the hands also becomes an important part of this process, allowing a more immediate and physical interaction with the materials. Rather than seeking complete control over the image, **the act of painting becomes an exercise of letting the material flow** and responding to its unexpected transformations. The incorporation of natural materials, such as mineral salts and sugar, further introduces processes of diffusion, branching, crystallization, and sedimentation. These material effects become a way of exploring forms of connection that are difficult to express through conventional architectural graphics.

The use of these materials is therefore not intended to reproduce nature literally, but to explore its processes and languages. Branching patterns produced through the interaction between sugar and watercolor, for instance, evoke the visual logic of roots, rivers, veins, and other systems of connection. They become a personal attempt to reflect on how water, earth, minerals, plants, and the human body are interconnected, and how these relationships might be translated into representation. The drawing consequently becomes a space where the material of representation and the content being represented are no longer completely separate.

This process does not propose a replacement for Indigenous forms of representation, nor does it claim to reproduce or speak for Kogi knowledge. Rather, **it constitutes a personal and experimental search for another way of representing territory**, informed by the knowledge encountered throughout the research. As the project moved away from more literal forms of drawing and began to use more tactile and unpredictable processes, other aspects of the territory became part of the representation. These included affect, memory, bodily perception, and the relationships between water, earth, and living systems. In this way, sentipensar became more than a concept discussed in the research. It also became part of the way the representation was produced.

3.1.2 The Pluriverse and the Critique of the Mundo Único

A second important idea in this research comes from Arturo Escobar's concept of the Pluriverse, developed through his work on political ontology, autonomy, and design. Escobar uses the idea of the pluriverse to question the modern belief that there is one universal world that can be understood through the same systems of knowledge, development, and spatial organization. The pluriverse, in contrast, **recognizes that different worlds can exist alongside one another**, each shaped by different relationships between humans, non-humans, spirituality, matter, and the environment.

This perspective challenges what Escobar calls the **One-World World**, a way of understanding reality that developed through European modernity and spread through colonial expansion. As discussed in previous chapters, this system presents its own way of knowing as universal and objective, while other forms of knowledge are often treated as local, incomplete, or ignored. Within this view, territory is reduced to a surface that can be mapped, land to property, and nature to a resource. Space is then treated as something neutral that can be occupied, organized, and used.[60]

The pluriversal perspective challenges this way of thinking by arguing that many worlds can exist together. It does not see these worlds as different cultural interpretations of one single reality. Each one is shaped by its own ways of knowing and relating to the world. From this perspective, territory cannot be understood as a uniform surface. It is made up of relationships between material, symbolic, ecological, spiritual, and affective dimensions that are closely connected.

60 - *Escobar, A. (2018). Designs for the pluriverse: Radical interdependence, autonomy, and the making of worlds. Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822371816*

This conceptual framework becomes particularly relevant for interpreting Teyuna. For the Kogi, the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta is not simply a geographical formation but the Heart of the World—the central living body through which equilibrium is maintained. Kogi cosmology describes existence through multiple interconnected worlds that coexist simultaneously within a larger whole. Although this research does not establish equivalence between Kogi cosmology and pluriversal theory, both perspectives converge in questioning the assumption of a singular universal reality.

The concept of the pluriverse helps place Teyuna within this broader **critique of modern spatial thought**. It also supports the idea that Indigenous territorial systems cannot be fully understood through categories that separate nature from culture, the observer from what is observed, or material structures from cosmological knowledge and lived experience.[61]

3.1.3 Cuerpo–Territorio–Tierra

The third conceptual foundation of this research is Catalina Mejía's notion of **body–territory–earth**, which constitutes one of the most important conceptual bridges for this study because it articulates, with particular clarity, the continuity between human corporeality, collective memory, and the land itself. Rather than understanding body and territory as separate entities, Mejía proposes that both operate as mutually constitutive dimensions of a single relational network. To fully understand this proposition, however, it is necessary to situate it within the intellectual and political context from which it emerges: Latin American community feminism (feminismo comunitario).

A current of thought that developed during the first years of the twenty-first century from Indigenous and peasant communities across *Abya Yala*—the name through which many Indigenous peoples refer to the American continent—and which represents one of Latin America's most original and radical contributions to global feminist thought. Community feminism did not emerge from universities but from communities themselves.[62] Its most direct genealogy can be traced through two foundational figures: Lorena Cabnal, a Maya-Xinka woman from Guatemala, and Julieta Paredes, an Aymara woman from Bolivia. Beginning approximately between 2006 and 2010, both developed—simultaneously although through distinct trajectories—a critique of dominant Western feminism which, in their view, reproduced many of the same colonial logics it claimed to resist.

Paredes developed her work in Bolivia through the collective Mujeres Creando Comunidad. She questioned feminist approaches from Europe and North America for not fully addressing the experiences of Indigenous women. Much of these traditions focuses on individual autonomy, the body as private property, and equality before the state. Paredes points to a different reality, where community, territory, and spirituality are part of everyday life and cannot be easily separated from women's experiences.[63]

Cabnal developed what she called territorial community feminism through her work with the Maya-Xinka community of Santa María Xalapán in Jalapa, Guatemala. One of her main contributions was the idea of the **body–territory**, which understands women's bodies as the first territory affected by colonization, exploitation, and violence. From this perspective, defending territory also means defending the body. For Cabnal, the connection between body and territory is material, not only metaphorical. In the communities where she worked, violence against women and the control of land were often closely connected. Mining companies, landowners, and military forces could affect both at the same time, through forms of extraction and territorial control.[64]

61 - *Escobar, A. (2014). Sentipensar con la tierra: nuevas lecturas sobre desarrollo, territorio y diferencia. UNAULA*

62 - *Sacavino, S. (2017). Tejidos feministas de Abya Yala: Feminismo comunitario, perspectiva decolonial y educación intercultural. Uni-pluriversidad, 17(2), 96–107. https://doi.org/10.17533/udea.unipluri.328317*

63 - *Paredes, J. (2010). Hilando fino desde el feminismo comunitario. En Y. Espinosa Miñoso (Ed.), Aproximaciones críticas a las prácticas teórico-políticas del feminismo latinoamericano (pp. 117–120). En la Frontera.*

64 - *Cabnal, L. (2010). Acercamiento a la construcción del pensamiento epistémico de las mujeres indígenas feministas comunitarias de Abya Yala. En Feminismos diversos: el feminismo comunitario (pp. 11–25). ACSUR-Las Segovias.*

The emergence of Latin American community feminism during the early twenty-first century was not accidental. It responded to at least three converging historical processes: First, **the intensification of extractivism across Indigenous and peasant territories** beginning in the 1990s —accelerated through neoliberal restructuring and free trade agreements— generated an unprecedented territorial crisis across Guatemala, Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia, and Peru. [65] Women, often positioned as traditional caretakers of domestic and communal territories, became both the first defenders of land and among the first victims of extractive violence.[66]

Second, **the limitations of second-wave liberal feminism**—centered primarily on gender equality within labor markets and state institutions—became increasingly evident for Indigenous women whose experiences could not be resolved through wage equality or electoral representation alone. Their oppression operated simultaneously through gender, class, and race–ethnicity and remained deeply rooted in colonial structures. The Argentine-American theorist María Lugones identified this condition through her concept of the **coloniality of gender** (2008), arguing that gender itself—as a binary and hierarchical category—constituted a product of European colonialism rather than a universal social structure present across all societies.[67]

Third, plurinational constitutional reforms in Latin America created new political and legal spaces for Indigenous territorial claims. In Bolivia, the 2009 Constitution established the country as a Plurinational State and recognized Indigenous peoples, territorial autonomy, and collective political organization (Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia, 2009). The 2010 Law of Rights of Mother Earth further introduced an alternative understanding of the relationship between human societies and the living world. In Ecuador, the 2008 Constitution recognized the rights of nature as constitutional rights (Asamblea Constituyente del Ecuador, 2008). Together, these changes opened new spaces for community feminist proposals around territory, autonomy, ecological relations, and the defense of life.

It is within this intellectual and political landscape that Catalina Mejía's formulation acquires its full significance. Mejía proposes the relationship of body–territory–earth not simply as a comparison between the forms of domination experienced by bodies and territories, but as the affirmation that **body is territory and territory is body** — body and territory are inseparable. This perspective challenges the idea of territory as a passive space and instead understands it as something shaped through lived experience, care, memory, and everyday relationships with the land.[68]

For Kogi communities, this connection between body and territory has a deeper meaning that is part of their own understanding of the world. The human body is understood as part of the body of the Universal Mother, so the relationship with territory is also a relationship with one's own existence. People do not simply live in a place. **They come to know and care for it through everyday practices such as walking, cultivating, making offerings, thinking, and remembering.** Through these practices, knowledge of the territory is experienced through the body and passed on over time.

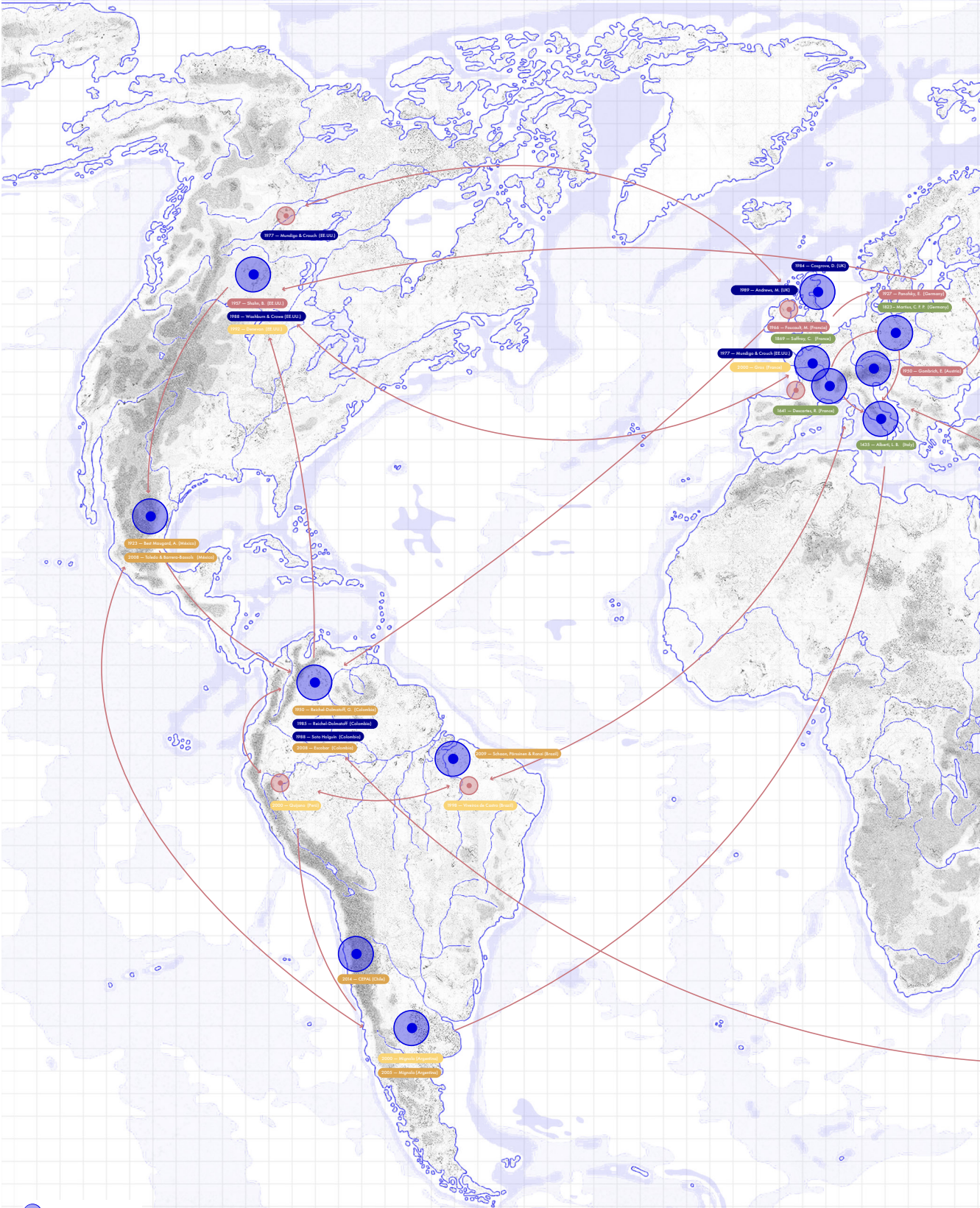
By incorporating Mejía's notion of body–territory–earth as one of the conceptual foundations of this research, an explicit epistemological decision is being made: to approach Kogi territorial thought not through the Eurocentric framework that separates subject from object and nature from culture, but through a framework that emerged from the Global South, from the voices of Indigenous and mestiza Latin American women, and which therefore may approach Kogi experience with less conceptual distortion.

65 - *Svampa, M. (2019). Neo-extractivism in Latin America: Socio-environmental conflicts, the commodity consensus, and the territorial turn. Cambridge University Press.*

66 -*Ulloa, A. (2018). Feminismos territoriales en América Latina: Defensas de la vida frente a los extractivismos. Nómadas, 45, 123–139*

67 -*Lugones, M. (2008). The coloniality of gender. Worlds & Knowledges Otherwise, 2(2), 1–17.*

68 - *Mejía Moreno, C. (2022). Con il corpo a terra. Uno sguardo dal femminismo decoloniale. In A. di Campli & C. Boano (Eds.), Decolonizzare l'urbanistica (pp. 116–134).*



Primary sources

Secondary sources

I. FOUNDATIONS OF REPRESENTATION AND MODERNITY (1435–1899)

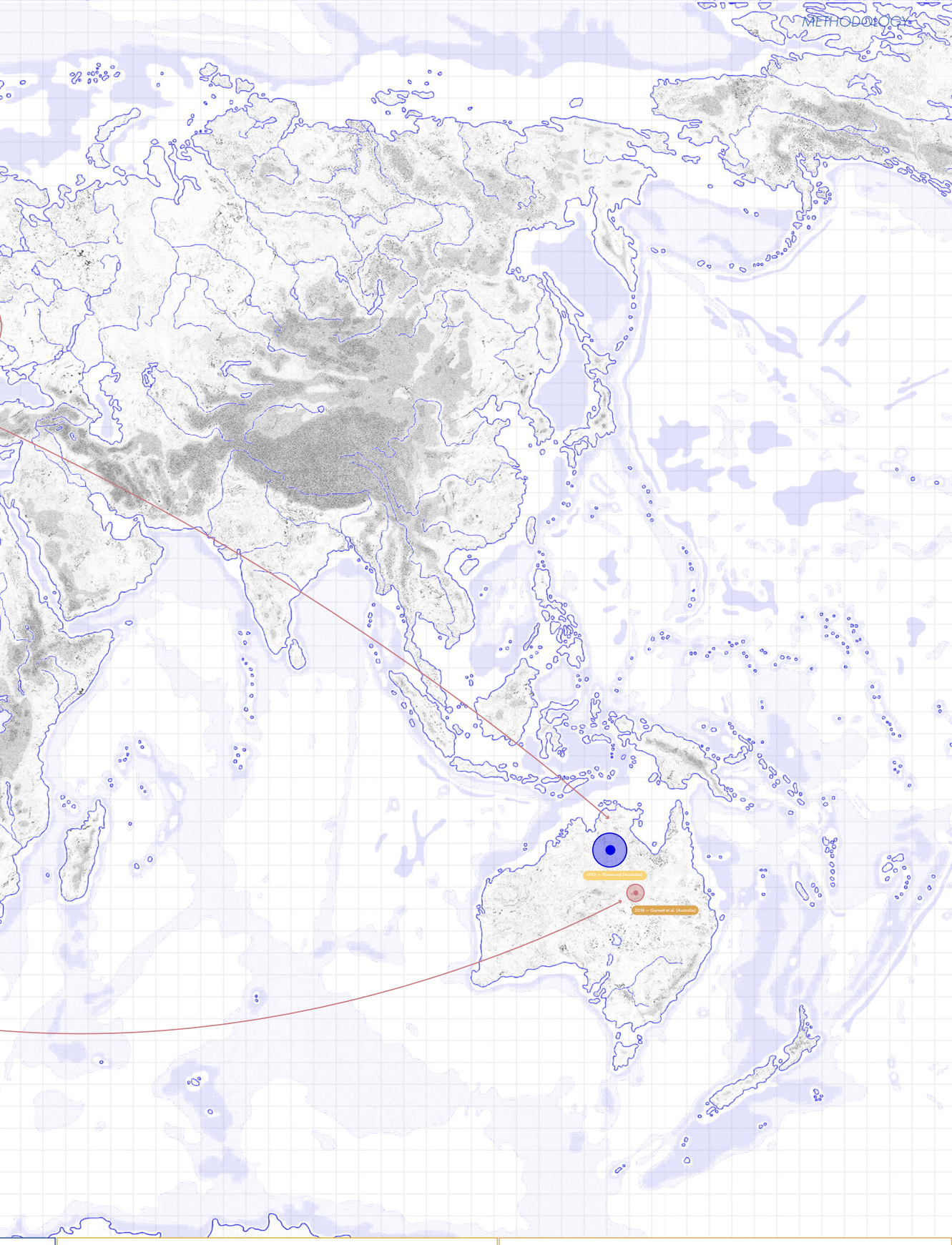
2 France (1641) - (1869)
1 Italy (1435)
1 Germany (1823)

II. IMAGE, IDENTITY AND CONSTRUCTION OF SPACE (1900–1969)

3 Mexico (1923) - (1950) - (1953)
2 Germany (1927) - (1957)
1 Austria (1950)
1 Colombia (1950)
2 EE.UU (1953) - (1957)
1 Francia (1966)

III. POWER, ANTHROPOLOGY AND TERRITORY (1970–1989)

3 UK (1984) - (1989)
2 EE.UU (1977) - (1988)
2 Colombia (1985) - (1988)
1 France(1980)



IV. ECOLOGY, COLONIALITY AND CRITICAL TURN (1990–2004)

3 UK (1992) - (1996) - (2004)
2 Colombia (1990) - (2002)
2 EE.UU (1992) - (1998)
1 Perú (2000)
1 Argentina (2000)
1 Australia (2000)
1 Swiss (1998)
1 France (2000)
1 Brasil (1998)

V. DECOLONIALITY, TERRITORY AND PLURIVERSE (2005–2014)

3 Colombia (1923) - (1950) - (1953)
2 EE.UU (1927) - (1957)
2 Argentina (1950)
2 Brasil (1950)
2 France (1953) - (1957)
2 México (1966)
1 Portugal (1950)
1 Chile (1953) - (1957)

3.2 Expanding the Epistemological Framework: Secondary Sources

The secondary sources were used to build the epistemological framework through which the primary sources were read and interpreted. Rather than treating these references as a separate theoretical background, the research used them to trace how different understandings of space, territory, body, and knowledge have been produced and legitimized over time.

The review began with **European philosophical and spatial traditions that shaped the modern understanding of territory**. Descartes was used to identify the foundations of an abstract and measurable conception of space, while Harley, Plumwood, Federici, and Gregory helped examine how these ideas became connected to cartographic representation, colonial power, gender, and the control of nature. These sources made it possible to identify the spatial and epistemological framework that later became central to colonial forms of territorial organization.

The research then moved toward critical and decolonial perspectives. Mignolo and Quijano were important for understanding the relationship between coloniality and the production of knowledge, while Braidotti helped introduce the idea of situated knowledge and the importance of considering where knowledge comes from. This stage raised questions about the **idea that European spatial categories are universal** and helped examine the historical processes through which they became dominant.

A further stage of the review **focused on Latin American and Indigenous perspectives** on territory and knowledge. Importantly, this shift does not suggest that critical thought from Latin America only emerged in the late twentieth century. Earlier thinkers such as Leopoldo Zea were already questioning the dominance of European intellectual frameworks and asking how knowledge could be produced from the historical and cultural position of Latin America (Zea, 1953). However, **from the late twentieth century onward, these critiques became increasingly visible within broader academic debates on coloniality, territory, difference, and alternative forms of knowledge** *(Figure 19)*. Quijano, Escobar, Estermann, and Lara were therefore used to connect questions of knowledge and spatial thought to Latin American contexts, while Reichel-Dolmatoff and Zalabata Torres provided more specific approaches to Indigenous territorial knowledge, particularly in relation to the Kogi.

At the same time, the research incorporated literature on feminist and territorial approaches emerging from Latin America. The work of Cabnal, Paredes, Sacavino, Ulloa, and Svampa was used to understand the connections between body, territory, gender, extractivism, and the defense of life. These sources were particularly relevant for situating the body–territory–earth perspective within broader Latin American debates and for understanding territory not simply as physical space, but as a living and relational network shaped by memory, care, political struggle, and different forms of knowledge.

Finally, the research incorporated more specific **critiques of architectural representation**, memory, and archival practices. José Solís Opazo's concept of the "mal de proyecto" was particularly relevant at this stage, as it provided a way to question how architectural practices organize, simplify, and represent realities that are more complex and constantly changing. This perspective shifted the research from asking only how territory is understood to also asking how it is represented, archived, and made visible through architectural and visual practices.

Fig 19.
Geographic distribution of primary and secondary sourcesDaniela González, 2026

This final stage connected the theoretical framework directly to the development of the project. The concepts discussed throughout the research—coloniality of knowledge, situated thought, territorial epistemologies, body–territory–earth, and the defense of life—were not treated only as theoretical references, but as tools for questioning how Teyuna has been documented and represented. The literature review therefore became part of the project's methodology, supporting a shift from understanding territory as an object that can be objectively recorded toward exploring how different forms of knowledge, memory, and lived experience can produce different representations of the same territory. In this way, the research moved from identifying the colonial systems through which territory has been classified and represented, to recognizing the plurality of Indigenous and Latin American ways of knowing it, and finally **to questioning how architectural representation can either reproduce or challenge these systems**.

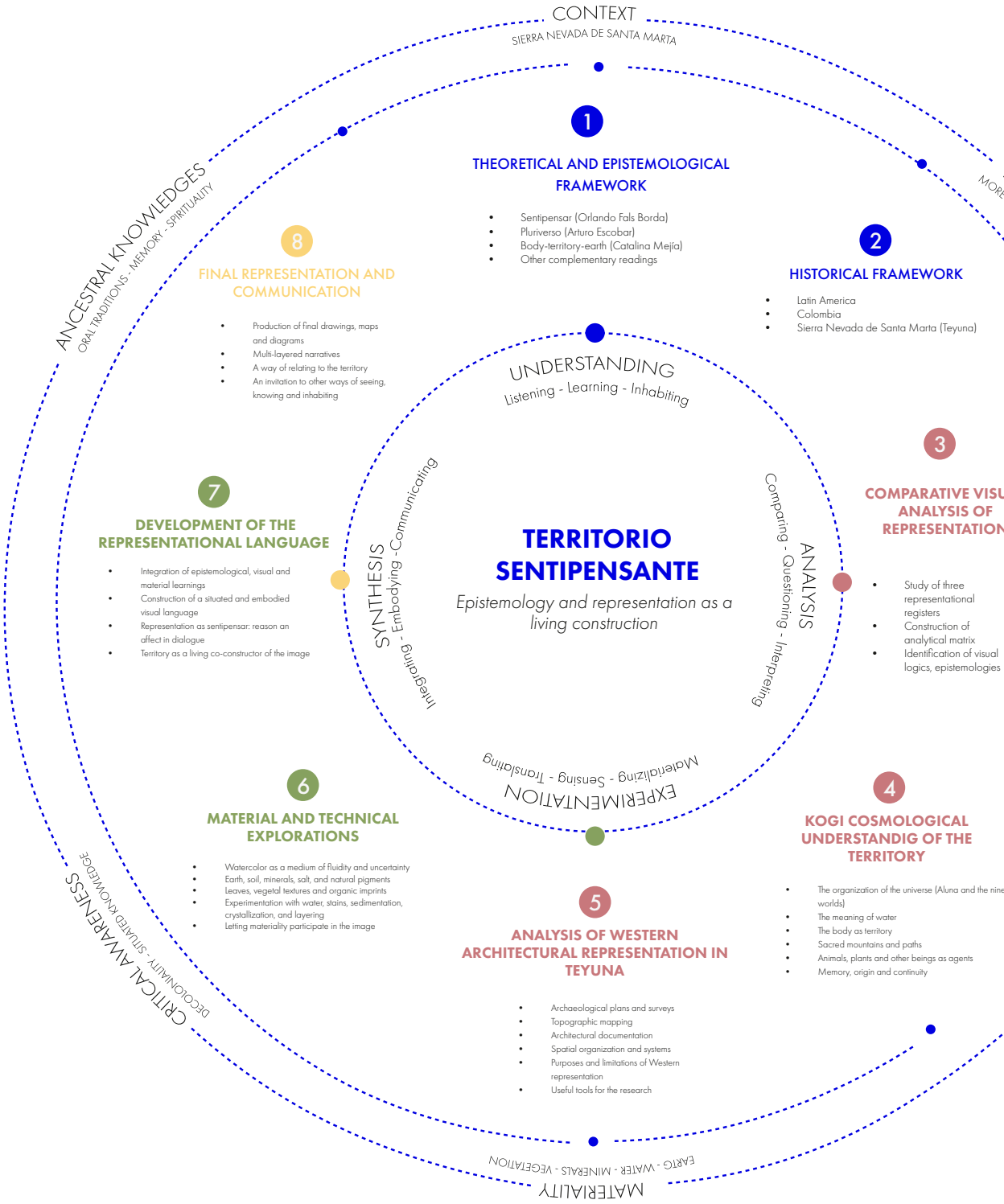
3.3 Development of the Representational Language

The final representational language developed gradually throughout the research rather than being decided at the end of the project. It emerged from the different visual and epistemological approaches examined along the way. Different systems of territorial representation were studied, compared, and questioned, and some of their ideas gradually entered the architectural drawings developed through the research. There was no predefined graphic style from the beginning. **The language took shape through a series of analytical and experimental steps**, each one changing the understanding of the territory and the possibilities for representing it *(Figure 20)*.

The ***first stage*** consisted of a comparative analysis of three different representational traditions and the ways in which each one approaches territory. The **colonial register** focused on nineteenth-century scientific illustrations, expedition drawings, travel engravings, and archaeological records produced during European explorations of Colombia, with particular attention to the work of Charles Saffray. The analysis was not concerned with whether these images accurately represented the territory. Instead, it examined **how they constructed what could be seen and how it could be understood**. Particular attention was given to line, geometry, composition, texture, form, spatial hierarchy, and viewpoint. This helped reveal how colonial drawing organizes territory through classification, separation, perspective, and distance from the observer.

The ***second stage*** focused on **Indigenous visual systems from northern South America**. Two different but related forms of representation were examined: the woven patterns of Kogi mochilas and the pictographic tradition of Cerro Azul in the Colombian Amazon. These practices were considered as ways of organizing and communicating knowledge, not simply as decorative or symbolic forms. Recurring geometries, spirals, zigzags, concentric forms, woven structures, and colors produced from mineral and plant pigments were examined in detail. Attention was also given to the relationship between these elements, **the body, the material itself, the territory, and the cosmological ideas behind them**.

The ***third stage*** examined **contemporary decolonial artistic practices** through the work of Carolina Caycedo, Lina Puerta, and Gustavo Caboco. These artists were selected because their work questions established ways of representing territory and brings together memory, ecology, ancestral knowledge, and personal and collective experience. Their work showed **how representation can also become a way of questioning how territory is known and understood, rather than serving only as a means of documenting it**. Particular attention was given to layers, collage, bodily gestures, textiles, natural materials, fragmented maps, hybrid forms, and changes in scale. These elements showed how an image can bring different relationships together without reducing them to a single or fixed reading.


CONTEXT
SIERRA NEVADA DE SANTA MARTA
1
THEORETICAL AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK
Sentipensar (Orlando Fals Borda)
Pluriverso (Arturo Escobar)
Body-territory-earth (Catalina Mejía)
Other complementary readings
2
HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK
Latin America
Colombia
Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta (Teyuna)
3
COMPARATIVE VISU
ANALYSIS OF
REPRESENTATION
Study of three representational registers
Construction of analytical matrix
Identification of visual logics, epistemologies
4
KOGI COSMOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDIG OF THE TERRITORY
The organization of the universe (Aluna and the nine worlds)
The meaning of water
The body as territory
Sacred mountains and paths
Animals, plants and other beings as agents
Memory, origin and continuity
5
ANALYSIS OF WESTERN ARCHITECTURAL REPRESENTATION IN TEYUNA
Archaeological plans and surveys
Topographic mapping
Architectural documentation
Spatial organization and systems
Purposes and limitations of Western representation
Useful tools for the research
6
MATERIAL AND TECHNICAL EXPLORATIONS
Watercolor as a medium of fluidity and uncertainty
Earth, soil, minerals, salt, and natural pigments
Leaves, vegetal textures and organic imprints
Experimentation with water, stains, sedimentation, crystallization, and layering
Letting materiality participate in the image
7
DEVELOPMENT OF THE REPRESENTATIONAL LANGUAGE
Integration of epistemological, visual and material learnings
Construction of a situated and embodied visual language
Representation as sentipensar: reason an affect in dialogue
Territory as a living co-constructor of the image
8
FINAL REPRESENTATION AND COMMUNICATION
Production of final drawings, maps and diagrams
Multi-layered narratives
A way of relating to the territory
An invitation to other ways of seeing, knowing and inhabiting
UNDERSTANDING
Listening - Learning - Inhabiting
ANALYSIS
Comparing - Questioning - Interpreting
EXPERIMENTATION
Materializing - Sensing - Translating
SYNTHESIS
Integrating - Embodying - Communicating
TERRITORIO SENTIPENSANTE
Epistemology and representation as a living construction
ANCESTRAL KNOWLEDGES
ORAL TRADITIONS - MEMORY - SPIRITUALITY
CRITICAL AWARENESS
DECOLONIALITY - SITUATED KNOWLEDGE
MATERIALITY
EARTH - WATER - MINERALS - VEGETATION

The three registers were compared using the same set of criteria. The analysis considered elements such as line, geometry, composition, patterns, texture, color, material, scale, time, the relationship between body and territory, spatial organization, viewpoint, and the purpose of the image. This helped clarify the differences between the three forms of representation and showed how these visual choices are connected to different ways of understanding and relating to territory.

This visual analysis was complemented by a second methodological layer focused on Kogi cosmology and territorial thought. Beyond the study of representational systems, the research also examined how territory is understood through Kogi knowledge. Particular attention was given to the **cosmological organization of the Sierra Nevada**, **the role of Aluna, the importance of water, and the relationships between mountains, rivers, animals, plants, ancestral paths, and the human body**. The body was understood as part of the territory rather than as something separate from it. These ideas provided a conceptual basis for moving from formal experimentation towards a different understanding of the territory itself.

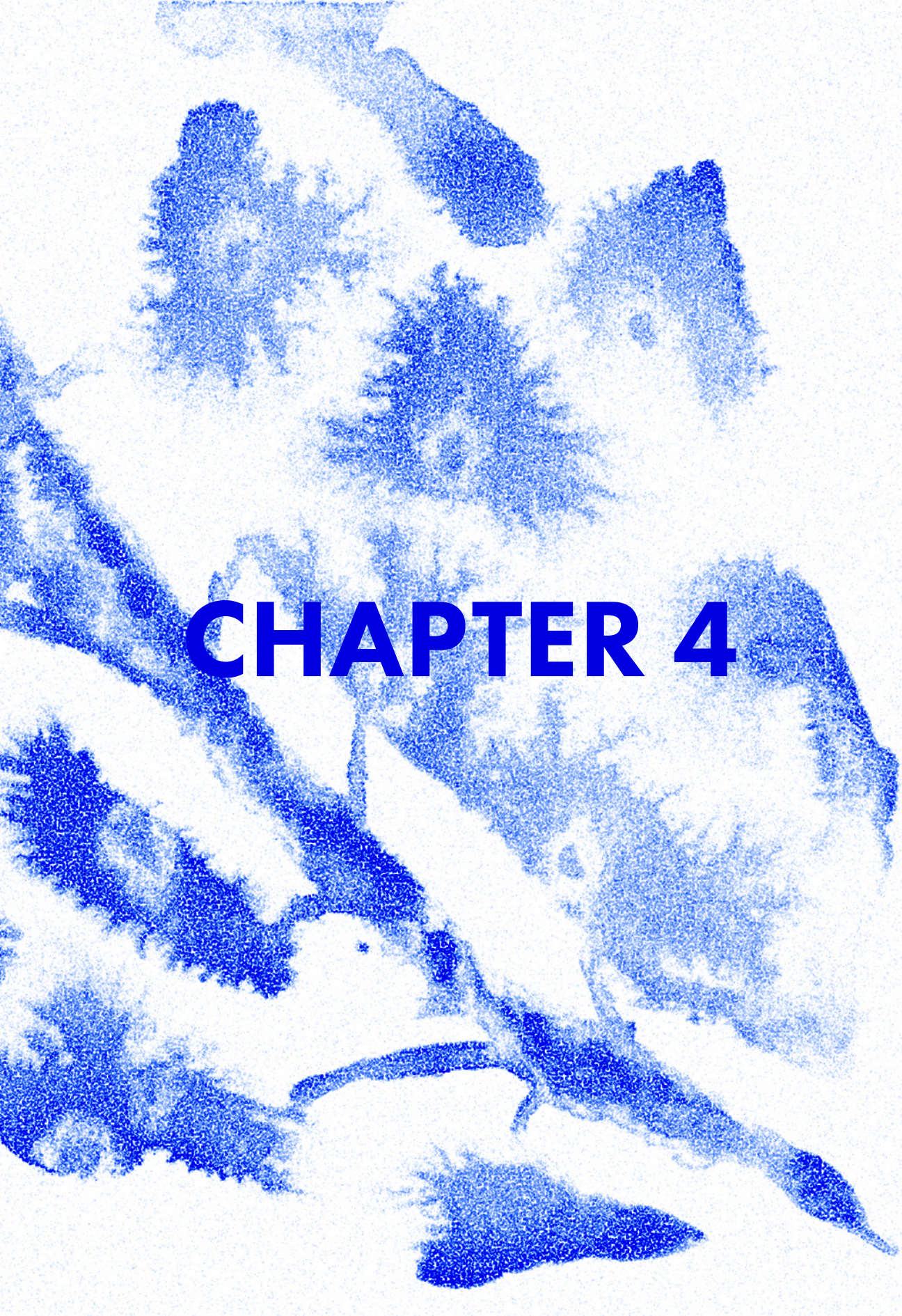
At the same time, conventional Western representations of Teyuna were examined, including archaeological plans, topographic surveys, architectural drawings, and maps. These drawings were important for understanding the organization of the site, its construction systems, circulation routes, and its relationship with the surrounding territory. They also made visible some of the limitations of representations based mainly on measurement, documentation, and accuracy. **Western and Indigenous forms of representation were therefore not treated as opposite systems**. Western drawing provided a starting point from which other ways of understanding territory could be explored and brought into the architectural representation.

The ***final stage*** consisted of an extended period of material experimentation through drawing. Building on the previous stages, different materials and techniques were tested to introduce greater uncertainty and material variation into the architectural representation. Watercolor became an important part of the process because of the way it behaves on paper. Pigment moves, mixes, settles, and spreads in ways that cannot always be controlled. This uncertainty became relevant when considering territory as something that is also constantly changing. Minerals, water, plant impressions, and other natural materials were also introduced into the drawings. They were not used simply to represent nature. **Their physical properties became part of the image**, producing textures, changes in color, crystals, stains, and other marks that could not be fully predicted. The final drawings were therefore shaped by both the decisions made during the process and the behavior of the materials themselves.

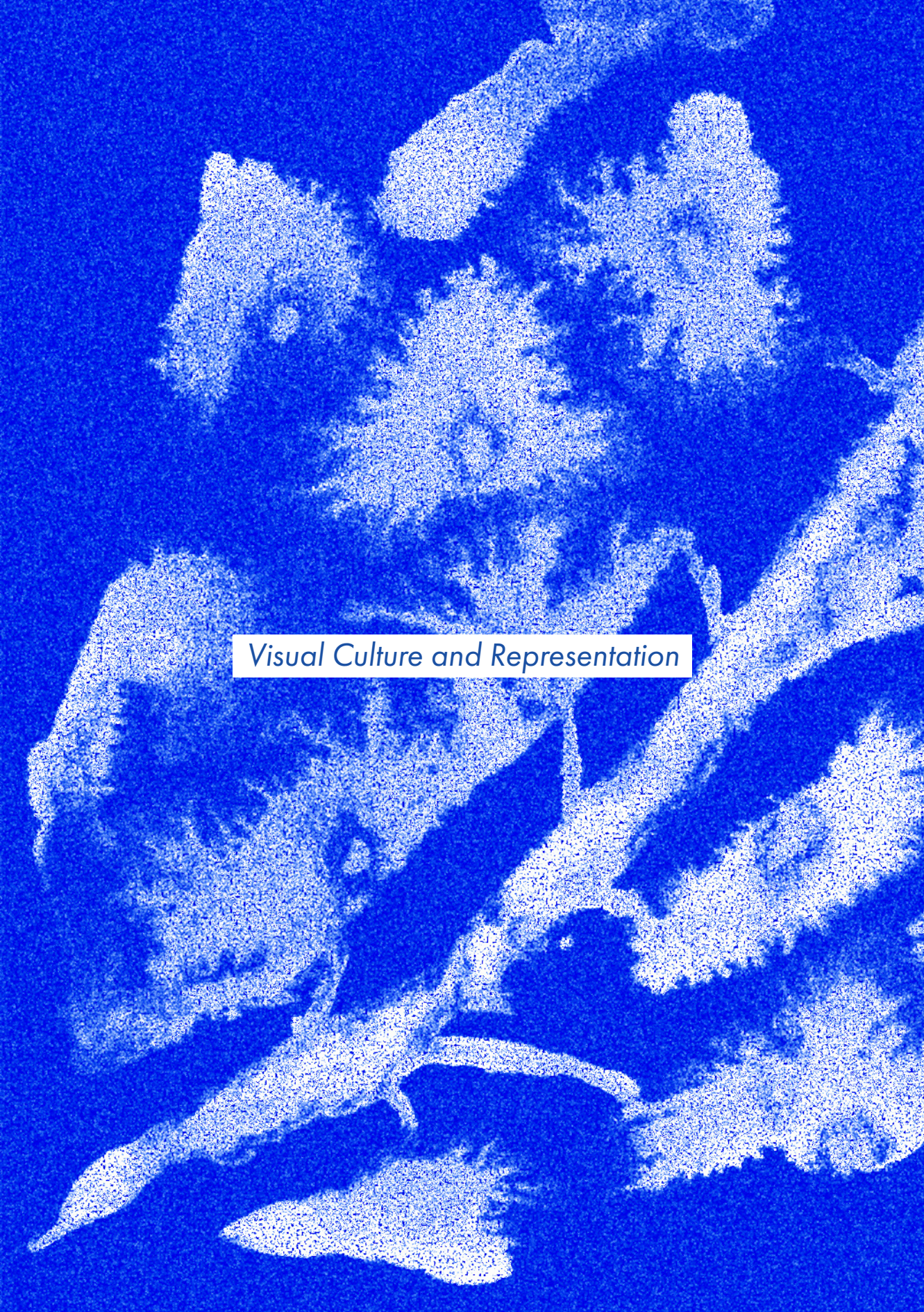
The final outcomes are not simply artistic compositions or conventional architectural representations, but bring together visual analysis, Indigenous understandings of territory, architectural drawing, and material experimentation. In this sense, the process can be understood as a form of sentipensante experimentation, in which drawing becomes a way of thinking and relating to territory through line, geometry, color, texture, and material. The process is also documented through a personal **research journal**, written in Spanish as a deliberate choice to create a more intimate space for expressing the sensations, thoughts, uncertainties, and reflections that emerged throughout the experimentation. It traces the shift from initial containment through the use of AI, towards the search for fluidity through watercolor and the later intervention with materials such as salt and sugar, making visible how my own sensitive perspective developed through the process.



Fig 20.
Methodology diagram
Daniela González, 2026



CHAPTER 4


Visual Culture and Representation

Visual representation is never neutral. Every image—whether a botanical illustration, a satellite image, a territorial map, a textile pattern, or an ochre line drawn on stone—reflects a particular way of relating to the world. Images do not simply represent territories; they also shape how territories are seen, understood, and experienced. They influence what becomes visible, what remains outside the image, and which forms of knowledge are recognized. Representation is therefore not only a visual process but also a way of producing and communicating knowledge. This section develops a comparative visual analysis through three different representational registers, each shaped by particular historical and epistemological conditions and by different ways of seeing, understanding, and relating to territory.

The first register examines the **European representational tradition** and its legacy within modern scientific and cartographic practices. Operating largely through an exterior and classificatory perspective, this tradition has historically privileged distance, objectivity, measurement, and the abstraction of territory into legible systems of knowledge. The second register turns toward **Indigenous Colombian visual traditions**—including Kogi textile cosmologies and the rock art of Cerro Azul in Guaviare—which approach image-making not primarily as the representation of an external reality, but as a practice incorporated in the reproduction of relationships between body, territory, memory, and life. The third focuses on **contemporary Latin American decolonial artistic practices**, articulated through the work of artists such as Carolina Caycedo, Lina Puerta, and Gustavo Caboco, whose visual languages challenge extractive and colonial modes of seeing by producing representations that connect with relationality, embodiment, memory, and situated forms of knowledge.

Importantly, these registers are not understood here as isolated aesthetic categories or as chronological stages in the development of visual representation. Instead, they are approached as different representational systems: ways of making territory visible and meaningful through specific formal decisions. From this perspective, visual elements such as line, geometry, color, composition, texture, scale, rhythm, and spatial organization are not neutral design choices or universal visual languages. They reflect different ways of understanding how the world is structured, how relationships are formed, and what is considered valid knowledge. A line can separate or connect, scale can create hierarchy or suggest reciprocity, composition can place the observer outside the territory or position them as part of it. **Formal decisions therefore also become decisions about knowledge**. Reading images through their visual structures makes it possible to understand not only what each representational system shows, but also how it makes certain relationships with territory visible while leaving others outside the image.

This analysis serves a methodological purpose. Rather than functioning as a catalogue of visual references, it establishes a critical framework through which to **identify and interpret the representational decisions developed throughout this research**. By examining recurring parameters—including line, color, scale, composition, materiality, temporality, texture, and the relationship between body and territory—the study seeks to understand how visual forms embody particular epistemological positions. T**he aim is not to reproduce Indigenous or decolonial aesthetics as visual styles, but to critically examine the assumptions embedded within dominant representational traditions** and to open space for alternative ways of imagining and constructing territorial knowledge. Through this process, representation becomes less a question of accurately representing territory and more a question of how relationships, responsibilities, and forms of coexistence may become visible.

4.1 Register I — Colonial Representation

The first representational register examined in this research corresponds to colonial and scientific visual production developed through nineteenth-century travel drawing, natural history illustration, ethnographic engraving, and early archaeological documentation in Latin America. This framework includes visual material associated with European expeditions in Colombia—particularly the visual accounts produced from the travels of **Charles Saffray**—as well as broader traditions of scientific and editorial illustration through which tropical territories became intelligible to European audiences.[69]

The methodological analysis developed here approaches this framework not primarily as an archive of images, but as a system of visual organization. Rather than focusing on what colonial images represent, the analysis examines how they are constructed and which visual elements repeatedly shape what can be seen. The starting point is that representational systems use recurring graphic procedures that influence how an image is perceived before its specific meaning is considered. In this sense, just as Indigenous visual traditions can be studied through recurring geometric transformations and patterns of symmetry, colonial representation can also be understood as a structured visual system based on repeated ways of organizing line, composition, scale, perspective, and spatial relationships.

The objective of this analysis is therefore not to determine whether colonial images are accurate or inaccurate representations of territory, but to understand how territory was made visible and representable through these images. This distinction is particularly important because nineteenth-century colonial imagery was rarely a direct record of what travelers observed in the field. In many cases, the visual material produced during expeditions went through several stages of interpretation before being published. Field sketches, notes, measurements, botanical observations, and preliminary drawings were often reworked in European publishing and artistic contexts, where they were adapted according to established conventions of representation.[70]

The case of Charles Saffray illustrates this process clearly. Although Saffray travelled extensively through Nueva Granada and produced observations and sketches in situ, the visual material published in Le Tour du Monde was not always reproduced directly from his original drawings. Several published engravings were produced or adapted by professional illustrators, including Alphonse de Neuville, based on Saffray's sketches.[71] As a result, these images did not function as neutral reproductions of experience but as **visual translations that transformed observation into forms already recognizable to European readers**.

This process of translation operated through conventions inherited from Renaissance perspective, French academic drawing, neoclassical compositional order, and the picturesque landscape tradition.[72] These visual traditions had developed methods for organizing complexity into legible systems through proportion, geometric hierarchy, perspectival depth, tonal order, and compositional stability. Colonial representation therefore did not invent a new visual language for the Americas; instead, **it incorporated unfamiliar territories into an already existing European regime of visibility**.

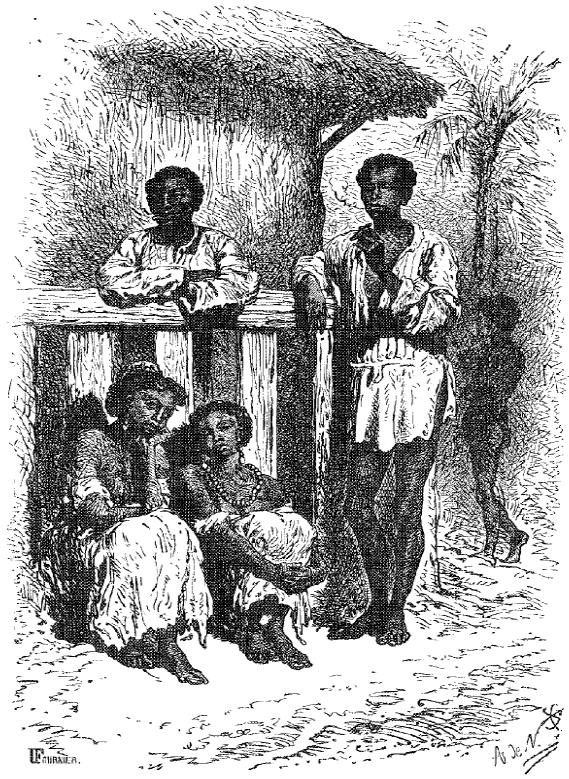
Through operations of selection, framing, abstraction, ordering, and classification, landscapes became reorganized into forms compatible with scientific observation, territorial administration, and bourgeois visual consumption. Across the colonial framework examined, a relatively stable formal structure emerges. These recurring procedures can be analyzed through six interrelated variables: line, geometry, composition, morphology, texture, and spatial organization.

69 - *Saffray, C. (1869). Voyage à la Nouvelle-Grenade. Le Tour du Monde.*

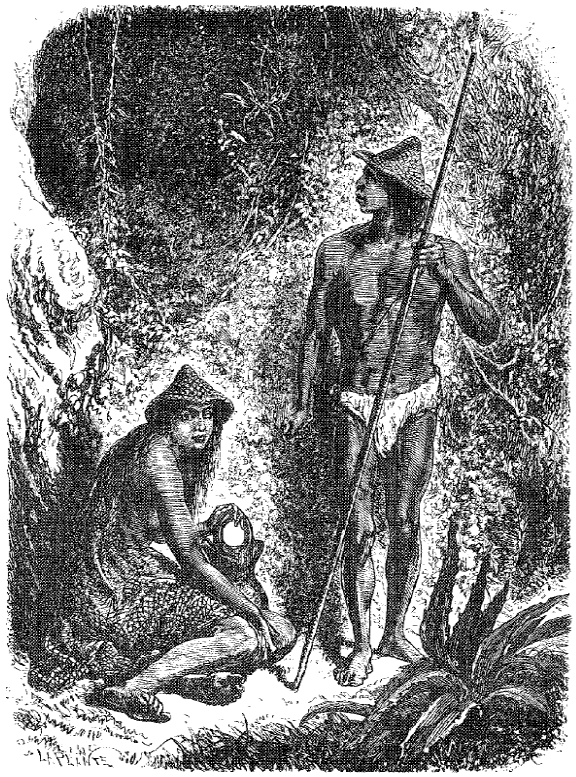
70 - *Ivins, W. M., Jr. (1953). Prints and visual communication. Harvard University Press.*

71 - *Banco de la República. (2019). Le docteur Saffray (El Doctor Saffray). Biblioteca Virtual del Banco de la República.*

72 - *Alberti, L. B. (1991). On painting (C. Grayson, Trans.; M. Kemp, Ed.). Penguin Books. (Original work published 1435–1436).*



Indígenas del Magdalena. *Natives of the Magdalena River.*



Indios de la Sierra Nevada. *Natives of the Sierra Nevada.*

Fig. 21-22
Saffray C., Geografía pintoresca de Colombia: la Nueva Granada vista por los viajeros franceses del siglo XIX, Bogotá Litografía Arco,1833.
Source: Banco de la República. Biblioteca virtual.

The first and most fundamental operation concerns **line**. In colonial representation, line rarely functions as a relational structure. Instead, it privileges contour as a mechanism for separating and stabilizing visual entities. Line operates primarily through delimitation. Bodies, buildings, pathways, vegetation, and landscape features become identifiable through clear contour definition and stable visual boundaries. This tendency was reinforced by nineteenth-century engraving techniques—which depended on precise linear articulation to maintain legibility through reproduction—as well as by academic drawing traditions that emphasi zed controlled contour, proportional coherence, and clear separation between forms.[73]

The second variable concerns **geometric organization** and the way spatial order is materially produced within the image. Within colonial representation, geometric order tends to privilege rectilinear organization. Straight lines, orthogonal relations, axial alignments, and stable directional systems repeatedly structure the image and organize the viewer's perception of territory. Human interventions—architecture, roads, cultivated land, boundaries, monuments, surveying markers, bodily posture—appear through geometric regularity and through the visible articulation of limits. The presence of order is frequently communicated through forms that can be measured, enclosed, and distinguished from surrounding environments.[74]

Within travel and ethnographic images, this often resulted in a clear difference in the way different elements of the territory were represented. Human figures and architecture tend to appear enclosed and clearly defined, while vegetation is often shown through fragmented lines, dense textures, and less precise forms. Forests and tropical landscapes are represented through layers of irregular marks rather than through clear contours. Line therefore does more than separate one form from another; it also affects what becomes clearly visible in the image. Some elements are presented as distinct and recognizable objects, while others become part of the surrounding environment. Through the use of contour, colonial representation therefore gives greater visual stability to certain elements of the territory while leaving others less defined.[75]

If line establishes separation, geometry determines how those separated entities become organized into coherent visual order. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, European visual culture associated geometry with rationality and legibility. Perspective theory, academic composition, and landscape painting relied on geometric systems capable of transforming complex environments into ordered visual structures.[76] Colonial representation inherits these assumptions and applies them to the depiction of territory.

Across expeditionary illustrations and travel engravings, landscapes are often organized through vertical and horizontal axes, visible boundaries, geometric relations, and clear compositional hierarchies. These structures do more than describe space; they organize it in ways that make different elements easier to observe and compare. One recurrent example is the pyramidal composition, inherited from Renaissance painting and reinforced through academic training. This structure guides the viewer's attention while creating a sense of visual order.[77]

This logic can be observed in ethnographic scenes derived from Saffray's expeditions. Illustrations such as Indigènes de la Magdalena arrange human figures not simply as records of a particular moment, but as carefully structured compositions that facilitate observation and comparison. A similar distinction appears in the representation of the landscape: vegetation is often drawn through irregular and curving lines, while architecture, roads, boats, and other territorial elements are given clearer geometric forms. Geometry therefore contributes not only to the description of space, but also **to its organization and classification**. Through these visual conventions, a complex territory is transformed into an ordered image in which different elements can be identified, separated, and compared.

73 - *Griffiths, A. (1996). Prints and printmaking: An introduction to the history and techniques (2nd ed.). British Museum Press.*

74 - *Panofsky, E. (1991). Perspective as symbolic form (C. S. Wood, Trans.). Zone Books. (Original work published 1927).*

75 - *Daston, L., & Galison, P. (2007). Objectivity. Zone Books.*

76 - *Foucault, M. (1970). The order of things: An archaeology of the human sciences. Pantheon Books.*

77 - *Gombrich, E. H. (1950). The story of art. Phaidon Press.*

The third variable concerns composition and the way visibility is organized within the image. Composition determines not only where different elements are placed, but also from which position the territory can be observed and understood. Colonial representation therefore records the landscape as it appeared and constructs it through visual conventions that influenced how territory was perceived and organized.[78] These conventions were also influenced by the picturesque tradition, which emphasized the visual arrangement of landscape through framing, contrast, composition, and carefully selected viewpoints.[79]

A recurrent compositional strategy consists of dividing the image into foreground, middle ground, and background, with each region performing a distinct representational function. Foreground zones establish visual entry and frequently contain darker masses or framing devices that orient perception. Middle zones concentrate descriptive information and human activity, becoming the principal site of visual attention, while background zones absorb atmosphere and territorial extension, suggesting continuity beyond the immediate scene.[80] This layered organization produces an **ordered sequence through which the observer encounters and interprets space**.

One of the clearest expressions of this logic is the systematic use of repoussoir (pushing back), a compositional device in which an object placed in the foreground—often a tree, rock, or architectural element—frames the scene and directs the viewer's gaze toward the space beyond.[81] This strategy appears repeatedly in illustrations derived from Saffray's travels, where dense vegetation frames the image laterally while rivers, scientific encounters, or scenes of movement unfold within clearer interior spaces. The resulting effect resembles theatrical staging in which territory becomes a scene and observation becomes carefully guided rather than open or immersive (*Figure 21-22*).

Perspective reinforces this operation by **organizing movement and attention through converging axes** such as river courses, roads, and mountain passages that extend toward distant points and generate impressions of immensity and exploration. Yet this spatial expansion does not invite participation within the landscape. Instead, **it positions the observer at a distance**, allowing territory to appear as something surveyed rather than inhabited.[82] Composition therefore transforms territory into an object available for reading, traversal, and eventual administration.

The fourth variable concerns **morphology** and the construction of visual subjects. Within colonial representation, morphology tends to organize forms through typification rather than singularity. Bodies become legible as representative figures structured through posture, proportion, gesture, and visual clarity. This tendency was reinforced by scientific illustration, in which images increasingly functioned as instruments for organizing and communicating knowledge rather than simply recording individual observations.[83] Illustrations derived from Saffray's documentation show this process clearly: **figures appear posed and visually ordered to maximize observation rather than relational context**.

This logic can also be observed in nineteenth-century scientific representations of tropical nature. In Martius' Historia naturalis palmarum, vegetation is given a high degree of formal precision, with individual species isolated and organized according to botanical criteria. [84] Humboldt's Tableau physique des Andes et pays voisins operates at a broader territorial scale, organizing vegetation through measurable relationships between altitude, climate, and geography. [85] In both cases, complex environments are transformed into ordered visual systems, while other dimensions of territorial life—such as Indigenous infrastructures, practices, and forms of environmental intervention—remain largely outside the representational framework.

78 - *Cosgrove, Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape (1984); Andrews, The Search for the Picturesque (1989).*

79 - *Andrews, M. (1989). The search for the picturesque: Landscape aesthetics and tourism in Britain, 1760–1800. Stanford University Press*

80 - *Verschaffel, B. (2012). The world of the landscape. CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture, 14(3). https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.2036*

81 - *Born, W. (1948). American landscape painting: An interpretation. Yale University Press.*

82 - *Panofsky, E. (1991). Perspective as symbolic form (C. S. Wood, Trans.). Zone Books. (Original work published 1927)*

83 - *Daston, L., & Galison, P. (2007). Objectivity. Zone Books.*

84 - *Martius, C. F. P. von. (1823–1850). Historia naturalis palmarum: Opus tripartitum. T. O. Weigel. Real Jardín Botánico, CSIC.*

85 - *Humboldt, A. von. (1803). Géographie des plantes près de l'equateur: Tableau physique des Andes et pays voisins. Biblioteca Virtual del Banco de la República.*

The fifth variable concerns **texture** and **tone**. In nineteenth-century engraving, texture was an important way of representing atmosphere, material qualities, and differences in visual importance. Because these images were produced in monochrome, variations in line density were used to distinguish surfaces, create depth, and guide the viewer's attention.[86]

Through these graphic processes, not only were aesthetic choices made, but there was also a great influence from what was seen and how it was understood. Vegetation, for instance, was often represented through dense textures and repeated marks, making forests appear visually saturated and difficult to read as individual elements. Atmospheric conditions were similarly reinforced through layers of detail, increasing the sense of density within the landscape. Human interventions, in contrast, were usually drawn with clearer contours and greater graphic definition. Buildings, scientific instruments, roads, boats, and other constructed elements remained visually distinct and easier to identify within the composition. This contrast helped establish different levels of visual clarity, contributing to the representation of territory as a space that could be made legible through particular visual conventions.[87]

Texture therefore organized perception regularly across the image. The viewer's gaze moved more rapidly across ordered and controlled forms while slowing within zones of environmental density. Through this distribution of graphic attention, forests appeared excessive and difficult to fully understand, whereas architecture and human intervention emerged as legible and intelligible. Visibility itself became structured hierarchically through tonal and textural differentiation.

The final variable concerns **spatial organization** through which relations become structured. **Colonial images repeatedly produce territory through segmentation, organizing visual elements as discrete and autonomous entities rather than as interconnected systems**.[88] Forms maintain clear boundaries, distances become measurable, and spatial relations remain stable and externally observable.

Within this structure, human figures rarely appear as part of their environment. **The landscape mainly functions as a setting rather than as an active part of the scene**, while the observer remains at a distance from which the territory can be observed and interpreted. In this way, space becomes easier to understand by keeping the observer separate from it. This separation between observer and landscape is consistent with broader critiques of colonial landscape representation, in which visual practices often presented land as an object to be observed, classified, and controlled.[89]

As Philippe Descola argues, the separation between nature and culture that characterizes modern Western ontology is historically situated rather than universal.[90] Colonial representation materializes this distinction through formal procedures that **separate subjects from landscapes** and organize territory as an object of observation rather than as a relational network.

Recent archaeological and ecological research highlights this visual heritage, demonstrating that many environments historically depicted as pristine landscapes were shaped by long-term Indigenous land management. Studies by Balée, Pärssinen, Schaan, Ranzi, and Heckenberger have documented archaeological and ecological evidence of Indigenous landscape transformation across vast regions of tropical South America.[91]

From this perspective, the limited connection with the territory creates both an empirical and a representational limitation. These images approach territory from the outside, through formal and rational systems of observation, making other ways of relating to and representing the territory less visible.

86 - *Griffiths, A. (1996). Prints and printmaking (2nd ed.). British Museum Press. and Ivins, W. M., Jr. (1953). Prints and visual communication. Harvard University Press.*

87 -*Palermo, G. (2024). Visuality and geography. In B. Warf (Ed.), The Encyclopedia of Human Geography. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-25900-5_298-1*

88 - *Mukherjee, N. (2020). Spatial imaginings in the age of colonial cartographic reason: Maps, landscapes, travelogues in Britain and India. Routledge.*

89 - *Mitchell, W. J. T. (1994). Landscape and power. University of Chicago Press.*

90 - *Descola, P. (2013). Beyond nature and culture (J. Lloyd, Trans.). University of Chicago Press.*

91 - *Balée (2013); Schaan, Pärssinen & Ranzi (2009); Heckenberger, The Ecology of Power (2005).*

Macro Category	*Visual parameter*	*Characteristics*	*Representational logic*	*Epistemological Imp.*
Line	Taxonomic countour Line	Controlled contours, stable edges, differentiated line weight; architecture and bodies sharply defined while vegetation remains unresolved.	Line separates and classifies rather than connects.	Territory becomes legible through distinction and hierarchy.
Geometry	Rectilinear Ordering	Orthogonal axes, vertical alignment, pyramidal balance, measurable proportions.	Geometry reduces environmental complexity into ordered systems.	Space becomes govenable through visual regularization.
Composition	Hierarchical Framing	Foreground-middle-background organization, repoussoir devices, directed visual paths.	Composition regulates access to territory.	Observation becomes controlled and sequential.
Scale	Detached Territorial Scale	Elevated vewpoints and compressed territorial fields. Human figures become measurable units.	Scale produces overview and visual control.	Territory appears external to lived experience.
Color	Optical Neutralization	Monochrome engraving, sepias, tonal hierarchy through hatching and chiaroscuro.	Tone substitutes for atmosphere and classification.	Visual neutrality produces authority.
Materiality	Reproductive Medium	Ink, engraving plates, editorial redrawings, printed circulation.	Material standardizes vision and enables repetition.	Representation becomes transferable and universalized.
Texture	Hierarchical Density	Cross-hatching and tonal accumulation, dense forests versus smooth architecture.	Texture distributes attention unevenly.	Nature appears excessive, intervention appears intelligible.
Morphology	Typological Construction	Generic bodies, posed figures, simplified architecture, categorized vegetation.	Forms become representative types rather than singular entities.	Difference becomes measurable and comparable.
Spatial Logic	Segmentation and Distance	Clear separations between bodies, objects, and landscape.	Space is composed as autonomous units.	Territory exists as object rather than relation.
Body-Territory relation	Exterior Observer Position	Human figures remain visually detached from environmental systems.	Territory acts as background.	Knowledge is produced from outside the landscape.
Perspective	Surveying Gaze	Stable horizon, perspectival depth, directed vanishing structures.	Perspective organizes mastery through distance.	Seeing becomes a form of possession.
Image function	Visual Administration	Travel image, archive, catalog, scientific document.	Images classify and stabilize territory.	Representation precedes extraction and governance.

4.2 Register II — The Indigenous and Latin American

The second representational register examined in this research refuses the category of "representation" as it is conventionally understood in Western aesthetic and scientific traditions. For the indigenous visual practices addressed in this section —the rock art of Cerro Azul in the Colombian Amazon, the textile cosmologies of the Kogi of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, the woven yica bags of the Wichí of the Gran Chaco, and the broader geometric grammar of Mesoamerican and pre-Columbian indigenous art— the image is not a sign that stands apart from the world it depicts. It participates in that world, sustains it, and in many cases constitutes a primary technology for producing knowledge of it.

This section develops a formal and epistemological analysis of these practices organized around the core visual parameters that have guided the study throughout: line, geometry, color, material, scale, and the relationship between form and meaning. The analysis draws on three overlapping methodological traditions: first, the morphological framework proposed by the Mexican painter and pedagogue Adolfo Best Maugard (1923), which identifies seven primary graphic elements common to all indigenous art of Mesoamerica and their structural analogues in prehistoric and contemporary indigenous visual culture; second, the symmetry analysis methodology developed by anthropologist Dorothy K. Washburn and mathematician Donald W. Crowe in Symmetries of Culture (1988), which interprets the repetition of flat patterns as carrying cultural information; and third, an epistemological framework drawn from decolonial and relational ontology scholarship, which situates these visual forms not as decorative or illustrative but as active systems of knowing, belonging, and world-maintenance.

The geographic and cultural scope of this section is intentionally broad —moving from Colombian rock art to the Chaco lowlands to the Mexican altiplano— because the methodological argument being constructed here is precisely that certain primary visual logics are repeated across indigenous Latin American traditions, not as evidence of cultural homogeneity but as evidence of a shared epistemological orientation toward form: the understanding that geometric abstraction and figuration are not opposites but **continuous dimensions of a single relational visual language**.

Before analysing specific visual parameters, it is important to establish a conceptual distinction that has often been overlooked in the study of Indigenous graphic arts. Archaeological research on Mexican rock art has identified this distinction as a significant gap in previous studies: the difference between shape and form. Shape refers to the specific and visible material appearance of a graphic element, whereas form refers more broadly to the way content is made visible through an image.[92]

Fig 23.
Colonial Table
Daniela González, 2026

92 - *Rudolph Arnheim. 1957. El Arte de la Percepción Visual (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1981); Ben Shahn, The Shape of Content (Cambridge: Harvard University Press.*

The English language makes this distinction available through its two terms: shape designates the material configuration of a figure: the distance between point A and point B, the closed curve of a circle, the angular path of a zig-zag; form designates the class of things to which that shape connects: the associations it activates, consciously or unconsciously, in the perceiving mind and in the cultural community that produced it. Arnheim, based on Wittgenstein, illustrates this distinction through the example of a simple triangle. The same linear drawing can be understood in different ways: as a hole, a solid object, a geometric figure, a mountain, a wedge, or a directional sign.The shape remains the same in each case: three lines meeting at three points. What changes is the form that this shape takes in perception, depending on what it is understood to represent.[93] **Form is therefore relational and culturally embedded**, since the same visible configuration can communicate very different ideas depending on how it is perceived and interpreted.

93 - *Arnheim, R. (1974). Art and visual perception: A psychology of the creative eye (Rev. ed.). University of California Press; Wittgenstein, L. (1953). Philosophical investigations (G. E. M. Anscombe, Trans.). Blackwell.*

This distinction has direct and far-reaching consequences for the analysis of indigenous visual culture. When a pictogram at Cerro Azul depicts a spiral, the shape—the curving line that moves away from a central point—is one thing; the form—what the spiral means and what it does within the world it inhabits—is another. It may represent water in motion, ancestral time, the path of the sun, the unfolding of a plant, a sonic or rhythmic pattern, or all of these simultaneously, depending on the cultural and cosmological framework of its producers and readers. The critical error of much colonial and post-colonial analysis of indigenous visual arts has been to stop interpretation at the level of shape while claiming to have reached form, to describe the what of the mark while mistaking this for the why.

This research therefore proposes to hold both dimensions simultaneously. The formal analysis of line, geometry, symmetry, and color that follows is always accompanied by attention to what these forms connect to, not as a final interpretation, which in most cases is not available to an exterior analyst, but as an opening onto the epistemological frameworks within which these forms operate. **The goal is not to decode indigenous images but to understand the kind of knowing they embody and the kind of world they participate in producing**.

A crucial methodological starting point for the formal analysis of indigenous visual culture across Latin America is the system proposed by Mexican painter Adolfo Best Maugard. [94] Studying the most remote manifestations of aboriginal Mexican art — encompassing Aztec, Maya, Totonac, and other pre-Columbian traditions — Best Maugard identified seven fundamental graphic motifs that, in his view, constitute the primary vocabulary from which all forms in Mexican indigenous art are generated.

The analogy Best Maugard proposes is structurally illuminating: as Western musical notation operates with seven fundamental notes from which all possible compositions, genres, and styles are constructed, indigenous **Mexican visual art operates with seven primary graphic elements from which all figures** *(Figure 24)*, whether abstract or figurative, geometric or naturalistic, can be derived and combined.

What makes this taxonomy methodologically powerful is its claim to structural exhaustiveness: all graphic forms found in indigenous Mexican art — and by extension, as subsequent research has suggested, across a wide range of pre-Columbian and indigenous Latin American visual traditions — can be understood as combinations, variations, and transformations of these seven primary elements.

The complex interlocking patterns known as **grecas can be understood as developments of a small number of basic elements**. The straight line and the angular spiral generate different forms of geometric repetition, while the interlocking meander patterns derive from the zigzag. [95] More complex concentric forms emerge from the circle and the curvilinear spiral. Naturalistic figures—anthropomorphic, zoomorphic, phytomorphic, and astromorphic—can also be understood as further transformations of these same basic elements, shaped according to what they represent.

This relationship is important for this research because it challenges the distinction between geometric abstraction and figuration. Rather than understanding geometry only as decoration or figurative forms, Best Maugard's system presents them as expressions of a visual language that communicates through the relationships between forms. The spiral, for example, does not operate as an individual figure, but as part of a sequence of transformations. These forms therefore work together as part of a connected system in which meaning emerges through their relationships and transformations.

94 - *Adolfo Best Maugard. 1923. Método de dibujo: tradición, resurgimiento y evolución del arte mexicano (Mexico City: Secretaría de Educación Pública).*

95 - *Meander patterns are understood as repeated geometric lines that turn back on themselves.*

Element		*Shape Description*	*Structural Character*
1. Spiral		A line that moves away from or toward a central point in a continuous curve.	Curvilinear, centripetal / centrifugal.
2. Circle		A closed curve equidistant at all points from a central point.	Curvilinear, static, centred.
3. Half-circle		An arc-circle opened along a diameter.	Curvilinear, directional, incomplete.
4. S-curve		A double curve reversing direction, what Best Maugard calls the "curve of beauty".	Curvilinear, rhythmic, bilateral.
5. Undulationg Line		A continuous wave without fixed centre or endpoint.	Curvilinear, serial, open.
6. Zig-zag line		An angular, repetitive directional change, the rectilinear equivalent of the wave.	Rectilinear, serial, open.
7. Straight Line		The shortest distance, between two points, all rectilinear forms derive from this.	Rectilinear, directional, foundational.

Fig. 24
Table Indigenous parameters
Source: Best Maugard, 1923. pp. 26-28

This structure closely aligns with what Mendiola Galván, in his analysis of the petroglyphs and rock paintings of northern Sinaloa, describes as the internal logic of rupestrian art: an integrated graphic system in which rectilinear, curvilinear, and combined forms are not isolated elements but interconnected parts of a larger visual structure. Rather than functioning independently, these forms establish relationships that produce geometric and visual equilibrium across the composition. Mendiola Galván describes this system, across both its naturalistic and abstract forms, as "a unit that maintains total equilibrium, both geometric and visual." He further argues that the rectilinear, curvilinear, and combined modes of representation "derive from a single origin" and maintain "absolute symmetry" with one another.[96]

The formal analysis of Indigenous graphic traditions, particularly through the study of rock art, reveals recurring rectilinear, curvilinear, and combined forms that should not be understood as isolated visual elements. Instead, **these forms can relate to and transform into one another**, generating more complex patterns while maintaining relationships of geometric and visual balance. As Mendiola Galván's analysis of northern Sinaloa rock art suggests, identifying these relationships makes it possible to move beyond the classification of individual motifs and examine the underlying formal structures through which a graphic system is organized.[97]

4.2.1 The Rectilinear System

The rectilinear system begins with one basic element: the straight line. From this simple element, more complex forms can be created through repetition, combination, and changes in direction. Basic geometric shapes such as squares, rectangles, triangles, rhombuses, and trapezoids can therefore be understood as different organizations of straight lines. In Indigenous graphic traditions, two transformations are particularly relevant: repetition and angular deviation. The zigzag is produced when a straight line repeatedly changes direction, while the greca develops this movement into a more regular sequence of angular turns. The angular spiral takes the same principle further, turning the line around itself and creating an expanding or contracting geometric movement *(Figure 25)*.[98] Rather than treating these forms as a simple catalogue of geometric figures, the rectilinear system can be understood through the relationships between them. Straight lines become repeated patterns; changes in direction create movement; and repetition establishes rhythm and continuity.[99]

Formally, rectilinear compositions tend to emphasize clear boundaries, geometric enclosure, and visual stability. Horizontal and vertical directions establish a strong sense of order, while repeated intervals create rhythm across the composition. These characteristics make the rectilinear system particularly useful for analyzing how space is organized visually: lines can mark limits, enclose areas, establish directions, and create relationships between repeated elements. Rather than assuming that these forms have a fixed meaning, the analysis focuses on **how their geometric organization produces different possibilities for structuring and reading space**.

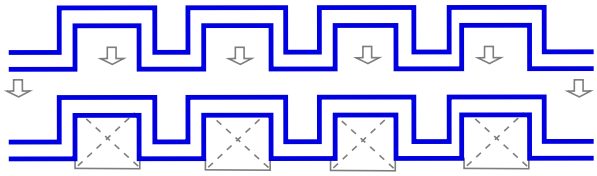
For this research, the rectilinear system is therefore understood not as a fixed vocabulary of forms, but as a set of operations that can be observed, compared, and transformed. Its emphasis on repetition, direction, boundaries, and spatial order provides a framework for examining how geometric relationships can organize the representation of territory. This becomes particularly relevant to the analysis of Teyuna, where the aim is not to assign fixed meanings to individual forms, but to understand how relationships between lines, patterns, and spatial structures can contribute to a different way of representing and interpreting territory.

96 - *Mendiola Galván, F. (s. f.). Arte rupestre: Epistemología, estética y geometría. Rupestreweb. https://www.rupestreweb.info/mendiola2.html.*

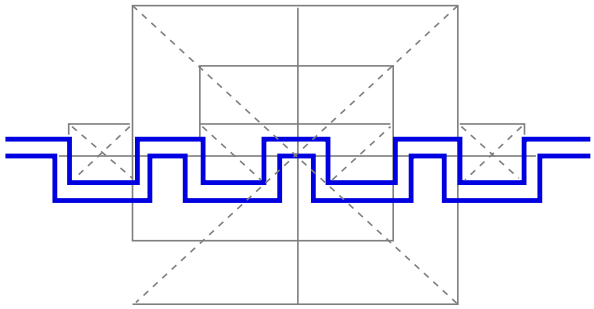
97 - *Mendiola Galván, F. (2002). Arte rupestre: Epistemología, estética y geometría. Sus interrelaciones con la simetría de la cultura: Ensayo de explicación sobre algunas ideas centrales de Adolfo Best Maugard y Beatriz Braniff. Rupestreweb. https://www.rupestreweb.info/mendiola2.html*

98 - *Best Maugard, A. (1923). Método de dibujo: Tradición, resurgimiento y evolución del arte mexicano. Secretaría de Educación Pública.*

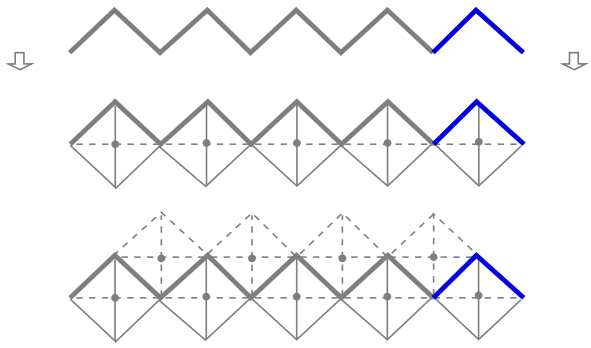
99 - *As Mendiola Galván explains in his analysis of rock art, the combination and transformation of primary elements can generate more complex abstract forms, including grecas, concentric circles and squares, as well as naturalistic motifs (Mendiola Galván, 2002).*



Simple geometry of Greek key and zigzag patterns corresponding to the square



Simple geometry of Greek key and zigzag patterns corresponding to the rhombus



Complex geometry of simple Greek key corresponding to the square and spiral

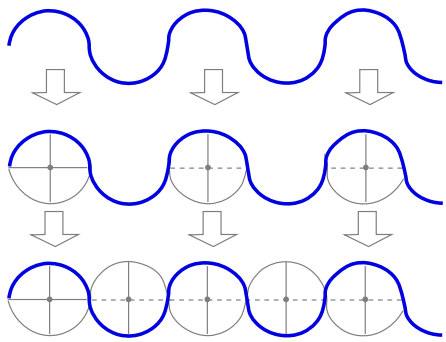
Fig. 25
Rectilinear transformations
Source: Author's elaboration based on Best Maugard (1923) and Mendiola Galván (2002).

4.2.2 The Curvilinear System

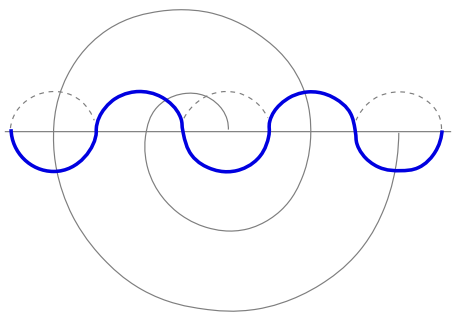
The curvilinear system begins with one basic element: the curve. Unlike the straight line, the curve changes direction continuously, creating forms that can remain open or return to themselves. From this basic element, several recurring forms can be identified: the circle, the spiral, the S-curve, and the undulating line. The circle is a curve that closes around a central point, while the spiral extends the movement of the curve outward or inward. The S-curve reverses its direction without closing, and the undulating line repeats this movement continuously without forming a closed shape.

These forms can therefore be understood not as separate geometric figures, but as different transformations of the same basic movement. The circle closes the curve, the spiral extends it, the S-curve reverses its direction, and the undulating line repeats it (*Figure 26*). This relationship gives the curvilinear system a sense of continuity and movement. Rather than relying on fixed angles and measured intervals, its rhythm is produced through variation, repetition, and changes in direction.

The relationship between these forms can also be understood through Kandinsky's formal analysis of geometric elements. In *Point and Line to Plane*, Kandinsky examines line as the result of movement and distinguishes between different types of lines according to their direction, movement, and visual tension.[100] Mendiola Galván draws on this type of formal reasoning in his analysis of rupestrian art, using basic graphic elements to examine how lines and geometric forms combine and transform into more complex configurations.[101]



Simple geometry of the curve corresponding to the circle



Simple geometry of the curve corresponding to the curvilinear spiral

100 - *Kandinsky, W. (2003). Punto y línea sobre el plano. Paidós. (Original work published 1926)*

101 - *Best Maugard, A. (1923). Método de dibujo: Tradición, resurgimiento y evolución del arte mexicano. Secretaría de Educación Pública.*

Fig. 26
Curvilinear transformations
Source: Author's elaboration based on Best Maugard (1923) and Mendiola Galván (2002).

For this research, the curvilinear system is understood as a set of formal operations based on continuity, transformation, and movement. Rather than assigning fixed meanings to curves, spirals, or undulating lines, the analysis focuses on how these relationships organize visual perception and suggest processes of connection and change. This provides a useful framework for examining representations of territory in which space is understood not as a collection of fixed elements, but as a continuous and relational process.

These transformational correspondences are not merely formal curiosities. They establish what the analysis of Sinaloa petroglyphs called an "impressive equilibrium" in the structure of indigenous graphic arts — a structural coherence in which any given motif, whether abstract or figurative, rectilinear or curvilinear, can be understood as a position within a single, internally consistent formal system. The implications for reading these arts are significant: rather than classifying images as abstract or figurative, geometric or organic, the analysis should ask where a given form sits in the transformation sequence — what form it derives from and what forms it generates.

4.2.3 Symmetry System

The second methodological framework informing this analysis is the symmetry analysis approach developed by Dorothy K. Washburn and Donald W. Crowe in Symmetries of Culture. Their work, applied to ceramic, textile, and basketry designs across cultures including Nasca embroideries, Ica Valley ceramics, Quechua textiles, and Shipibo-Conibo pottery, proposes that the way motifs are repeated—not merely their individual shapes—can carry culturally specific information about social organization, territorial distribution, and contact between communities.[102]

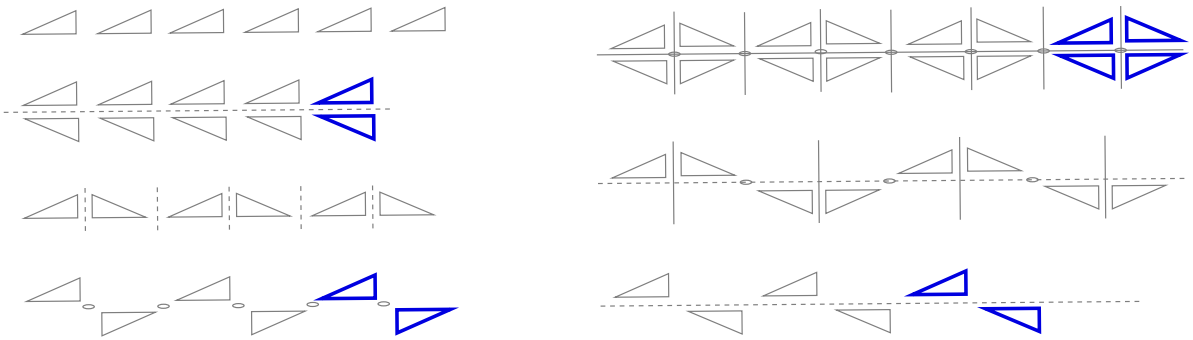
Washburn and Crowe distinguish between **one-dimensional patterns**, which develop primarily along a single direction, and **two-dimensional patterns**, which extend across a surface. Both are generated through a limited set of symmetry operations: **translation**, in which a motif is repeated along an axis; **reflection**, in which it is mirrored across an axis; **rotation**, in which it turns around a central point; and **glide reflection**, which combines translation and reflection. Rather than treating these operations as purely mathematical categories, their approach provides a way to describe how visual patterns are constructed, repeated, and related within different cultural traditions.

The importance of this approach lies in shifting attention from the individual motif to the **relationships between motifs**. A form can acquire a different visual structure depending on how it is repeated, oriented, connected, or transformed in relation to others. Symmetry can therefore be understood not simply as visual balance, but as a system through which patterns establish rhythm, continuity, correspondence, and spatial relationships. In this sense, the meaning of a visual system does not depend only on the forms it contains, but also on how those forms interact across a composition.

One-dimensional patterns organize repetition primarily along a single axis, producing sequences and rhythmic structures such as borders, bands, and repeated motifs. Washburn and Crowe identify **seven classes** of one-dimensional symmetry, or frieze groups, which describe different ways in which a motif can be repeated along a linear direction. These patterns can combine operations to create variations in direction, orientation, and continuity. Their relevance to Indigenous visual traditions lies in showing how a simple form can become a continuous sequence through repetition, transforming an individual motif into a larger rhythmic structure.

102 - *Dorothy K. Washburn and Donald W. Crowe. 1988. Symmetries of Culture: Theory and Practice of Plane Pattern Analysis (Seattle: University of Washington Press.*

The examples presented by Washburn and Crowe show how one-dimensional symmetry can produce visually different structures even when the basic motif remains similar (*Figure 27*). Repetition can create continuous bands, alternating sequences, mirrored arrangements, or directional movements. The importance of these examples for the present research is therefore not to assign a specific meaning to each pattern, but to observe **how repetition establishes relationships between forms and produces continuity across a surface**. This provides a useful basis for examining how visual elements can operate as parts of a larger network rather than as isolated motifs.



Two-dimensional patterns extend these relationships across a surface, allowing several symmetry operations to interact and producing more complex visual fields (*Figure 28*). Washburn and Crowe identify **seventeen classes** of two-dimensional symmetry, commonly known as the plane symmetry or wallpaper groups. These classes describe different ways in which a motif can be repeated across a surface while maintaining consistent geometric relationships between its elements. The classification demonstrates how relatively simple forms can generate complex networks through changes in direction, reflection, rotation, and repetition.

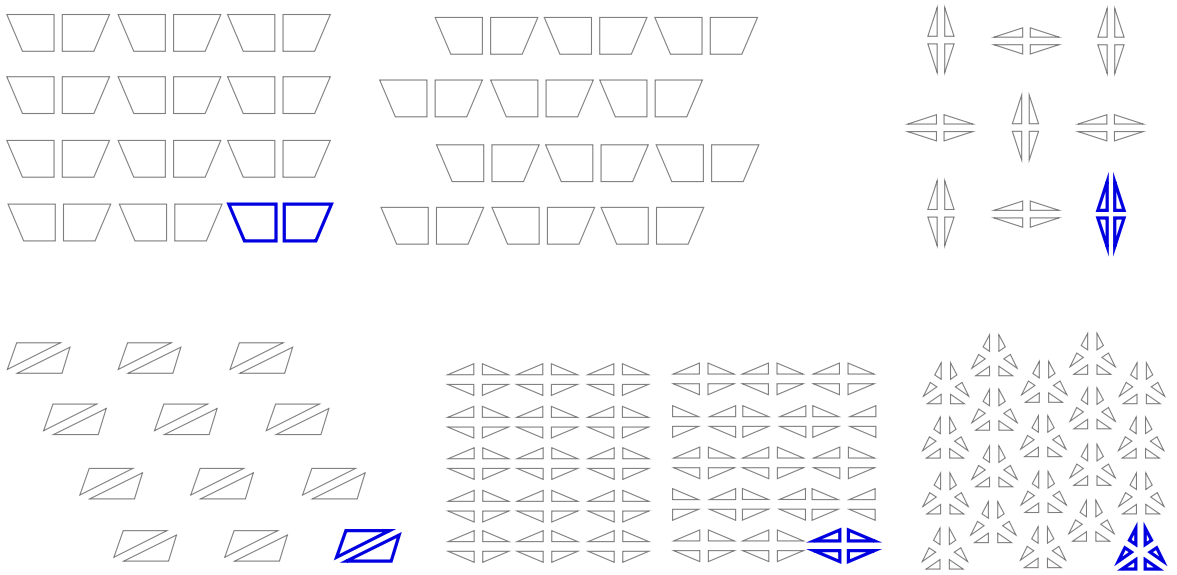


Fig. 27
One dimensional patterns. Source: Dorothy K. Washburn and Donald W. Crowe. 1988. Symmetries of Culture: Theory and Practice of Plane Pattern Analysis (Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Fig. 28
Two dimensional patterns. Source: Dorothy K. Washburn and Donald W. Crowe. 1988. Symmetries of Culture: Theory and Practice of Plane Pattern Analysis (Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Fig. 29
Examples of two-dimensional patterns in fabrics Source: Dorothy K. Washburn and Donald W. Crowe. 1988. Symmetries of Culture: Theory and Practice of Plane Pattern Analysis (Seattle: University of Washington Press.

The comparative examples presented by Washburn and Crowe—including designs from different Indigenous and non-Western traditions—demonstrate how similar formal operations can produce very different visual organizations. The purpose of these comparisons is not to suggest that the cultures represented share the same visual language or meanings, but to show **how symmetry provides a common formal vocabulary for examining different systems of pattern organization**. In this sense, two-dimensional symmetry is particularly useful for understanding how individual forms become connected within larger visual structures and how these connections produce continuity, rhythm, and spatial relationships.

Within Indigenous visual traditions, these relational structures can be particularly significant because patterns are produced within specific cultural, territorial, and cosmological contexts. **Symmetry does not therefore carry a universal meaning**; rather, the organization of a design can participate in culturally specific ways of understanding relationships between bodies, territory, nature, and the wider living world. Washburn and Crowe's approach is valuable precisely because it allows these structures to be analyzed without reducing them to isolated symbols or assuming that a formal correspondence necessarily implies the same cultural meaning.

For this research, symmetry analysis complements the rectilinear and curvilinear systems developed above. While the rectilinear system examines how forms are generated and transformed through straight lines, and the curvilinear system examines how they are generated and transformed through curves, symmetry analysis focuses on how these forms are repeated, related, and organized within a larger composition. Together, these frameworks move the analysis from the generation of individual forms, to their transformation, and finally to the relationships they establish within a broader visual structure. Applied to Teyuna, this provides a way to investigate how visual networks may organize relationships between forms and territory, and how repetition, continuity, and correspondence can contribute to representations of a relational and living territory.



Truncated two-dimensional pattern.
Chief's blanket, Third Phase, Navajo
(California Academy of Sciences, San Francisco, no. 370-699; photo by C. Thomas)



Truncated two-dimensional pattern on a lime container from Madang District, New Guinea. From Hanneman 1969.



Truncated two-dimensional pattern.
Detail, sleeping hammock, Cashinahua, Peru
(Haffenreffer Museum, Brown University, no. 69-10278).

4.2.4 Cerro Azul, Guaviare: Rock Art as Embodied Territorial Knowledge

The rock art sites of Cerro Azul, within the Serranía de la Lindosa in Guaviare, constitute one of the most significant archives of pre-Columbian visual knowledge in the Colombian Amazon. Located near the Guayabero River, the site consists of sandstone rock formations containing sixteen identified panels of ochre paintings, some of them accessible only through difficult climbs. Archaeological research in the region has identified evidence of human presence dating to approximately 12,600–11,800 years ago, together with mineral pigments, lithic materials, plant and animal remains, and extensive rock paintings.[103]

For the purposes of this research, however, the importance of Cerro Azul is not only its chronological depth, but the relationship established between form, material, body, and territory. The paintings were produced directly on the sandstone surfaces of the rock shelters rather than on a separate support such as paper or canvas. The pigments were obtained from materials found in the surrounding environment, including mineral substances such as iron oxides and charcoal. The act of representation therefore began with the transformation of materials from the territory itself into substances capable of producing images. This creates a **direct material relationship between the place from which the pigment was obtained, the body that transformed and applied it, and the rock surface on which the image was produced**.

This relationship becomes even more significant when considering the techniques used to produce the paintings. The evidence from Cerro Azul does not support the idea that the images were simply made through direct handprints. Muñoz Castiblanco identifies representations of hands that were produced with fine instruments, allowing for controlled lines and detailed forms. [104] The body therefore remains central to the process, but not necessarily as a direct imprint. The hand operates as an embodied agent through which material is transformed into visual form. Representation is consequently produced through an interaction between bodily action, natural materials, technical instruments, and the geological surface of the territory.

This differs significantly from the representational conditions examined in the colonial register. In nineteenth-century scientific and travel imagery, observation was generally separated from its final visual support through several intermediate stages: the landscape was observed, sketched, redrawn, engraved, printed, and circulated through distant editorial systems. At Cerro Azul, by contrast, the image remains materially connected to the place in which it was produced. The mountain itself becomes the surface of representation. [105] There is no equivalent separation between the territory observed and the support on which it is represented. **The rock is simultaneously territory, material surface, and visual support**.

The scale of representation also changes this relationship. The pictograms are not detached images that can be removed from their surroundings and understood independently of their physical location. Their dimensions, textures, orientation, and position are determined by the rock surface itself. The image therefore becomes part of a larger spatial condition rather than an autonomous object. This is particularly relevant to the body–territory relationship developed throughout this research: the body participates in the transformation of materials from the territory, while the territory provides the physical surface through which knowledge becomes visible.

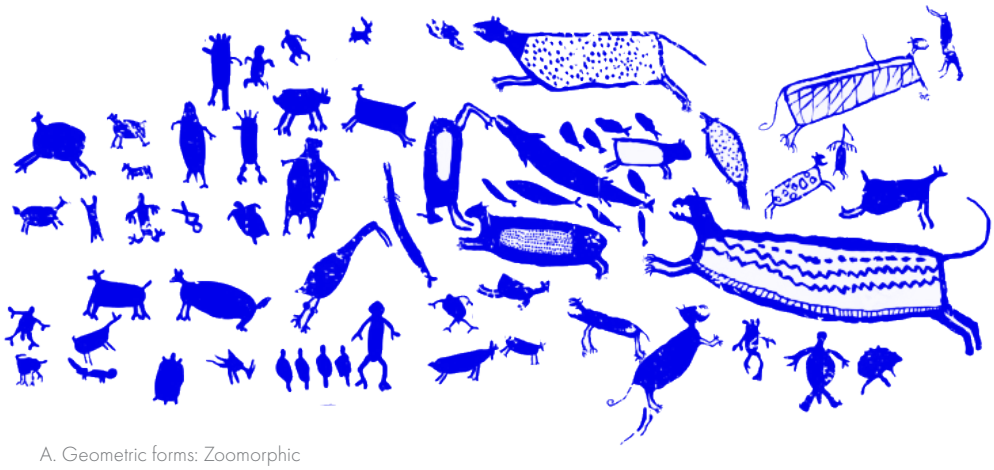
103 - *Morcote-Ríos, G., Aceituno, F. J., Iriarte, J., Robinson, M., & Chaparro-Cárdenas, J. L. (2021). Colonisation and early peopling of the Colombian Amazon during the Late Pleistocene and the Early Holocene: New evidence from La Serranía La Lindosa. Quaternary International, 578, 5–19.*

104 - *Muñoz Castiblanco, G. (2020). Estética amazónica y discusiones contemporáneas: El arte rupestre de la serranía de La Lindosa, Guaviare-Colombia. Calle 14 Revista de Investigación en el Campo del Arte, 15(27), 14–39.*

105 - *Gómez, M. J. (2025, November 6). De la tierra al arte: pigmentos en la Serranía de La Lindosa. La Red Cultural del Banco de la República.*

Fig. 30
Cerro Azul rock shelter and its pictographic panels
Source: Banco de la República. (2025)





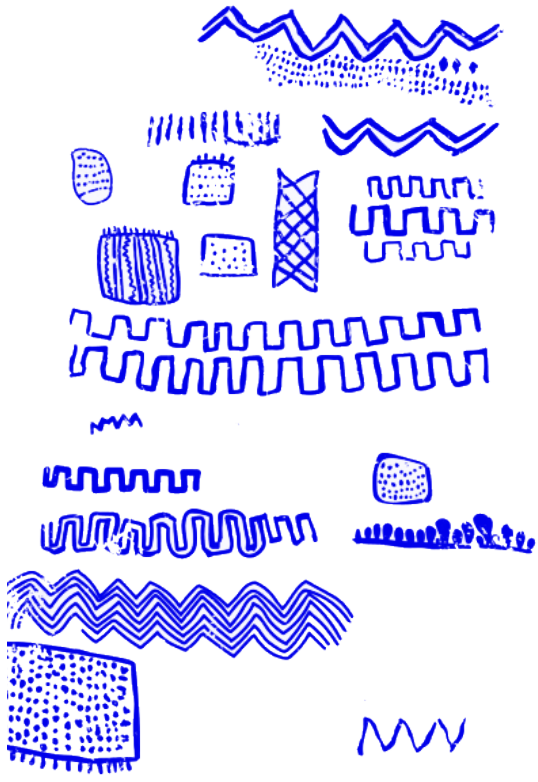
A. Geometric forms: Zoomorphic figures (animals)



B. Geometric forms: Plants, hands, roots, etc.



C. Geometric forms: ritual activities, collective gatherings, hunting.



D. Geometric forms: Repeated graphic patterns

The content of the paintings further demonstrates that this visual system cannot be reduced to a single symbolic vocabulary. The panels contain geometric forms alongside anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figures, including animals, human bodies, hands, plants, domestic structures, and repeated graphic patterns. They also include scenes that have been interpreted in relation to ritual activities, collective gatherings, hunting, and other forms of interaction between humans and their environment. Research on Chiribiquete has further connected figures such as jaguars, plants, human transformations, animals, celestial elements, and the maloka—the communal house and an important spatial and ritual structure within Indigenous societies—to broader cosmological understandings of the living world (*Figure 31*).[106] These interpretations are useful here not because they provide a fixed dictionary for decoding every image at Cerro Azul, but because they demonstrate that figurative and geometric elements can participate in broader systems of knowledge in which human, animal, vegetal, and territorial relations are interconnected.

This becomes particularly important when reading the pictograms through the formal systems established above. The geometric patterns identified at Cerro Azul do not exist separately from the figurative images. Zigzags, spirals, curves, and rectilinear structures appear alongside bodies, animals, plants, and scenes of collective activity. Rather than classifying these elements as either abstract or figurative, the formal analysis developed in this research understands them as different positions within a continuous visual grammar. This supports the earlier observation that **shape and form cannot be separated**: the same geometric configuration may acquire different roles depending on its relationship with the surrounding figures, the rock surface, and the cultural framework in which it is produced.

The paintings can therefore be understood not simply as representations of territory, but as visual practices within territory. Their production involves materials extracted from the surrounding environment, bodily actions, technical procedures, geological surfaces, and culturally situated forms of knowledge. The resulting image is not detached from these conditions. It emerges from their interaction.

For this research, Cerro Azul therefore provides an important counterpoint to the colonial representational register. While colonial imagery often introduced distance between observer, material, territory, and representation, the pictograms demonstrate a different configuration in which these elements remain closely connected. The body acts as a mediator between knowledge and material; natural substances become pigment; the mountain becomes the support; and visual forms become embedded within the territory itself. Representation is consequently understood not as the external recording of a pre-existing landscape, but as an embodied practice through which relationships between people, materials, place, and knowledge are materially produced and made visible.

This distinction is central to the methodological argument of this research. The purpose is not to establish a definitive interpretation of what each pictogram "means," nor to reconstruct with certainty what its makers thought or felt. Instead, Cerro Azul provides evidence of a different representational condition, in which visual form emerges through an active relationship between body, material, perception, and territory. The pictograms can therefore be understood not simply as images of a landscape, but as material traces of ways of knowing and relating to a living territory.

106 - *Castaño-Uribe, C. (2019). Chiribiquete: La maloka cósmica de los hombres jaguar. SURA.*

Fig. 31
Selected pictographic forms from Cerro Azul. Source: Adapted from Castaño-Uribe (2019).

4.2.5 Mochila Arhuaco Textile Geometry

The Arhuaco mochila—the woven bag traditionally produced by Arhuaco women of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta—provides another important example for understanding how geometry, bodily practice, and territorial knowledge can operate as a single visual-material system. The research of ethnomathematician Armando Aroca Araújo provides a particularly relevant framework for this analysis, as it identifies and examines the geometric structures embedded in Arhuaco weaving and demonstrates how these forms are connected to cultural knowledge.[107]

The mochila is created through a continuous bodily practice. The woman who weaves does not simply reproduce a previously designed image. Her hands repeatedly transform thread through movement, tension, repetition, and combination, gradually producing geometric structures within the textile. **The act of weaving therefore becomes part of the production of knowledge**: the body is not separated from the process through which the visual system is constructed. What is created remains physically connected to the action that produced it.

This relationship acquires a deeper significance within Arhuaco cosmology. The mochila is understood not simply as a container decorated with symbolic patterns, but as a material extension of the womb.[108] as cited by Aroca Araújo (2008), describes the mochila as a representation of the Earth Mother, the great Cosmic Mother, understood as the origin and end of all that exists. The association between the woven object, the woman's body, and the Earth Mother therefore establishes a direct relationship between creation, reproduction, territory, and cosmological order. Aroca Araújo identifies sixteen **Traditional Figures** (Figuras Tradicionales) woven into the lateral body of the mochila (*Figure 32*).[109] These figures should not be understood as isolated symbols. Their significance emerges through their relationships with one another and through the larger cosmological structure of which they form part.

This example therefore brings together the formal systems identified in the previous analyses. They become **tools through which a specific cultural and territorial knowledge is organized**. The importance of this example for the methodology lies precisely in this connection between form and action. In Cerro Azul, the analysis revealed how bodily action and the rock surface participate together in the production of representation. In Arhuaco weaving, the same relationship takes another form: **the body repeatedly acts upon a material through a culturally transmitted technique, and this action produces geometric structures that carry relationships with the territory** and the Arhuaco understanding of the cosmos.

This also changes the way the mochila can be understood as a map. It is not a map in the cartographic sense, because it does not represent territory from an external or distant viewpoint. Instead, it can be understood as a relational map, in which different dimensions of Arhuaco existence are held within a single material structure. Spatial relationships coexist with temporal, ecological, social, and spiritual dimensions represented through other figures. The textile does not reproduce the territory from above; it organizes relationships within it.

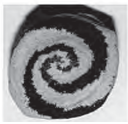
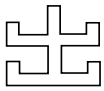
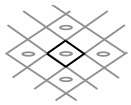
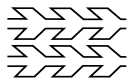
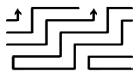
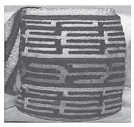
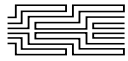
The mochila demonstrates how **territorial knowledge can be produced through the body**, materialized through repetitive action, and organized through geometric relationships. The woman who weaves does not stand outside the system she represents. Her body participates in the process through which the pattern is created, while the resulting object remains connected to the body that produces and carries it. In this sense, weaving becomes not simply a technique for representing knowledge, but a practice through which relationships between body, territory, material, geometry, and cosmology are maintained and transmitted.

107 - *Armando Aroca Araújo, Geometría en las mochilas arhuacas: Por una enseñanza de las matemáticas desde una perspectiva cultural (Cali: Programa Editorial Universidad del Valle, 2008). This is recognised as the first ethnomathematics thesis completed at Master's level in Colombia.*

108 - *Castaño (1986, p. 24), cited in Aroca Araújo (2008). The mochila is understood as 'a representation of the Earth Mother, of the great Cosmic Mother, origin and end of all that exists.*

109 - *The sixteen traditional figures are: Garwa (father of the roads), Kunsumana Cheirua (thought of the man), Kambiru (scorpion's tail), Chinuzatu (the four corners of the world), Zikamu (centipede), Kunsumana A'mia (thought of the woman), Kanzachu (tree leaf), Sariwuwu (months of pregnancy), Urúmu (snail/spiral), Háku (rattlesnake), Gwirkunu (hills and lakes), Makuru (vulture), Gamako (frog), Kaku Seránkwa (Father Creator of the Sierra), Phundwas (snowy peaks of the Sierra), and Kutía (ribs).*

Fig. 32
Table The sixteen traditional figures
Source: Aroca Araújo (2008)

Arhuaco name		*Symbolic Meaning*	*Formal / Geometric*	*Symmetry class*	*Epistemological Implication*
Urúmu	 	The spiral; the snail shell; cyclical and ascending Arhuaco time; the cosmogonic form through which Kaku Seránkwa conceived the world	The only Traditional Figure that begins at the very centre of the mochila base and expands outward and upward through the entire object. The figure unfolds across the cylindrical body and circular base simultaneously.	Spiral rotation; continuously expanding and non-repeating geometry	Time is understood as spiral rather than linear: cyclical yet ascending. Geometry and cosmology coincide structurally: spiral growth is both
Gamako	 	Frog; fertility across Sierra Nevada Indigenous cosmologies	Bilateral zoomorphic structure translated into geometric order	Bilateral reflection	Fertility is encoded through bodily symmetry and reproductive continuity
Chinuzatu	 	The four corners of the world; cosmological organization of territory through cardinal directions	Fourfold rotational composition derived formally from Háku through rotation of the rhombus lattice around a central point	Fourfold rotational symmetry	Territory and cosmos share the same geometric grammar. Cosmological quadripartition is enacted through rotational geometry rather than represented symbolically.
Háku	 	The rattlesnake; symbol of time, space, and movement simultaneously; the snake's skin as territorial map	Translational frieze generated through repetition of rhombus units; entirely diagonal logic with no horizontal strokes	Translational symmetry	The figure does not depict the snake but reproduces its structural logic. The animal and the geometric operation are co-instantiated. Territorial extension itself becomes geometric translation.
Phundwas	 	Snow peaks of the Sierra Nevada; sacred summits (Seijka — Heart of the World)	Pointed triangular forms with ascending stepped edges	Translational frieze with bilateral organization	Sacred geography is represented through elevation, repetition, and geometric continuity.
Gwirkunu	 	Hills and lakes; topographic structure of Sierra Nevada territory	Stepped rectilinear forms suggesting mountain profiles with alternating horizontal and vertical rhythm	Translational symmetry with bilateral sub-sym-	Landscape is encoded through geometric abstraction rather than mimetic depiction. Territory appears as patterned relation.
Kanzachu	 	Tree leaf; vegetal cycles and ecological continuity	Bilateral pointed form structured around a central axis	Bilateral reflection	Plant life is represented through symmetry and growth.
Kunsumana A'mia	 	Thought of the woman	Complementary bilateral figure paired with male thought	Bilateral reflection	Cognitive and spiritual life are structured through cosmological duality and reciprocal relation.
Makuru	 	Condor / vulture; ecological and spiritual bird	Bilateral composition emphasizing horizontal extension of wings	Bilateral reflection	Flight becomes a geometric principle linking terrestrial and aerial domains
Kutía	 	Ribs; internal bodily structure	Parallel stepped forms suggesting skeletal repetition	Bilateral reflection with translational repetition	The body is understood as patterned architecture rather than isolated anatomy



Principle	*Pattern*	*Cosmological Interpretation*	*Representational Consequence*
Geometry and Cosmology are structurally co-extensive	Spiral growth, translational repetition, bilateral reflection, and fourfold rotation recur systematically across figures.	The same operations that generate the textile structure the world: (Urúmu) - cyclical time, (Háku)- territorial extension, (Kunsumana)- complementary, (Chinuzatu)- cosmological quadripartition.	Geometry is not a representational tool but the operative structure shared by cosmos and textile.
Figuration and abstraction are continuous	Every figure combines symbolic reference with geometric logic.	Snake and tranlational symmetry, mountain and stepped geometry, thought and bilateral reflection coexist simultaneously.	Images do not alternate between abstraction and representation, they instantiate both at once.
Color is inseparable from geometric meaning	Chromatic contrast between figure and ground enables geometric legibility.	Colors derive from Sierra Nevada ecologies (barks, leaves, mineral pigments), linking formal structure to territory.	Color functions simultaneously as visual differentiation, ecological index, and cosmological statement.
The textile is a three-dimensional mathematical text	Figures unfold across cylindrical body, circular base, and woven strap.	Geometry operates spatially rather than pictorially, the mochila is inhabited and carried.	The mochila becomes a volumetric cosmological device rather than a flat image surface.

4.3 Register III — Decolonial Representation

The third representational register examined in this research corresponds to a series of artistic practice developed across Latin America from the 1990s to the present—a practice organized not by the extraction of knowledge from territory but by the production of relationships within it. This framework includes the multimedia work of Carolina Caycedo, particularly her long-term constellation Be Dammed (2012–ongoing) and Yuma, or the Land of Friends (2014); the mixed-media sculptures, installations, and textile works of Lina Puerta; and the drawing-documents, embroideries, and performances of Wapichana artist Gustavo Caboco.

These practices do not form a single movement, but they share a different way of looking at and representing territory from the colonial register discussed in the previous section. They do not approach territory as something to be observed and classified from the outside, but as something experienced from within, in relation to the communities that inhabit it and through materials that carry memory and meaning. What makes this register different, then, is not only its political position, but the way this position becomes visible through the images themselves.

4.3.1 Carolina Caycedo

The work of Colombian artist Carolina Caycedo is particularly relevant to this research because she works directly with one of the main tools through which colonial modernity has produced and understood territory: the aerial image. In works such as Yuma, or the Land of Friends (2014), part of the Be Damned series, Caycedo uses visual technologies traditionally connected to state planning, environmental extraction, and cartographic authority, including satellite images, topographic maps, and aerial photography. However, instead of simply rejecting these tools, she transforms them through processes of multiplication, fragmentation, and collision.[110] By doing so, she challenges the idea that these images can provide a neutral or objective view of territory.

Fig. 33
Mochila weaving technique
Source: Bogotivo, 2020.

Fig. 34
Table Arhuaco Textile
Daniela González, 2026

In related works within the Be Dammed constellation, Caycedo also shifts between satellite imagery and visibly manual forms of drawing. In her river books and related works, marker drawings on Canson paper retain the irregularity of hand-drawn production. The line does not follow a rigid system of measurement or control. It remains visibly manual—variable in pressure, open at its ends, irregular in thickness, and capable of interruption. Figures emerge through their relationships with surrounding forms rather than through clear boundaries. Rivers extend beyond their banks, fishing nets become extensions of water currents, and bodies connect with vegetal and hydraulic systems.[111]

The looseness of the line can therefore be read as a political decision. Colonial drawing historically produced authority through precision, distance, and technical exclusivity; Caycedo instead adopts a visual language associated with community workshops, and activist graphics —forms intended for circulation rather than institutional preservation. The drawing remains reproducible and collectively readable.

Rather than producing a uniform visual field, Caycedo places different image and color registers in tension. In Yuma, satellite imagery is combined with black-and-white aerial photography and cartographic material, bringing together different modes of seeing and recording the river territory [112] . Their coexistence exposes an important methodological question: **territory is never fully visible through a single representational system**.

110 - *Sánchez, C. (2024). La represa es una forma de frontera. Una noción de memoria histórica ambiental a partir de la obra de Carolina Caycedo. Escritos, 32(68), 1–19.*

111 - *Caycedo, 2020; Biennale of Sydney, 2024.*

112 - *Acevedo-Yates, C. (2020). Carolina Caycedo: From the bottom of the river. Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago & DelMonico Books.*





Fig. 35
Carolina Caycedo. (2014). YUMA, o la tierra de los amigos (YUMA, or the Land of Friends).

The satellite image records infrastructure but erases species, textures, memories, and cultural life. The work suggests that greater visual resolution does not necessarily produce a deeper understanding of territory. Increased visibility can also reduce local complexity by privileging what can be detected, measured, and represented from above. **The layering of incompatible color systems therefore becomes a critique of the fantasy of total knowledge**. Colonial cartography historically transformed territory into forms that could be measured, classified, and administered.[113] Caycedo reverses this operation. Yuma operates at an architectural scale and requires bodily navigation. At the same time, intimate scales remain active: stories of fisherfolk, Indigenous communities, gestures, and non-human perspectives coexist within the same network.

113 - *Harley, J. B. (1989). Deconstructing the map. Cartographica, 26(2), 1–20.*

Fig. 36
Table Analysis of Carolina Caycedo's work. Daniela González, 2026

Macro Category	*Visual parameter*	*Characteristics*	*Representational logic*	*Epistemological Imp.*
Line	Open relational Line	Variable stroke, open contours, leaking forms, manual gesture.	Line connects instead of enclosing.	Knowledge emerges through relation, not control.
Geometry	Layered geometry	Satellite grids, mixed with river curves and fragments.	Geometry becomes negotiation, nor order.	Multiple spatial systems coexist.
Composition	Polycentric assemblage	No focal center, layered visual fields.	Composition accumulates rather than organizes.	Meaning emerges through coexistence.
Scale	Multi-scalar field	Territorial scale combined with intimate narratives.	Macro and micro operate simultaneously.	Territory is embodied, not surveyed.
Color	Chromatic friction	Blues + yellows + sediment tones.	Color exposes conflicting ways of seeing.	No image fully captures territory.
Materiality	Hybrid media	Marker, collage, maps, archives, photographs.	Material acts as archive and critique.	Representation is materially structured.
Texture	Sedimented surface	Overlapping images and visible edges.	Surface records processes.	Territory appears as accumulation.
Body-Territory relation	Hydrological continuity	Bodies, rivers, nets, and ecologies merge.	Body extends into territory.	Territory becomes relational.

4.3.2 Lina Puerta

Lina Puerta's practice adds a further dimension to the understanding of line developed in the previous examples. In her Kinship series —works exploring relationships of family, ancestry, and connection— and Fabric Tapestries, the line is not drawn but produced through fabric, thread, embroidery, and the layering of different materials. Puerta's recent textile works are inspired by patterns from Kamëntsá and Inga weaving traditions in Colombia, which she connects with knowledge passed down across generations of women. She combines these references with embroidery techniques associated with European craft traditions, bringing them together through contemporary material processes.[114]

In this context, line becomes inseparable from material and process. Puerta describes her practice as one that combines different materials and responds to their colors, textures, and relationships during the making process. [115] **The line can therefore be understood as a material connection between different elements rather than simply as a boundary or contour**.

Puerta's compositional practice also relies on accumulation and layering. Her works combine textiles, paper pulp, artificial plants, jewelry, netting, lace, and other found or recycled materials. These elements are placed together to create dense surfaces in which botanical, natural, and manufactured forms coexist. The artist herself describes experimentation and layering as central to her process, while institutional descriptions of her work emphasize the complex layering of materials and techniques.

Puerta has repeatedly explored the relationship between the human body and the natural world, including forms that reference the womb, and other parts of the body alongside botanical elements. In her Kinship series, this relationship extends toward plants and ancestral knowledge, creating works in which human and botanical forms are visually connected rather than treated as separate categories.

The combination of these elements can also be read in relation to Puerta's understanding of her own *Mestiza ancestry*. The artist explains that her recent fabric works bring together Indigenous weaving patterns with quilting and embroidery practices, seeking to recover undervalued forms of knowledge and alternative ways of relating to nature. The coexistence of these different material traditions therefore becomes more than a formal combination: it reflects a practice built from multiple cultural inheritances.

This is also evident in the materials themselves. Puerta combines references to Colombian Indigenous traditions with contemporary and discarded materials, including nets, recycled fabrics, jewelry, beads, artificial plants, and handmade paper. In works such as Rombo Vivo and Rana, for example, Colombian Indigenous jewelry is placed alongside discarded food nets, reused fabrics, seeds, beads, and embroidery. **Rather than separating traditional and contemporary materials, the work allows them to remain visible within the same surface**. This material coexistence can be understood as a form of visual continuity in which different histories and forms of knowledge remain present at the same time.

Color and texture reinforce this approach. Puerta works with highly saturated colors, sequins, fabrics, beads, artificial vegetation, and other materials that create visually dense surfaces. In her Kinship works, bright colors and layered textures are used to connect human and botanical forms and to explore relationships between people and plants. [116] The density of the surface therefore does not simply describe nature; it is produced through the accumulation of different materials, techniques, and references.

114 - *KODA & Hunter East Harlem Gallery. (2021). Lina Puerta: Migration, Nature, and the Feminine. Hunter East Harlem Gallery.*

115 - *Puerta, L. (n.d.). Portals & Fabric Tapestries. Lina Puerta.*

116 - *Sures, L., & Samour, M. (Eds.). (2024). Radical paper: Art and invention with colored pulp. The Legacy Press. pp. 196–205.*


Zapp's
POTATO CHIPS
Nutrition Facts
BAKER'S SPICE



Fig. 37
Lina Puerta. (2020). Moth(er).

For this research, Puerta's work is relevant because it extends the previous analysis from geometric structure toward material and relational construction. The rectilinear and curvilinear systems helped identify how forms are generated and transformed, while the symmetry system examined how they are repeated and organized. Puerta adds another dimension: she demonstrates how inherited patterns, bodily references, natural forms, and contemporary materials can be brought together through the act of making. The importance of her work for the project therefore lies not in reproducing her visual language, but in understanding **how different forms of knowledge can be connected through material and formal relationships**.

Fig. 38
Table Analysis of Lina Puerta's work.
Daniela González, 2026

Macro Category	*Visual parameter*	*Characteristics*	*Representational logic*	*Epistemological Imp.*
Line	Stitched and connective line	Embroidery, weaving, repetitive gestures, soft countours.	Line links rather than separates.	Relations emerge through continuity.
Geometry	Organic expansion	Branching forms, circular repetition, ornamental growth.	Geometry produces ecosystems rather than order.	Territory exceeds fixed classification.
Composition	Dense assemblage	Layered objects and distributed focal points.	No singular compositional center.	Knowledge emerges through coexistence.
Scale	Intimate and domestic	Bodily dimensions, close viewing.	Scale becomes experiential.	Understanding emerges through proximity.
Color	Saturated ornament	Greens, reds, yellows, earth tones.	Color activates memory and celebration	Chromatics construct belonging.
Materiality	Genealogical materials	Textiles, ceramics, glass, recycled objects.	Material carries inherited knowledge	Matter stores cultural continuity.
Texture	Tactile density	Smooth, glossy ceramic, crisp clear glass, tactile warmth of a knitted textile.	Texture slows perception.	Complexity resists immediate legibility.
Body-Territory relation	Ecological continuity	Layered fibers and irregular surfaces.	Human and environment are inseparable.	Ecology becomes relational.

4.3.3 Gustavo Caboco

Gustavo Caboco's drawing-documents work in a different register, but they share with the previous examples an understanding of drawing as a way of establishing relationships rather than simply defining forms. Caboco describes his practice as a way of documenting Indigenous stories and expanding the discussion around Indigenous subjectivities. His work addresses the displacement of Indigenous bodies, processes of (re)territorialization, and the production and recovery of memory.[117]

This approach is also visible in the way Caboco represents the relationship between bodies and their environments. His drawings and other works frequently connect human figures with plants, animals, landscapes, and territorial elements rather than treating them as completely separate categories. This can be understood in relation to his broader interest in the movement between body, memory, and territory. Rather than using the line only to establish the limits of a figure, **his practice allows forms to connect and extend across one another**. For this research, this becomes relevant as a different way of organizing the relationship between body and environment: not through separation, but through continuity.

Scale is similarly connected to the body. Many of Caboco's drawings, embroideries, and textile works are encountered at a close and intimate distance, while other works expand into larger installations and paintings.[118] This variation makes scale part of the relationship between the viewer and the work. Rather than presenting territory as a distant background, Caboco often approaches it through personal memory, family history, movement, and material traces. His work therefore shifts the act of looking from observing territory from the outside toward experiencing it from within a more situated perspective.

Caboco's material practice also connects drawing with sewing and embroidery. His artistic training began during childhood in his mother Lucilene Wapichana's sewing studio, where she shared stories about her family, the landscape, and the memories of the Canauanim maloca in Roraima, from which she had been displaced as a child.[119] Caboco identifies these threads and stories as an important foundation of his artistic research. This relationship between drawing, textile work, and memory is particularly relevant to the way Caboco understands his practice. In this context, **the act of making becomes connected to the reconstruction of relationships that were interrupted by displacement**. The line is therefore not only a graphic element; it can also function as a thread that connects bodies, memories, and places.

This is particularly important for the present research because it changes the relationship between archive and community. Instead of treating Indigenous objects as materials that can be studied from an external position, Caboco's practice introduces **Indigenous participation into the process of researching, interpreting, and reconnecting with the collection**. The archive therefore becomes a place of encounter rather than only a repository of information. This shift is closely related to the methodological question of this research: who produces knowledge about territory, from where, and through which forms of material and visual practice?

The idea of **"return to the land"** is central to this process. Caboco describes retorno à terra as a method and creative process through which he moves aesthetically back toward his Wapichana origins in Serra da Lua, Roraima. His first return to Canauanim took place in 2001, when he accompanied his mother, who had left the community as a child. Since then, return has become an important part of his artistic research and a way of reconnecting family memory with territory.[120]

117 - *Atehortúa, D., Pinheiro Dias, J., Caboco, G., Cadete, R., & Araus Sieber, M. (2024). Ateliê-Lavrado: A Wapichana residency with the British Museum. ReVista: Harvard Review of Latin America.*

118 - *Caboco, G. (n.d.). Sobre. Gustavo Caboco. https://caboco.tv/sobre/*

119 - *Prêmio PIPA. (n.d.). Gustavo Caboco. https://www.pipaprize.com/gustavo-caboco/*

120 - *Caboco, G. (n.d.). Retorno à terra. Gustavo Caboco*





Fig. 39
Gustavo Caboco, (2023). As águas nos chamaram e o pajé Maruwai conversou com as mães das nascentes.

Caboco's practice therefore provides a final shift within this comparative analysis. The previous examples helped identify geometric systems, patterns, symmetry, and the relationship between body, material, and territory. Caboco adds the dimension of **memory and return**: the visual work becomes a way of reconnecting with a territory from which displacement has created distance. His drawings, textiles, and archival practices do not simply represent Indigenous territory; they **participate in processes of remembering, reconnecting, and rebuilding relationships with it**. For the present research, this is important because it suggests that representation can operate not only as a record of territory, but also as an active practice through which relationships with territory are maintained and renewed.

Fig. 40
Table Analysis of Gustavo Caboco's work.
Daniela González, 2026

Macro Category	*Visual parameter*	*Characteristics*	*Representational logic*	*Epistemological Imp.*
Line	Narrative and Open Line	Hand-drawn contours, repeated marks, unfinished forms.	Line reconstructs memory.	Territory emerges through narration.
Geometry	Fragmented Spatial Structures	Maps, symbolic forms, dispersed organization.	Geometry resists territorial fixation.	Space remains relational.
Composition	Narrative fields.	Distributed scenes and associative organization.	No singular reading path.	Knowledge unfolds through movement.
Scale	Intimate - Territorial oscilation	Personal memory and collective geography coexist.	Scale becomes experiential.	Territory is embodied.
Color	Restrained Earth palette	Browns, reds, blacks, muted tones.	Color acts as testimony.	Chromatics sustain memory.
Materiality	Handmade and reparative	Ceramics, drawing, text, visible process.	Material supports continuity.	Knowledge remains situated.
Texture	Surface memory	Irregular finishes and tactile marks.	Texture records making.	Memory becomes material.
Body-Territory relation	Territorial embodiment	Bodies tranform into landsccapes.	Territory becomes lived experience.	Human and land remain connected.

4.4 From Representation to Relationship

Read together, these three representational registers demonstrate that visual representation cannot be understood as a secondary operation of depicting a pre-existing territory. **Representation participates in the way territory is understood, experienced, and communicated**: it establishes relationships between bodies and environments, determines what becomes visible or invisible, and gives value to particular forms of knowledge. What initially appears as a question of visual language—line, geometry, composition, colour, texture, scale, and material—therefore reveals a deeper question about how different forms of knowledge construct relationships with territory.

The colonial register provided the starting point of this analysis. Its formal operations construct visibility through separation, classification, measurement, and distance. The relationship between observer and territory remains external, while the complexity of the environment is reduced into forms that can be made visually legible. This progression also **reveals a fundamental limitation of colonial register**. Its formal system can make territory visible with great precision, but the comparative analysis shows what this precision leaves outside the image: the body that experiences the territory, the material through which knowledge is produced, the relationships between human and non-human worlds, the memories attached to places, and the histories of displacement and resistance.

The Indigenous register allowed the analysis to move from individual geometric forms toward the relationships they establish within larger systems. The process began by examining how basic elements are generated and transformed. Through the study of Cerro Azul and Arhuaco textile geometry, this formal analysis was further connected to territory, body, and cosmology. The analysis therefore moved from **geometry to territory and from territory to the body**, revealing that forms are not only generated but produced through relationships between bodies, materials, practices, places, and systems of knowledge.

The decolonial register introduced another transformation. Rather than focusing only on how territory is represented, the analysis examined how contemporary artistic practices can question and transform inherited systems of representation. Carolina Caycedo, Lina Puerta, and Gustavo Caboco work with different materials and strategies, but their practices move away from the idea of representation as a neutral record. Maps, textiles, materials, drawings, archives, and histories become sites where different relationships with territory can be made visible. **This also gives the decolonial register a political dimension**. These practices do not only propose different visual languages; they can expose environmental conflicts, colonial histories, displacement, unequal relations of power, and the experiences of communities whose territories have been represented from outside. At the same time, they create spaces for identification and empathy by bringing personal and collective histories into relation with the viewer. Representation therefore becomes more than a way of showing territory: it becomes a way of taking a position in relation to it.

The purpose of the matrix is therefore not to classify Indigenous or decolonial visual languages, nor to reproduce them as aesthetic styles. Instead, it becomes a methodological tool for understanding what different representational systems make possible and what they leave outside the frame. This progression informs the project's own representational decisions: rather than asking only how Teyuna can be drawn, mapped, or visually reconstructed, the research asks **how representation can communicate a territory understood as living, relational, embodied, and remembered** (*Figure 41*).

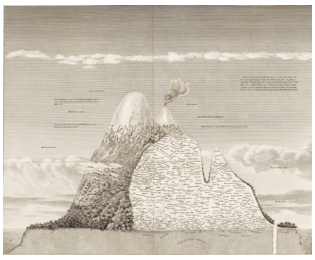
Fig. 41
Analysis matrix of the three registers.
Daniela González, 2026

MACRO CATEGORY

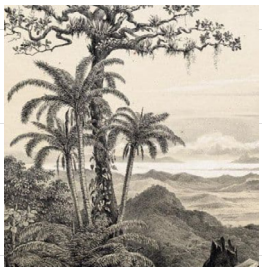
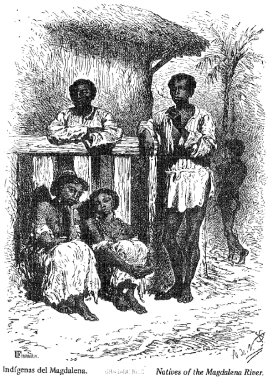
Colonial Register (19th c. Scientific / Expeditionary Representation)

Indig (Arh







Line	Closed contour. Stable edges. Hierarchical distinction between figure and ground. Engraved precision. Linear control.		Relational line. Continuous tr Repetition through weaving c Line extends relations rather t
Geometry Logic	Euclidean geometry. Orthogonal order. Axial composition. Pyramid structures. Perspective grids.		Cosmological geometry. Spirals, concentric circles, zig woven matrices. Geometry c than objects.
Composition	Centralized composition. Foreground–middle–background hierarchy. Controlled reading sequence.		Additive composition. Figures coexist without persp Accumulated surfaces. Temp
Spatial Organization	Space segmented into measurable units. Observer positioned outside.		Space understood as contin landscape, spirits and memo
Morphology	Typological bodies. Taxonomic classification. Stable silhouettes.		Archetypical morphologies. Human–animal permeability. Entoptic forms.
Pattern Systems	Repetition produces order and comparability. Modular rhythm.		Patterns encode memory, kin cosmological orientation and
Texture	Hatching and tonal density organize hierarchy. Texture moralizes territory.		Texture emerges from materia (rock, fiber, pigment). Surface is active.
Color	Restricted palette. Tonal realism. Light isolates and categorizes.		Mineral and vegetal chroma Ochre, white, black as cosm Color performs relations.
Materiality	Neutral support (paper, engraving, print). Material disappears behind image.		Material is inseparable from (cotton, mineral pigments, ro
Scale	Territory reduced to page. Survey logic. Territorial compression.		Scale follows bodily practice
Body–Territory Relation	Body occupies territory.	 Indígenas del Magdalena. Natives of the Magdalena River.	Body emerges from territory.

genous Latin American Register
huaco Textiles + Cerro Azul)

Decolonial Register
(Caycedo / Puerta / Caboco)







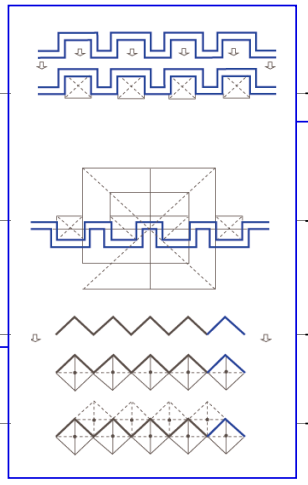
acing. Variable thickness.
nd ritual inscription.
han enclosing objects.

g-zags, thermal gradients,
rganizes relationships rather

ectival hierarchy.
oral layering.

Epistemological Shift

uity between bodies,
ry.

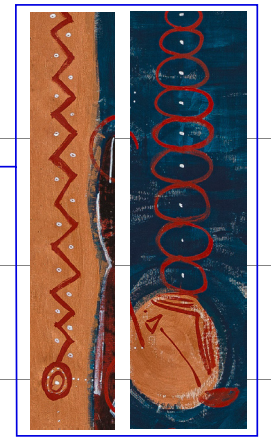


Open and unstable line.
Manual pressure visible.
Interrupted contours.
Drawn through accumulation and bodily gesture.

Topological geometry.
Overlapping layers, branching systems,
territorial networks

Polycentric composition.
Simultaneous scales.
Superimposed temporalities.

Space activated through
movement and participation.



Hybrid morphologies.
Bodies merge with vegetal and hydraulic
systems.

nship, thermal gradients,
d ecological cycles.

al continuity



Patterns emerge through collective gestures
and accumulated traces.

Texture reveals labor, sediment and
ecological memory.



tics.
ological forces.



Chromatic friction.
Multiple incompatible registers coexist.

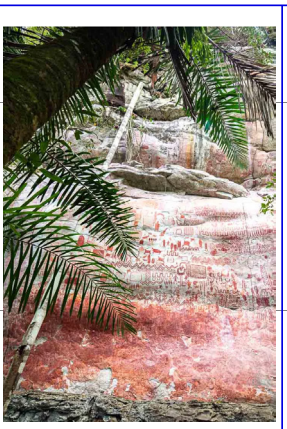


Epistemological Shift

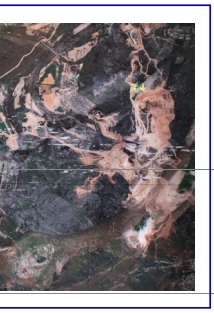
meaning
ck).

Matter becomes archive and
political agent (nets, sediments, collage).

e and cosmological orientation.

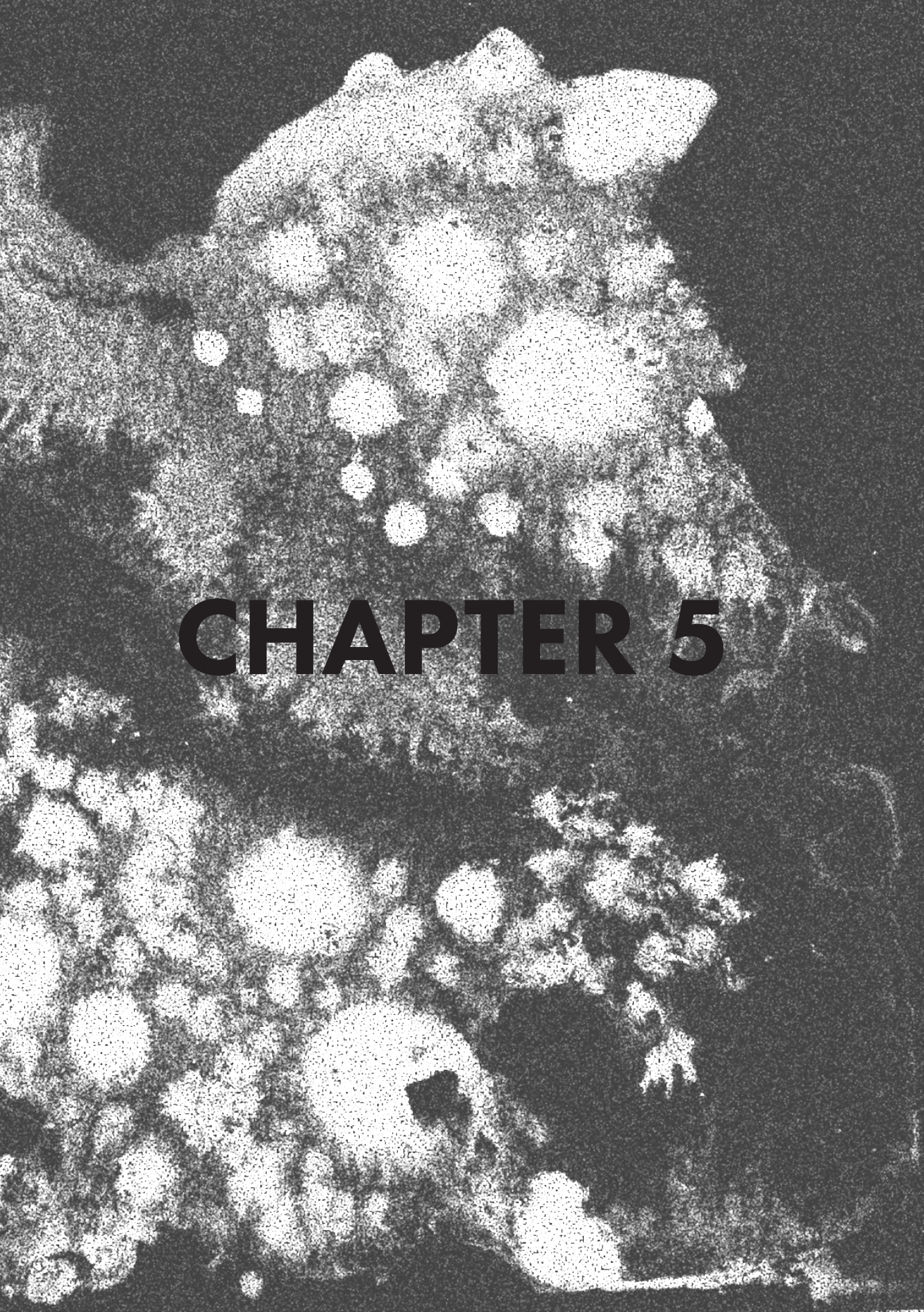


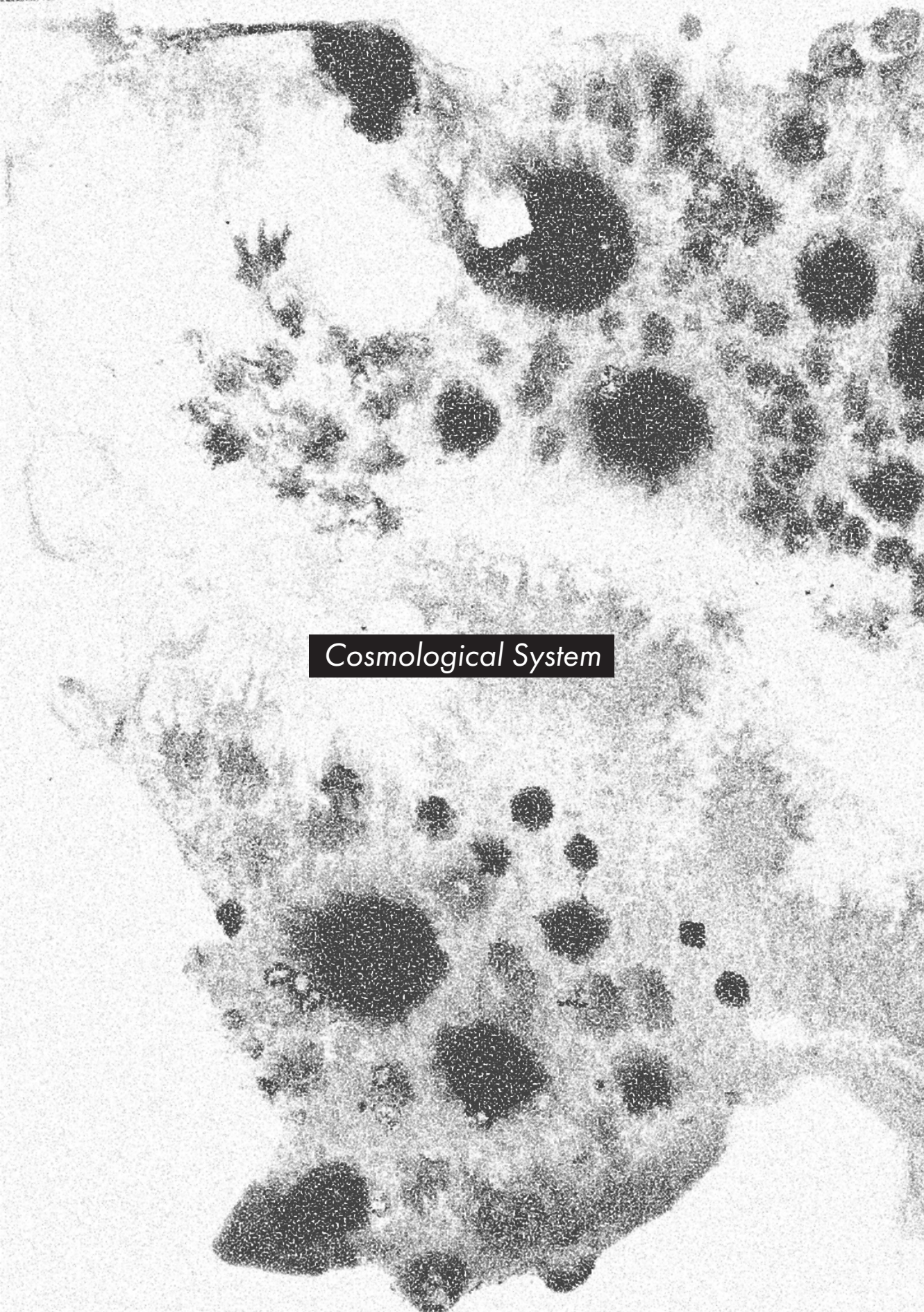
Simultaneous macro–micro scales.
Immersive experience.

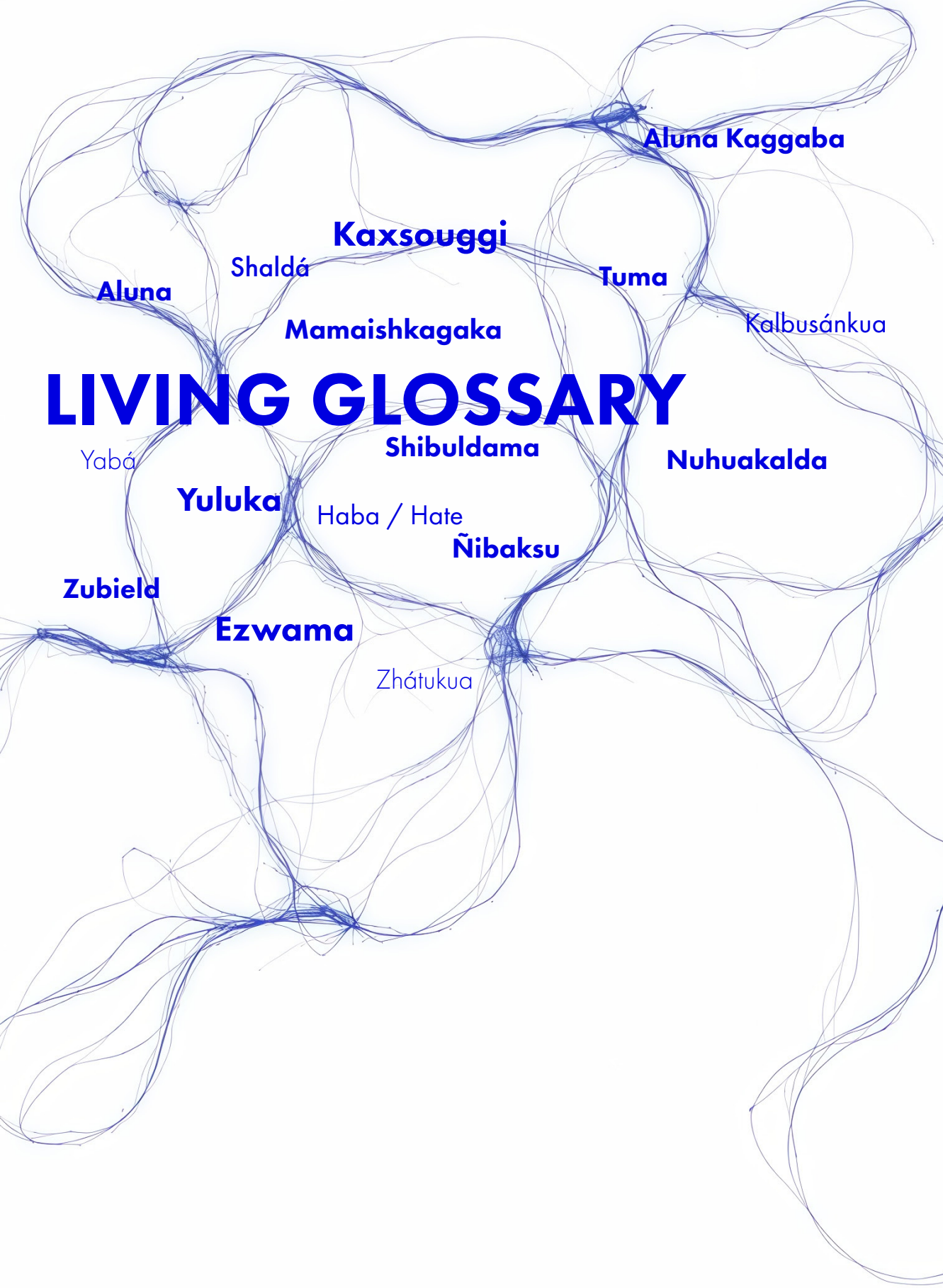


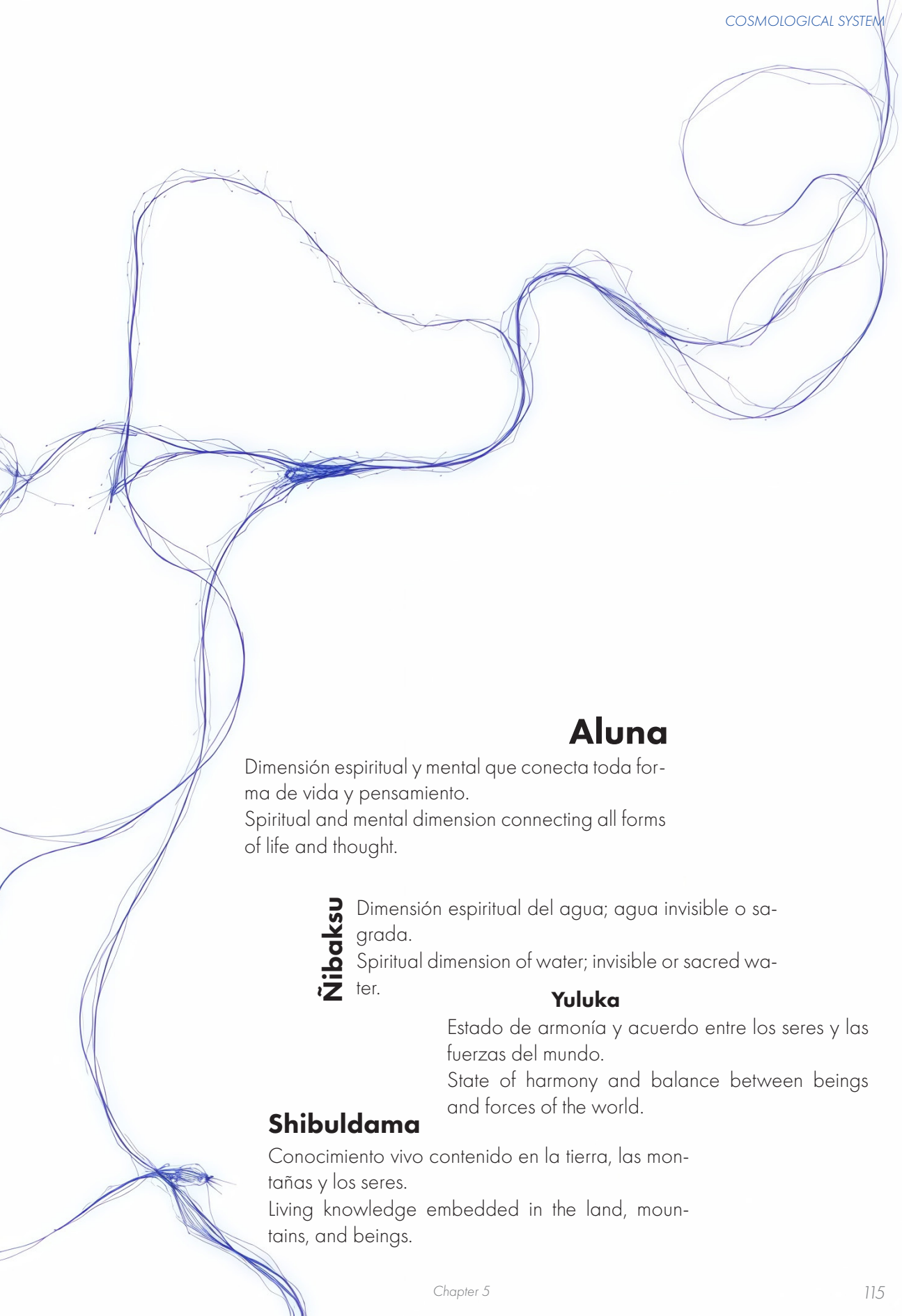
Territory acts through bodies.

Epistemological Shift


CHAPTER 5


Cosmological System


Aluna Kaggaba
Kaxsouggi
Shaldá
Tuma
Aluna
Kalbusánkua
Mamaishkagaka
LIVING GLOSSARY
Shibuldama
Yabá
Nuhuakalda
Yuluka
Haba / Hate
Ñibaksu
Zubield
Ezwama
Zhátukua



Aluna

Dimensión espiritual y mental que conecta toda forma de vida y pensamiento.
Spiritual and mental dimension connecting all forms of life and thought.

Ñibaksu

Dimensión espiritual del agua; agua invisible o sagrada.
Spiritual dimension of water; invisible or sacred water.

Yuluka

Estado de armonía y acuerdo entre los seres y las fuerzas del mundo.
State of harmony and balance between beings and forces of the world.

Shibuldama

Conocimiento vivo contenido en la tierra, las montañas y los seres.
Living knowledge embedded in the land, mountains, and beings.

Nuhuakalda

Interior espiritual de las montañas y del cosmos.
Spiritual interior of the mountains and the cosmos.

Kalbusánkua

Pilar cósmico que conecta los distintos niveles del universo.
Cosmic pillar connecting the different levels of the universe.

Mamaishkagaka

Lugar espiritual donde el agua es purificada y renovada.
Spiritual place where water is purified and renewed.

Yabá

Entid
el flu
Spirit
flow

Tuma

Piedra ceremonial utilizada en prácticas rituales y divinatorias.
Ceremonial stone used in ritual and divinatory practices.

Ezwama

Sitio sagrado de origen y responsabil
Sacred site of origin and ritual respon

Aluna Kaggaba

Seres espirituales que habitan y protegen el territorio.
Spiritual beings inhabiting and protecting the territory.

Zhátukua

Cuenco ceremonial de a
cación espiritual y adivina
Ceremonial water bowl u
cation and divination.



ades espirituales que acompañan y orientan
jo de los ríos.
tual entities accompanying and guiding the
of rivers.

idad ritual.
sibility.

Zubield
Pagamento u ofrenda ritual para mantener el equilibrio del cosmos.
Ritual offering performed to sustain cosmic balance.

Aluna nusegatsé

Residuos espirituales producidos por desequilibrios territoriales.
Spiritual residues produced by territorial imbalance.

gua usado para comuni-
ación.
sed for spiritual communi-

Haba / Hate
Madres y padres cosmológicos de los elementos y fuerzas naturales.
Cosmological mothers and fathers of natural elements and forces.

Shaldá
Cargas espirituales acumuladas en el cuerpo y el territorio.
Spiritual burdens accumulated within body and territory.

Kaxsouggi

Árboles sagrados considerados guardianes vivos del territorio.
Sacred trees regarded as living guardians of the territory.

This section looks at Kogi cosmology to better understand the idea of territorio sentipensante developed in this research. It is not approached only as a collection of beliefs, but as a way of understanding the relationships between space, time, the body, and the different forms of life that make up the territory. From this perspective, territory is experienced through everyday practices and through the responsibilities people have toward the places they inhabit.

Kogi cosmology also helps explain why territory is understood as something that requires care and attention. It is a place that must be observed, listened to, and maintained through different practices and relationships. This understanding is important for the research because it offers another way of approaching the spatial organization of Teyuna, beyond its physical remains and architectural features.

5.1 A Living Universe

In Kogi cosmology, the universe is understood as a living whole rather than as a system made up of separate and inactive parts. Humans, animals, plants, mountains, rivers, stones, celestial bodies, and spiritual forces are all connected within this understanding of the world. At its origin is the **Universal Mother**, from whom life comes and through whom these relationships are maintained. Her thought is referred to as Alúna. The term is often associated with ideas of thought, memory, and the spiritual dimension of the world, although none of these translations fully captures its meaning within Kogi thought.[121]

Alúna is not understood as a separate spiritual world that exists apart from the physical one. It is part of how the Kogi understand the relationships through which life comes into being and continues. The things that can be seen in the territory are therefore not simply symbols of something spiritual that exists somewhere else. **They are part of the same set of relationships**. Mountains, rivers, and stones have an active place within this understanding of the world because they participate in the processes that sustain life.[122]

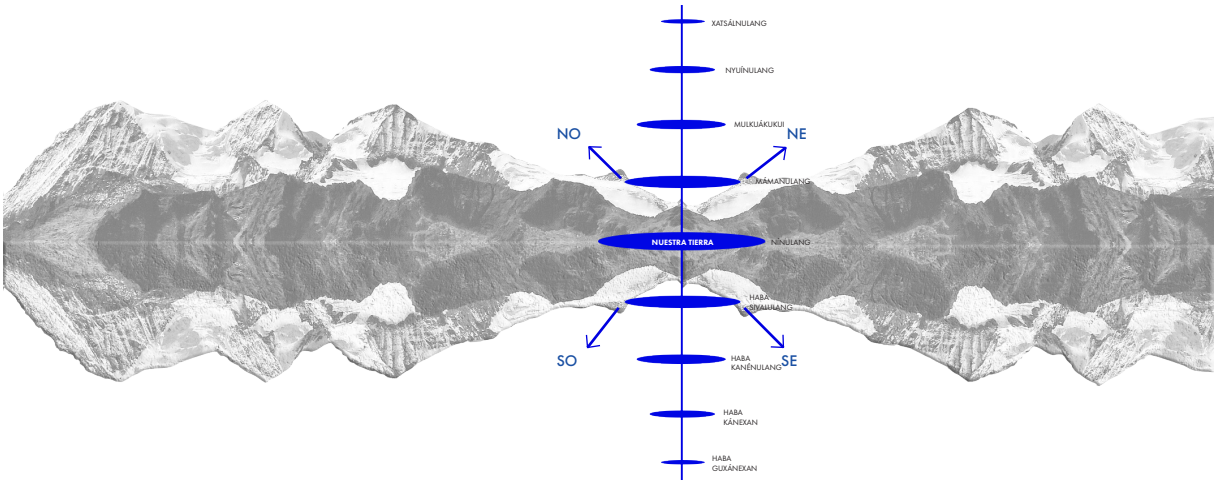
This also changes the way territory can be understood from an architectural perspective. If the physical landscape is connected to Alúna and to the relationships that sustain life, then changes made to that landscape cannot be considered only physical changes. They can also affect the relationships, practices, and responsibilities connected to the territory.

In Kogi teachings, the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, and the world more broadly, is described as a great cosmic egg and as a place from which life emerges. Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff documented this understanding through the idea of **nine connected levels or worlds**. The human world is located in the middle, between the levels above and below it.

These levels are not simply different places. They are connected to different states of balance and disorder, and the position of the human world gives people an important responsibility within this system. Human life depends on maintaining relationships between these different parts rather than treating them as separate worlds. The Sierra is therefore understood not only as a physical mountain but as part of a larger structure that connects the different dimensions of life.

121 - *For a foundational anthropological interpretation of Kogi cosmology and the concept of alúna, see Reichel-Dolmatoff, G. (1990). The Sacred Mountain of Colombia's Kogi Indians. Brill.*

122 - *A more recent ontological interpretation of alúna and the continuity between material and spiritual existence is developed in Parra Witte, D. (2018). Kogi Ecology and Cosmology: The Law of Origin, Environmental Crisis, and Indigenous Eco-Politics in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Colombia (Doctoral dissertation, University of St Andrews).*



This understanding of the world can also be seen in the way the Sierra Nevada is organized and in the location of Teyuna. Altitude has a practical importance in such a mountainous territory, but it also has a meaning within Kogi thought. Some of the higher areas are connected to places of origin, ancestral knowledge, and particular forms of spiritual practice. The ezwamas, for example, are sacred places located at around 1,700 to 2,800 metres above sea level. They are important places for ritual activities and for the transmission of knowledge. According to Reichel-Dolmatoff, young people learning from the Mamas, known as kuivi, could spend long periods in these places receiving instruction and following practices intended to prepare them for their responsibilities.

The idea of the world as a layered body also changes the way the land itself can be understood. The earth is not simply the ground on which people, animals, and plants live. **It is part of the living system that gives them life and connects them to one another**. Living in the territory therefore also means taking care of it and maintaining the relationships that allow life to continue.

This connection extends to the different beings that make up the world. Humans, animals, plants, stones, rivers, winds, illnesses, ceremonies, and ancestors are understood as having a common origin in the Universal Mother. Reichel-Dolmatoff recorded accounts in which the Mamas describe the emergence of different beings and elements of the world from this common origin. The many forms of life are therefore not seen as completely separate from one another. **They are connected through their shared origin and through the relationships they maintain within the territory**.[123]

Knowledge is closely connected to this responsibility. For the Kogi, thinking is not something separate from everyday life. It involves remembering, paying attention, and taking care of the territory. To know a place also means understanding the responsibilities that come with living there and carrying out the practices needed to maintain its balance.

Fig. 42
Conception 9 Levels of the Kogi Universe. Daniela González, 2026.

123 - *Reichel-Dolmatoff, G. (1950). Los Kogi: Una tribu de la Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Colombia. Instituto Etnológico Nacional.*

When this relationship with the territory is weakened or ignored, people are understood as losing part of their connection with the processes that sustain life. Knowledge is therefore not simply something that a person collects or owns. It is learned and shared through ceremonies, everyday practices, and the ways people care for the territory and fulfil their responsibilities toward it. In Reichel-Dolmatoff's conversations with the Mamas, **knowledge was valuable because of what it allowed people to do and how it helped maintain the balance of the world, rather than simply because of how much information a person possessed.**[124]

5.2 Cosmological Structure of Space

For the Kogi, the four directions have meanings that go beyond orientation. **East, for example, is connected to white, the sunrise, and the beginning of life. It is related to the place where the sun appears and to the idea of origin. West has a very different meaning. It is associated with black and with death and transition, since this is where the sun disappears at the end of the day. North is represented by blue and is connected with illness and situations that can disturb the balance of the world. South is associated with red, but its meaning is less straightforward. It is related to life, movement, and transformation.** The directions are therefore part of the way the Kogi understand the world around them. They connect the act of finding one's position in the territory with broader ideas about where life comes from, what happens when it ends, and how balance can be maintained.[125]

These directions also have a practical role in the way the territory is used. They influence where settlements are placed, how people move along ceremonial paths, and where certain sacred places are located. The ezwamas are especially important in this respect. They are places where particular forms of knowledge and ritual practice are maintained and where relationships with other parts of the Kogi world are understood to take place. For this reason, knowing where one is in the territory is not only a matter of finding a direction. Orientation is also connected to knowing how to act in a particular place and what responsibilities come with it.[126]

5.3 Water as the Voice of Territory

Water has an important place in Kogi understandings of the territory. Rivers, springs, lakes, and rain are connected to the life of the Sierra and are understood as having their own movement and presence. The direction in which water moves through the landscape also has meaning within this way of understanding the territory. Its movement toward the west forms part of a larger cycle connected to change and renewal. Alan Ereira's accounts of Kogi teachings describe water as something that moves through the territory and connects different places and forms of life. It is therefore not understood only in terms of its practical use. Water is also connected to memory, emotion, and the continuation of life.[127]

This idea appears clearly in the learning sessions documented by Daniel Parra Witte with Mama Luntana. When he was asked whether water could be seen as a connection between the spiritual and physical worlds, the Mama explained that water has both a visible form and a spiritual one, referred to as ñibaks, or "black water." He described water as **"a bridge of conversation with the spiritual world"** and explained that without water there could be no communication in the world. In this sense, water connects what can be seen with what belongs to the spiritual dimension of Kogi thought and helps maintain the relationships that exist throughout the territory. [128]



124 - *Reichel-Dolmatoff, G. (1990). The Sacred Mountain of Colombia's Kogi Indians. Brill.*

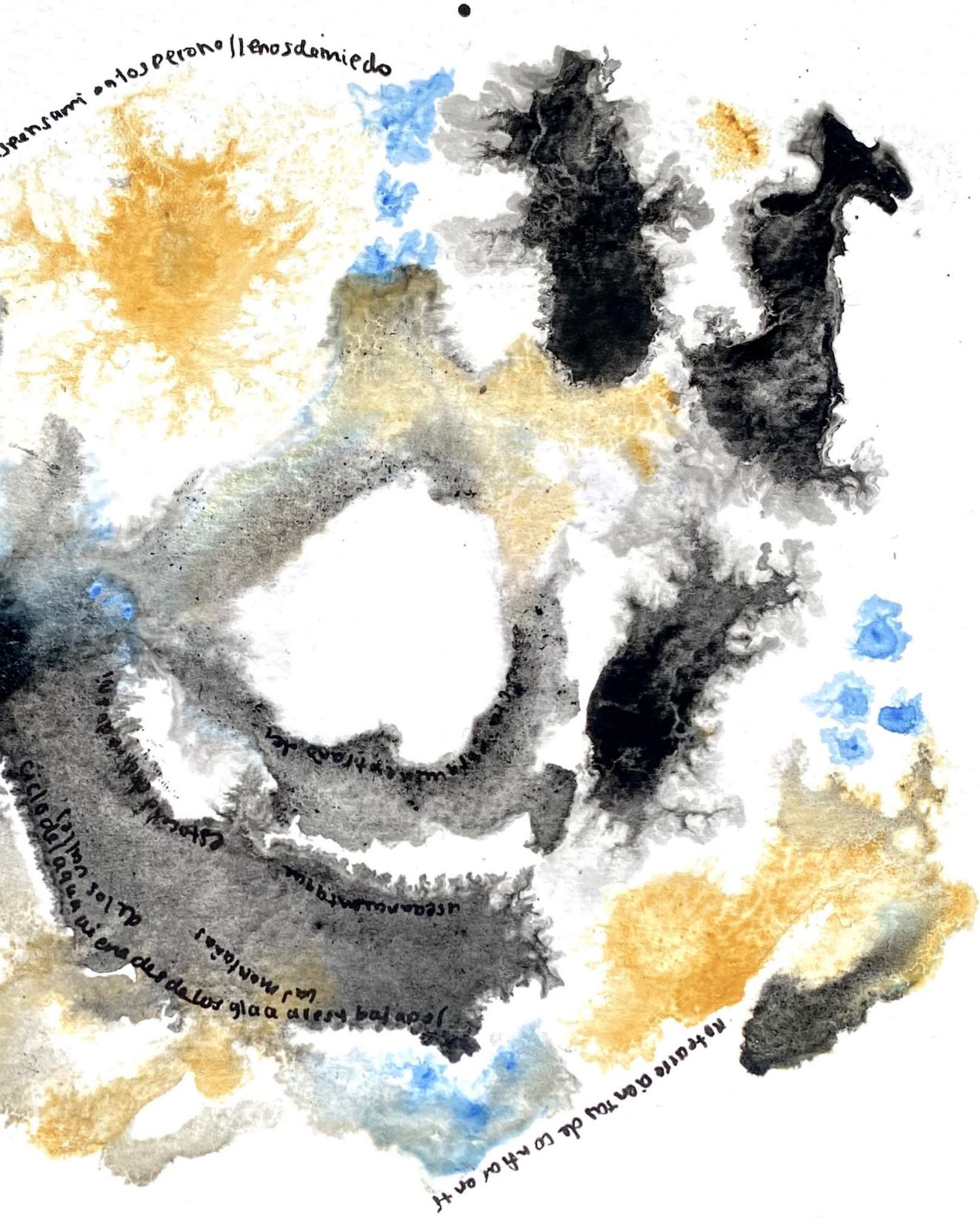
125 - *Reichel-Dolmatoff, G. (1990). The Sacred Mountain of Colombia's Kogi Indians. Brill.*

126 - *Ezwamas are sacred sites of origin distributed throughout the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta where Mamas perform rituals, offerings (pagamentos) and maintain the spiritual balance of the territory. See: Parra Witte, D. (2018). Kogi Ecology and Cosmology (Doctoral dissertation, University of St Andrews).*

127 - *Ereira, A. (1992). The elder brothers: A lost South American people and their message about the fate of the earth. Alfred A. Knopf.*

128 - *Parra Witte, D. (2018). Kogi Ecology and Cosmology (Doctoral dissertation, University of St Andrews).*

Fig. 43
Watercolor drawing of the Kogi water cycle. Daniela González, 2026.


Naturaleza en tus ojos
Todo fluye hasta los glaciares y baja en ríos
los manglares
desaparecimiento
Ciclo del agua en los valles
Pensami entos pero llenos de miedo

This connection between water and communication can also be seen in the zhátukua, a wooden bowl used by the Mamas for divination. The bowl contains water and small stone beads known as tuma. The Mamas observe the bubbles that appear in the water and interpret them when asking about people, places, or events. In his conversations with Parra Witte, Mama Luntana explained that when the zhátukua speaks, it does so through the water and through Alúna. High-altitude lakes are also described as natural zhátukuas, which connects them with the origins of creation and with the first communication of the Mother.[129]

These ideas help explain the close relationship between Mother, earth, and water in Kogi thought. The Mother is connected to the origin of the world through Alúna, while the earth gives physical form to that thought. Water moves through this territory and connects different places and forms of life. **Rivers therefore have a meaning that goes beyond their physical movement**. They connect the mountains with the sea and connect different places within the territory.

The movement of water can be described through the hydrological cycle of evaporation, rainfall, and runoff. Kogi teachings add another dimension to this process. The movement of water through the Sierra is also connected to spiritual relationships and to the actions of the beings who live there. This is one of the ways in which the territory is understood as something alive, where the movement of water is connected to the continuation of life.

Parra Witte records teachings from the Mamas of Tungeka in which the journey of water begins in the glaciers and high-altitude lakes of the Sierra. These places have a particular spiritual importance and are closely related to Alúna. As the rivers move down through the valleys, they are understood to carry more than water. **They also carry traces connected to what happens along their path, including the actions and experiences of people and animals**. The *yabá*, described as beings associated with the rivers, accompany this movement and help guide the water as it travels toward the coast.[130]

The river eventually reaches the sea, where another part of this process takes place. According to these teachings, guardians at the mouths of the rivers oversee what passes from the mountains into the ocean. The journey continues beyond the coast, toward a place called *Mamaishkagaka*. There, the water undergoes a process described as a form of burning. *Zhántana* is the guardian responsible for this process. It is not a physical burning, but a spiritual one through which the water is said to be cleansed and to confess, or *aluna ishguashi*, what it has carried from the Sierra.[131]

After this process, the water returns to the mountains through the atmosphere. The formation of clouds and the arrival of rain mark this return. In this way, the movement between the mountains and the sea is understood as a continuous exchange rather than as a cycle that simply ends when the river reaches the coast.

Parra Witte also describes a conversation with Mama Manuel that helps explain the wider scale of this understanding. When he showed the Mama a classroom globe, Mama Manuel pointed toward Antarctica and suggested that *Mamaishkagaka* could be understood as being there, "where the ice is." **This interpretation places the journey of water within a much larger geography, extending beyond the Sierra and connecting it to other parts of the world**.

129 - *Parra Witte, F. X. (2018). Living the Law of Origin: The cosmological, ontological and ecological principles of the Kogi people of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Colombia Doctoral dissertation, University of Kent. pp. 86–87.*

130 - *In Kogi cosmology, yabá are semi-visible entities associated with specific places and processes in nature. They act as guardians and regulators that help maintain the proper flow of ecological and spiritual forces. Parra Witte (2018).*

131 - *Parra Witte, F. X. (2018). Living the Law of Origin: The cosmological, ontological and ecological principles of the Kogi people of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Colombia Doctoral dissertation, University of Kent. pp. 91–92.*

In this account, the rivers of the world eventually reach this distant place, where the water leaves behind the things it has collected on its journey. It then continues toward the Arctic. There, according to the Mamas, its alúna is renewed, and the water receives **"a new mind"**. The process is compared to what happens when a person takes a bath, changes clothes, and starts again. From there, the water makes its way back toward the Sierra Nevada, which the Kogi call the Heart of the World. ***Kalbusánkua***, described as an invisible Cosmic Pillar, is involved in this return. Through it, the water is brought back to the earth as rain. The journey described by the Mamas therefore does not stop when the water reaches the sea. It continues through other parts of the world before returning once again to the Sierra.[132]

The Mamas also compare the movement of water with the practice of confession. Water carries things with it as it moves through the territory and later releases them during its journey. People can do something similar through ceremonies and offerings at sacred places, where they leave behind things that have affected the body or the spirit. This is not understood mainly in terms of guilt, but as a way of **dealing with what has accumulated and restoring balance**. Mama Manuel described this relationship when he said, **"the confession of water is like the confession we Kogi make; it is also a release".** The comparison shows why the movement of water has such an important place in Kogi thought. Its purification is connected to the same practices through which people care for themselves, the territory, and the relationships that sustain life.[133]

From this perspective, water is not understood only as a natural resource. Its movement through the territory also connects people, places, and different parts of the world. The water cycle can therefore be understood alongside the ideas of care and reciprocity that are present in Kogi thought. Water moves between mountains, rivers, the sea, and the atmosphere, while people have responsibilities toward the places and relationships involved in this process. Caring for rivers, mountains, oceans, and sacred sites is consequently part of caring for the conditions that allow life in the territory to continue.

This understanding also explains why the Kogi oppose dams, changes to river courses, and large-scale extraction of water. For the Mamas, these interventions affect much more than the physical movement of water. **They interfere with the relationships that connect the river to the rest of the territory**. In the learning sessions documented by Daniel Parra Witte, the Mamas of Tungeka compared a dammed river to "cutting a vein" or tying it so that blood can no longer circulate. They then asked how a person would feel if something similar were done to their own body. Their answer was direct: "This is how the Mother feels when rivers are blocked".[134]

This comparison is connected to a broader idea in Kogi thought: **rivers are part of the living body of the Earth**. Their movement connects different parts of the territory and allows the cycle described above to continue. When a river is blocked, the water cannot follow the same path toward the sea and Mamaishkagaka, where it is said to undergo the process of confession and purification. The interruption therefore affects more than the river itself, since it also changes the relationships that connect the mountains, the sea, and the return of water to the Sierra.

According to this understanding, changes in the movement of water can also affect rainfall beyond the immediate area. The Sierra Nevada, known as the Heart of the World, is described as responding when rain does not return as it should. The Mamas relate this to periods of heavy rain and other changes in the weather. They also explain that materials left behind when rivers are blocked can accumulate what they call aluna ***nusegatsé***, described as spiritual residues that have not been transformed. These residues can later return toward the mountains and are associated with illnesses and other changes affecting the territory.[135]

132 - *Parra Witte, F. X. (2018). Living the Law of Origin: The cosmological, ontological and ecological principles of the Kogi people of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Colombia Doctoral dissertation, University of Kent. pp. 91–92.*

133 - *Aluna ishguashi may be translated as "confession in alúna" and refers to a process of releasing and purifying accumulated material and spiritual burdens. Parra Witte (2018).*

134 - *Quoted in Parra Witte (2018), based on learning sessions with Mama Manuel in Tungeka regarding the spiritual dimensions of the global water cycle.*

135 - *Aluna nusegatsé refers to spiritual residues or imbalances that accumulate when ecological and ritual processes are interrupted. See Parra Witte (2018).*

5.4 Living Landscape: Agents of the Cosmos

In Kogi cosmology, the elements of the landscape have an active place in the life of the territory. Humans are also part of this system, with their own responsibilities toward the other beings and places around them. This way of understanding the world can be related to what Eduardo Viveiros de Castro calls Amerindian perspectivism. In this approach, different beings share the same world but do not necessarily experience it in the same way. [136] What is usually called nature is therefore not completely separate from social life; people, animals, plants, and other beings are understood through the relationships they have with one another.

Animals also have particular meanings within Kogi thought. They are connected to different aspects of life and are part of the way the Mamas interpret what is happening in the territory. **The toad, for example, is associated with fertility, feminine energy, and reproduction. The serpent is connected with death, transformation, and renewal, while the jaguar is related to strength, vitality, and spiritual authority**. These relationships are not simply symbolic images added to the landscape. The animals themselves are part of the knowledge through which the territory is read. Their presence, movements, and sounds can provide signs that the Mamas interpret when trying to understand what is happening around them.[137]

Trees also have an important place in Kogi understandings of the territory. They are sometimes described as being part of the **Mother's hair**, connecting the vegetation of the Sierra with the body of the earth. In the same way that hair covers and protects a person's body, forests are understood as covering and protecting the Mother. **Vegetation therefore has a role in maintaining the conditions of the land, rather than being seen only as a group of individual plants**. Reichel-Dolmatoff also recorded several comparisons between the human body and the landscape in Kogi narratives. Valleys can be related to parts or openings of the body, while rivers are compared with bodily fluids. The different surfaces found on animals, such as hair, scales, shells, and skin, are also related to the different surfaces of the earth.

Some trees have a particularly important place in this understanding of the forest. The Kogi refer to certain old and powerful trees as ***Kaxsouggi***. They are considered to be guardians of the forest and are connected to the life of particular places. Because of this, they are treated with a level of respect similar to that given to people and are not cut down. Their importance is not always something that can be identified simply by looking at the tree itself. [138]

Stones, known as ***haggi***, also have an important place in Kogi understandings of the territory. They are not considered simply as geological features, but **are connected to ancestors, memory, and the continuity of the territory over time**. Certain sacred places are identified through the presence of particular stones together with trees, which can indicate that the place has a specific importance. The stones are also understood as part of ritual life. Their presence connects the community with the land and with the memories and relationships associated with a particular place.

Smaller forms of life are also included in this understanding of the territory. Grasses, fungi, mosses, and lichens are part of the living landscape and have a role in the relationships between the soil, plants, water, and other forms of life. Grass, for example, can be understood as the skin of the earth because it covers the ground and can also show changes in the condition of the soil. Other organisms are connected to processes that link what can be seen on the surface with what is understood to exist inside the mountains, including ancestral knowledge and forces. [139]



136 - *Viveiros de Castro, E. (2014). Cannibal Metaphysics. Univocal Publishing.*

137 - *Reichel-Dolmatoff, G. (1990). The Sacred Mountain of Colombia's Kogi Indians. Brill.*

138 -*Parra Witte, F. X. (2018). Living the Law of Origin: The cosmological, ontological and ecological principles of the Kogi people of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Colombia Doctoral dissertation, University of Kent.*

139 - *Reichel-Dolmatoff, G. (1990). The Sacred Mountain of Colombia's Kogi Indians. Brill.*

Fig. 44
Watercolor drawing of animals.
Daniela González, 2026.







Fig. 45
Watercolor drawing of plants.
Daniela González, 2026.

Trees have a particular importance because they connect different parts of the world described in Kogi thought. Their roots extend into the ground and are associated with what exists inside the mountains, while their trunks and branches grow upward toward the sky, the sun, and other celestial elements. In this sense, trees can be related to the idea of ***Kalbüsánkua***, the **World Tree or Cosmic Pillar** that connects the nine levels of the universe. From this perspective, cutting forests at the higher parts of the mountains affects more than vegetation. It also affects the connections between the ground, the mountains, and the sky that are important within Kogi understandings of the territory.

Kogi teachings also connect forests with the formation of rain, clouds, and mist. This is related to the idea that the mountains contain shibuldama, understood as ancestral knowledge or intelligence within the earth. From this perspective, losing a forest means losing more than plants and animals. It also means affecting the knowledge and relationships associated with that place and with the processes that support life.[140] The territory can therefore be understood as a community made up of many forms of life that interact with one another. Forests, mountains, water, animals, and people are connected through these relationships. This way of understanding the landscape also brings architecture, ecology, and cosmology closer together, since changes to one part of the territory can affect the others.

5.5 The Body as a Living Map

In Kogi thought, the body is closely connected to the territory and plays an important role in how people experience and care for it. The idea that **"to think is to live"** is therefore not about thinking as an activity that happens only in the mind. It refers to paying attention to what happens around you and acting in relation to it. Living in the territory involves taking part in the practices that help maintain its balance, so knowledge is learned and expressed through the body as well as through words and ideas. Memory, perception, and action are all part of this process.

Within this understanding, myth is not a symbolic story detached from reality, but one of the primary ways through which thought becomes life and territory becomes intelligible. Myth explains the origin of the world, the movement of natural forces, the cycles of time and water, the organization of space, the relationships between humans, animals, plants, ancestors, and spirits, as well as the ethical principles that sustain communal life. Rather than functioning as a fixed narrative about the past, **myth continuously returns through ritual, speech, and bodily practice in order to maintain the balance of the world**. Every ceremony, dance, offering, and act of remembrance reactivates what Carlos Niño Murcia describes as a primordial act through which the world is recreated and sustained.In this sense, knowledge is not accumulated as abstract information but embodied through repetition, gesture, memory, and collective participation.[141]

This way of thinking is based on relationships and on the experience of the world rather than on clear separations between its different parts. **Time can be understood through cycles and returns, while space is experienced through the relationships between people, places, and other forms of life.** Myth is therefore one of the ways through which this knowledge is expressed and passed on. It involves reason, but also memory, perception, intuition, and spiritual experience. From this perspective, Indigenous myth cannot be fully understood using only the categories of Western epistemology, since body, territory, dreams, memory, and spirituality are not treated as completely separate areas of experience. [142]

140 - *Reichel-Dolmatoff, G. (1990). The Sacred Mountain of Colombia's Kogi Indians. Brill.*

141 -*Territorio chamánico. Niño Murcia, C. (2007). Territorio chamánico: una mirada desde la Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta.*

142 -*Rozo, J. (1997b) and Páramo, G. (1989), cited in Niño Murcia, C. Territorio chamánico.*

It is therefore a way of understanding life through relationships and through the constant changes that take place within them. From this perspective, "to think is to live" can also be understood in relation to territory. **Thought does not happen separately from the world around it, but develops through the ways people participate in and respond to the different processes that sustain life.**

TThe connection between the body and the territory can also be seen in the ways Kogi teachings compare parts of the body with elements of the Sierra Nevada. Rivers are compared with veins, sweat with flowing water, and hair with vegetation, while valleys and other openings in the landscape can be related to parts of the body. The Sierra itself is also understood in relation to the body of the Universal Mother. [143] These comparisons express a close connection between people and the land, rather than treating the body and the territory as completely separate. In this sense, everyday actions involving the body are also connected to the way people relate to and care for the territory.

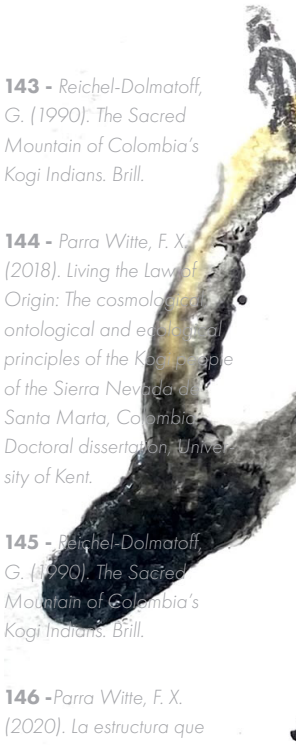
One example of this relationship is aluna ishguashi, usually translated as confession. **Through this practice, people leave thoughts, emotions, and other burdens at sacred places**. The purpose is not understood as asking for forgiveness in the usual sense, but as a way of releasing what has accumulated and restoring balance. This can be compared with the way water moves through the territory: what is carried must eventually be released and transformed. In this sense, the body is also part of the circulation between people and the territory, receiving and carrying experiences that are later released through particular practices.[144]

The relationship between body and territory also appears in the nuhué, the ceremonial house where men gather for learning, discussion, and ritual activities. Its importance goes beyond that of a meeting space. The circular plan and domed roof are related to Kogi understandings of the world and to the interior of the mountains. Reichel-Dolmatoff described the ***nuhué*** as a **"world-house",** a description that helps explain how different activities come together within the building. Elders share stories and knowledge there, ceremonies take place, and matters concerning the community and the territory are discussed. [145] The nuhué therefore brings together aspects of community life that, from a Western perspective, might normally be treated as separate, such as education, governance, spirituality, and the care of the territory.

Ceremonies, dances, and music are also part of the way the Kogi relate to and care for their territory. They are not treated simply as performances or cultural activities. Through them, relationships with animals, plants, water, and ancestors are renewed. Different lineages have their own songs and dances connected to particular responsibilities, including rain, fertility, and the care of certain species. [146] The movements, rhythms, and repetitions involved in these practices are therefore part of how people maintain these relationships and communicate with what is visible and what belongs to the spiritual world.

The body participates in the territory, while the territory acts through the body; both are connected through the circulation of water, thought, memory, and energy. From this perspective, practices such as confession, weaving, ceremony, music, and gathering in the nuhué are not separate cultural activities, but ways of maintaining the relationships that hold the territory together. This understanding provides an important foundation for the concept of territorio sentipensante developed in this research: a territory is not only perceived, represented, or inhabited, but continuously produced through the relationships between bodies, places, materials, and living beings.





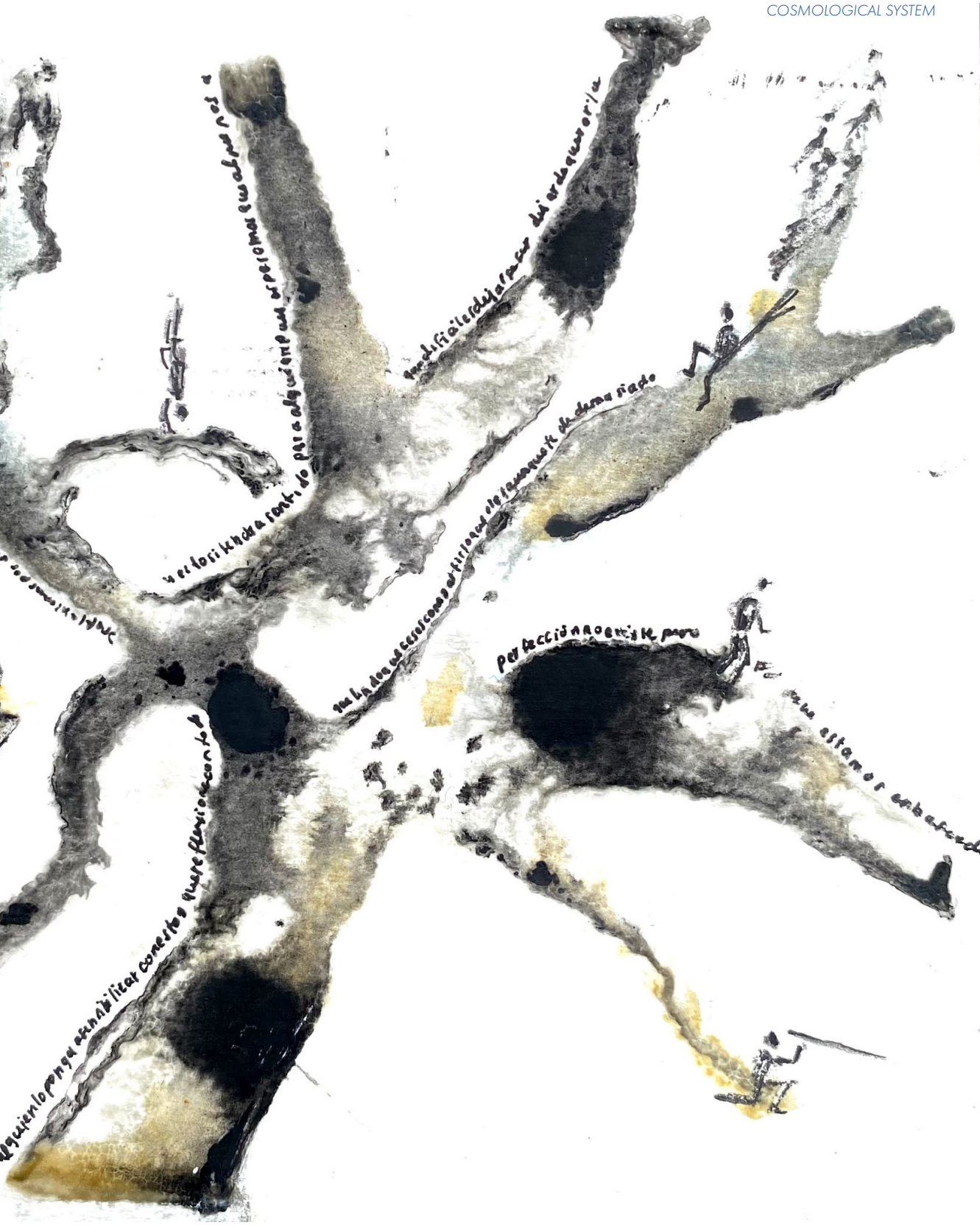
143 - *Reichel-Dolmatoff, G. (1990). The Sacred Mountain of Colombia's Kogi Indians. Brill.*

144 - *Parra Witte, F. X. (2018). Living the Law of Origin: The cosmological, ontological and ecological principles of the Kogi people of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Colombia. Doctoral dissertation, University of Kent.*

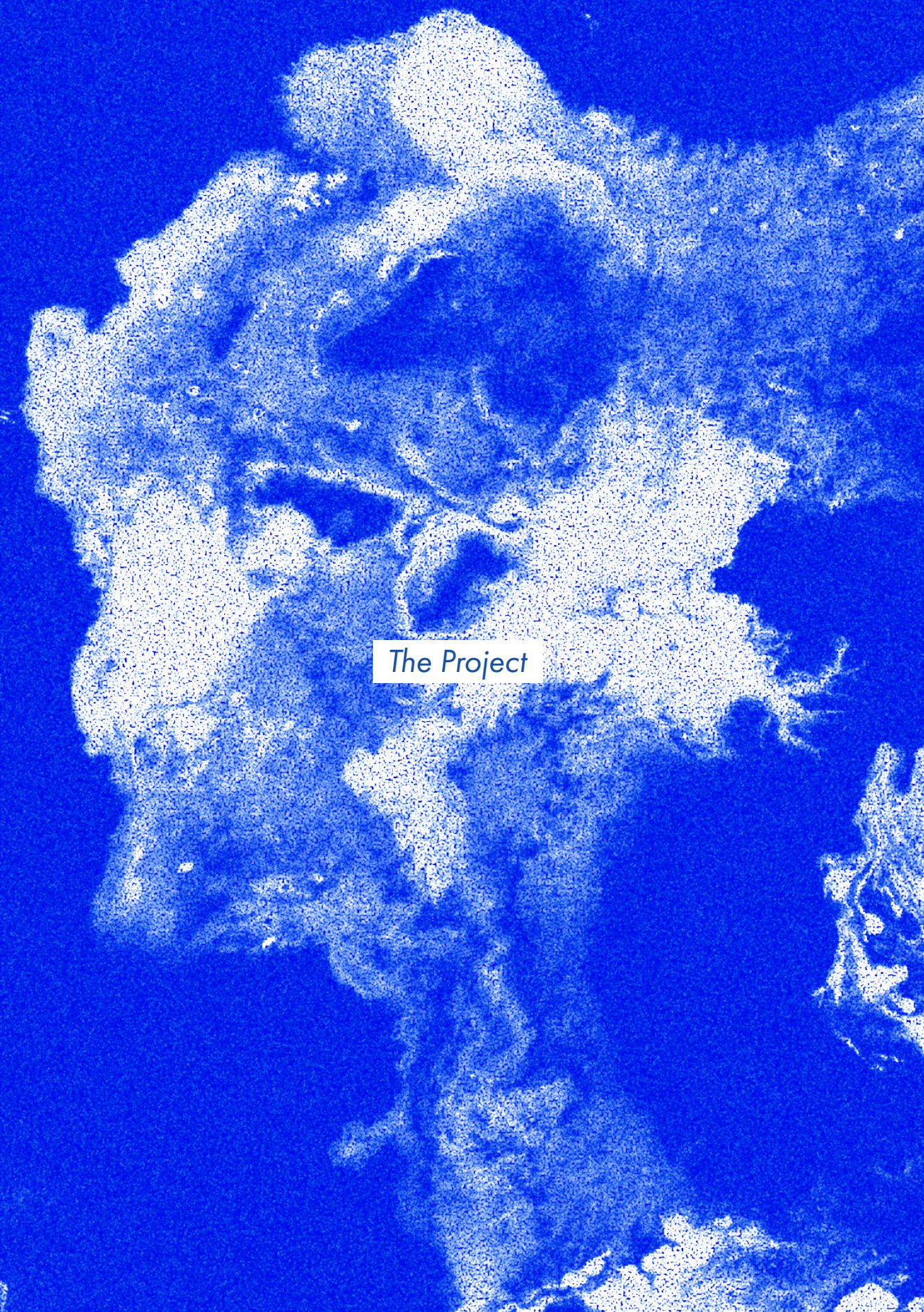
145 - *Reichel-Dolmatoff, G. (1990). The Sacred Mountain of Colombia's Kogi Indians. Brill.*

146 -*Parra Witte, F. X. (2020). La estructura que sostiene la vida: alimento e intercambio entre los Kogi. Tabula Rasa, 36, 101–129.*

Fig. 46
Watercolor drawing of body-territory.
Daniela González, 2026.



CHAPTER 6


The Project

This chapter does not present an architectural project in the conventional sense. Rather, it describes the process through which Teyuna ended to be understood exclusively as an object of spatial documentation and became, within this research, a territory that demands a different mode of representation. While the previous chapters argued that Teyuna should be understood as a sentipensante territory this final chapter explores how that conceptual framework is translated into practice.

The shift proposed throughout this thesis could not remain only at the level of theoretical discussion. **It required the development of a representational methodology capable of responding to the relational, living, and processual nature of the territory**. Consequently, representation is approached not merely as a technical operation, but as a form of knowledge production through which materials, gestures, and modes of making become integral components of the research itself.

The main question of this chapter is not only what is being represented, but how each way of representing a place is connected to a particular way of understanding it. The drawings, materials, and decisions discussed in the following pages are part of this question. They show not only how the project took shape visually, but also how knowledge about a place can be produced, communicated, and experienced through representation.

6.1 Western Cartographic Representation: The Limits of Cartography

The first approach to Teyuna in this research was, inevitably, cartographic. Before proposing an alternative way of representing the territory, it was necessary to understand the site through the visual and analytical tools that have historically shaped its archaeological and architectural interpretation.This first stage became important for the rest of the research. **Before questioning a representational system, it was necessary to work with it and understand how it operates**. This meant looking at what it allows us to see and understand, but also at what tends to disappear when territory is reduced to the conventions of architectural and cartographic drawing. For this reason, the first stage of the research focused on reconstructing the physical configuration of the settlement using the representational systems that have informed most of the existing studies on Ciudad Perdida.

Among the different sources consulted, the archaeological survey developed by María Isabel Mayorga became one of the main references for this research.[147] Her work provides an exceptionally detailed documentation of Teyuna, recording not only the architectural elements that define the settlement—including terraces, pathways, stairways, retaining walls, circular platforms, and topographic relationships—but also the conservation interventions carried out over the last decades, such as reconstructed or relocated stones. This second aspect is particularly important because it shows that the survey does not document an untouched archaeological site, **but one that has already been transformed through conservation practices**. In other words, it records a landscape that has been continuously negotiated between what has been discovered and what has been restored.

The level of detail contained in Mayorga's survey made it possible to produce an accurate digital reconstruction of Teyuna in AutoCAD, which became the basis for the plans and spatial analyses presented in this chapter. More than simply reproducing the archaeological drawings, this reconstruction became an exercise in understanding the spatial logic through which the site has been documented and interpreted.

147 - *Mayorga Hernández, María Isabel. El agua como elemento constructor de territorio y arquitectura en Colombia. Caso de estudio Teyuna, Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. Tesis doctoral, Universidad de Granada, 2023/2024.*

This reading was also supported by architectural studies such as Margarita Serje's Organización Urbana en Ciudad Perdida, which looks at the settlement through its urban organization and the way its architecture works.[148] Their approaches are different, but Mayorga and Serje work with a similar way of representing Teyuna. In both cases, **the site is mainly studied through things that can be observed and measured**, such as dimensions, geometry, circulation, topography, the relationship between different architectural spaces, and construction systems.

These studies were essential for two reasons. First, they provided the rigorous documentation necessary to understand the physical structure of the settlement and to reconstruct it accurately. Without their work, the drawings presented in this research would not have been possible. Second, when considered together, **they also reveal the common limits of this representational tradition**. Within this framework, knowledge is produced through measurement, precision, and the systematic organization of space. The territory becomes understandable through what can be mapped, measured, classified, and represented geometrically.

This body of knowledge remains an important starting point for the research. Archaeological documentation has made it possible to understand the physical organization of Teyuna in considerable detail and has been essential for studying its architectural complexity. The purpose here is not to dismiss archaeological cartography, but to look at it more critically: **to consider what it allows us to understand about the site, while also asking what other forms of knowledge are difficult to express through this type of drawing**.

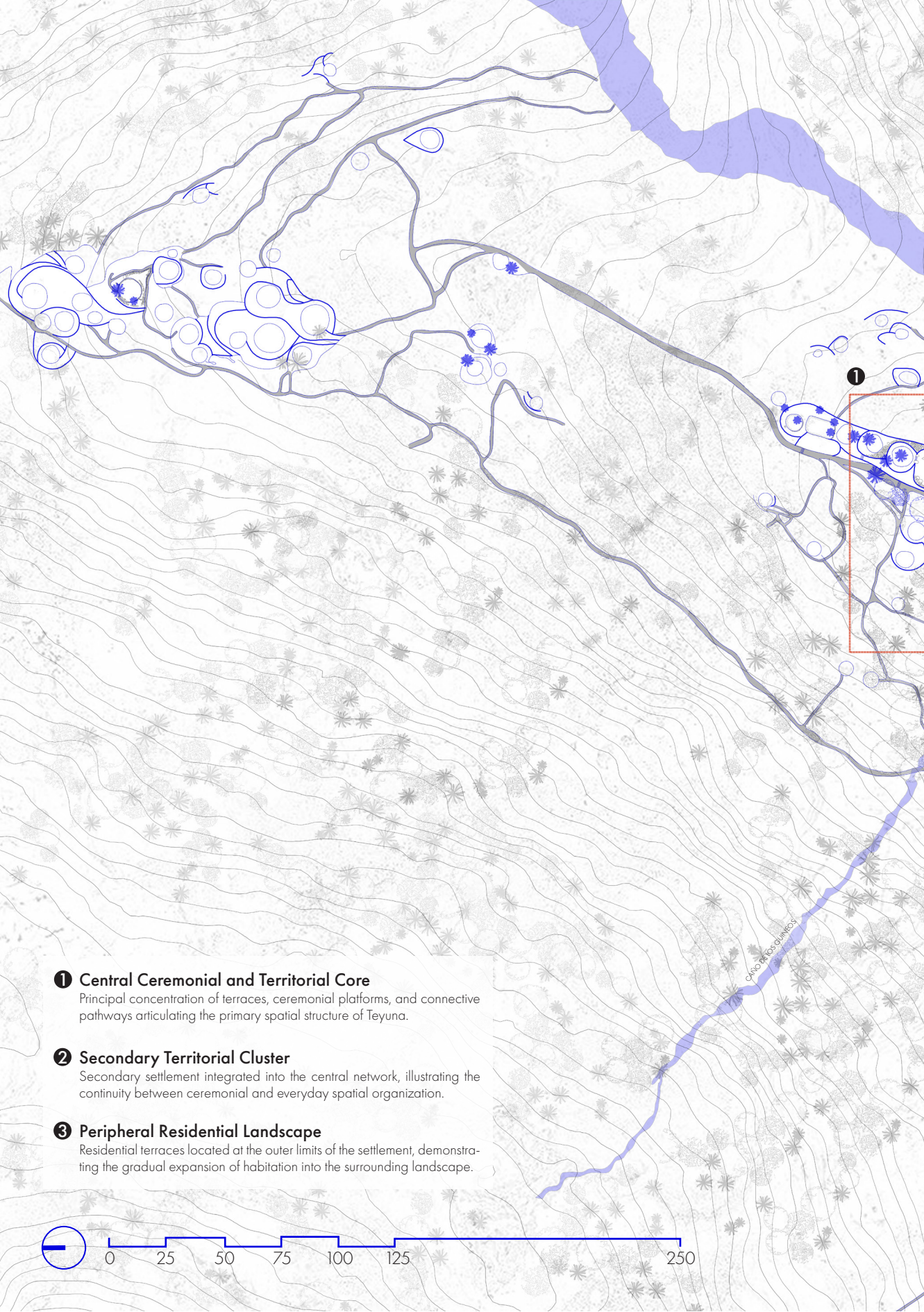
The drawings developed during this first stage reconstruct the elements documented through the archaeological surveys: pathways, terraces, stairways, retaining walls, circular platforms, contour lines, and topographic relationships. They record dimensions, circulation routes, changes in elevation, and spatial hierarchies, making it possible to understand the physical organization of the settlement and the relationships between its different architectural elements. Like any cartographic representation, these drawings work through a process of selection and abstraction. Stone becomes line, slopes become contour lines, movement becomes circulation paths, and the complexity of the landscape is translated into a system of measurable geometries. This process is not a limitation, but one of the main strengths of cartography.

For this reason, the effectiveness of this representational system should not be underestimated. Without this planimetric reconstruction, it would not have been possible to understand how the settlement adapts to the mountainous terrain, how the different terraces relate to one another, or how circulation structures the experience of moving through Teyuna. **The drawings became an essential analytical tool for understanding the architectural organization of the site before attempting to question it**.

However, working through this process also revealed an important question. As the drawings became increasingly precise, they also became increasingly selective. Every representational system makes certain aspects of reality visible while leaving others outside its field of observation. In the case of archaeological cartography, priority is given to those aspects that can be measured, located, classified, and documented. Geometry becomes the primary language through which the territory is understood. The question, then, is not whether this representation is correct or incorrect. Rather, it is to ask what kinds of knowledge become possible through this language, and which kinds of knowledge remain outside it.

148 - *Serje de la Ossa, Margarita. "Organización urbana en Ciudad Perdida." Cuadernos de Arquitectura Escala, no. 9, Bogotá: Escala, 1984, pp. 1–22.*

Fig. 47
Teyuna planimetry. Daniela González, 2026.

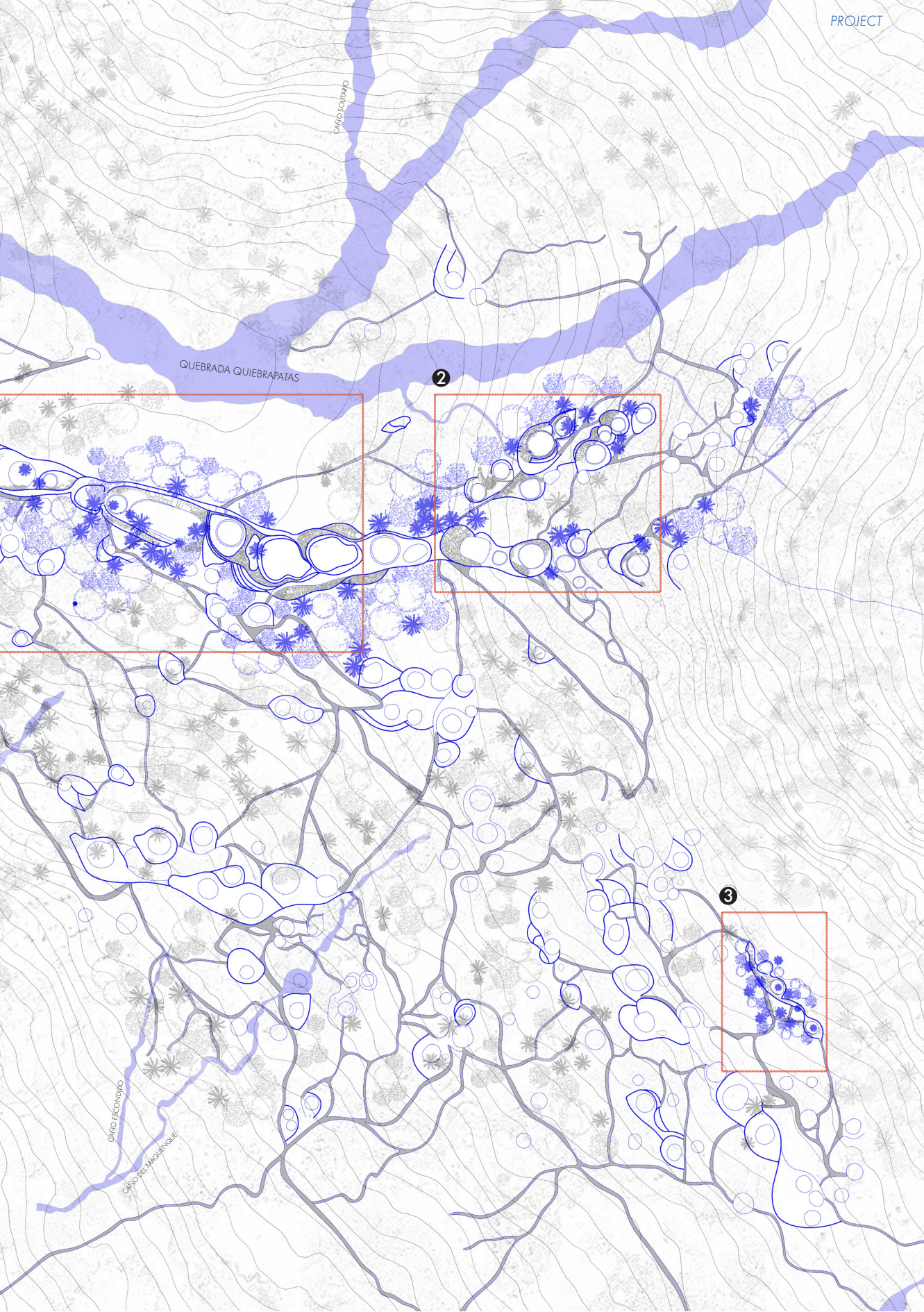


❶ Central Ceremonial and Territorial Core
Principal concentration of terraces, ceremonial platforms, and connective pathways articulating the primary spatial structure of Teyuna.

❷ Secondary Territorial Cluster
Secondary settlement integrated into the central network, illustrating the continuity between ceremonial and everyday spatial organization.

❸ Peripheral Residential Landscape
Residential terraces located at the outer limits of the settlement, demonstrating the gradual expansion of habitation into the surrounding landscape.

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CAÑO SOMBRERO
QUEBRADA QUIEBRAPATAS
2
3
CAÑO ESCONDIDO
CAÑO DEL MAQUENQUE

The Western representation of Teyuna makes it possible to read the settlement primarily through its spatial organization and the relationships between its different architectural elements. At the centre of the site, a group of larger terraces forms the main area of the settlement, where the most important collective and ceremonial activities are understood to have taken place. Around this central area, the terraces become more dispersed and their spatial relationships change, creating areas that can be interpreted as residential, communal, or transitional (*Figure 47*). This organization does not appear as a simple division between different functions, but as a gradual change in the scale, position, and relationship between terraces, paths, and open spaces.

The paths are particularly important in understanding this organization. They connect the different terraces and establish movement between the central areas and the more peripheral parts of the settlement. Some terraces receive several paths from different directions, while others are connected by a single route. Serje uses these differences in circulation to distinguish between more open and more closed terraces and relates them to different forms of use, including residential areas, communal work spaces, and public or social areas.[149] From this perspective, **circulation is understood mainly as a functional relationship between architectural units**: the path connects one space to another and helps organize how people move through the settlement.

Water introduces another layer to this spatial organization. The channels and drainage systems follow the topography of the site and are closely connected to the terraces and paths. Mayorga's research places particular emphasis on this relationship, showing how the movement of rainwater, surface runoff, and permanent water sources influenced the construction and organization of the settlement. Her documentation identifies channels running between terraces, drainage structures incorporated into platforms, and paths that reach water sources while protecting the circulation routes from erosion.[150] Water can therefore be traced through the site alongside the movement of people: channels collect and direct runoff, while paths connect the different terraces and allow movement across the steep terrain.

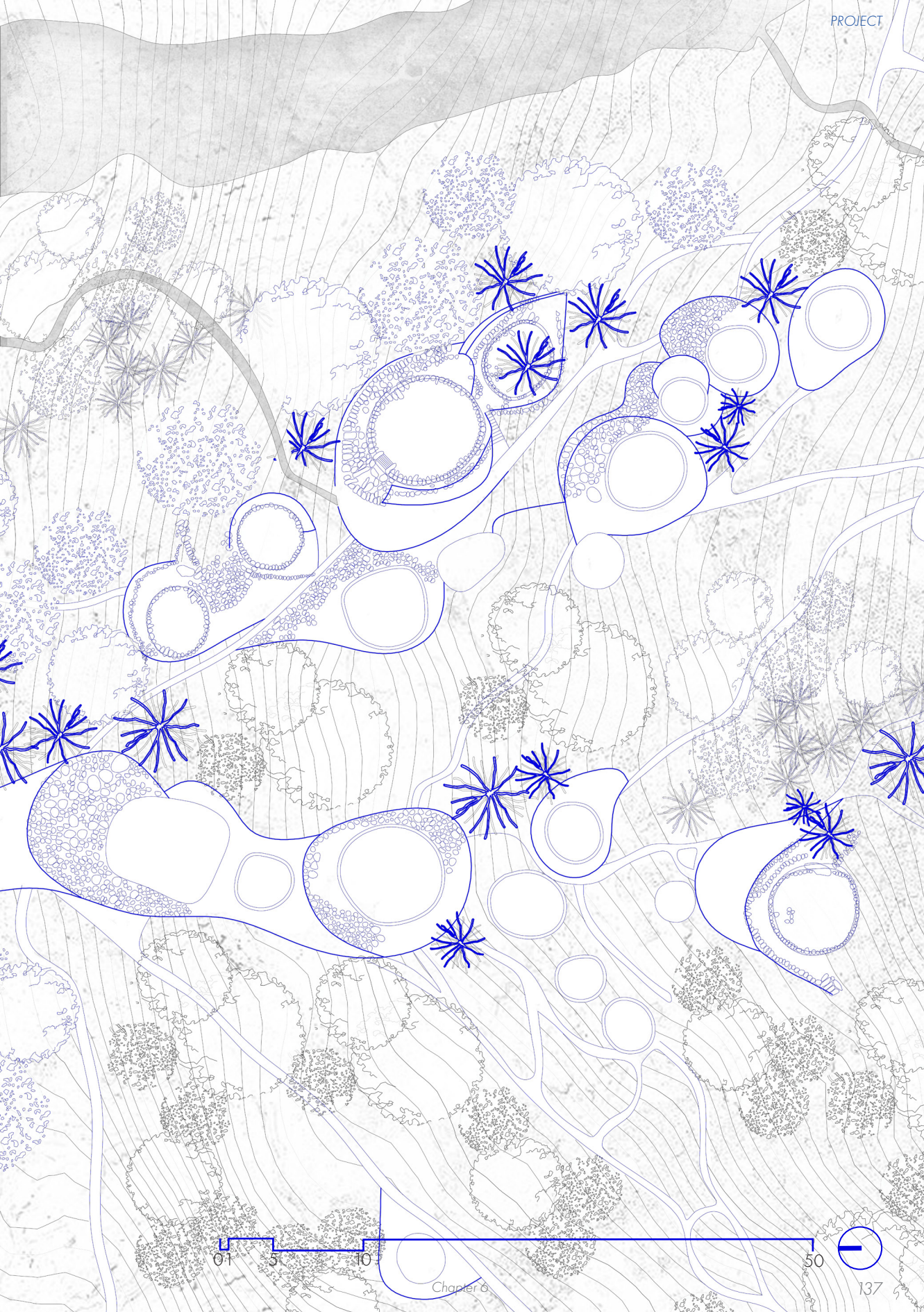
Seen in this way, the Western representation produces a readable spatial system. The central terraces, residential and communal areas, paths, channels, and changes in topography can be identified and related to one another through measurable and functional relationships. **The drawing makes it possible to understand where things are located, how they connect, how water moves through the site, and how different parts of the settlement may have been used**. This reading is valuable precisely because it provides a clear account of the physical organization of Teyuna. At the same time, it establishes a particular way of looking at the site: one in which spatial relationships are primarily understood through function, circulation, construction, and physical form.

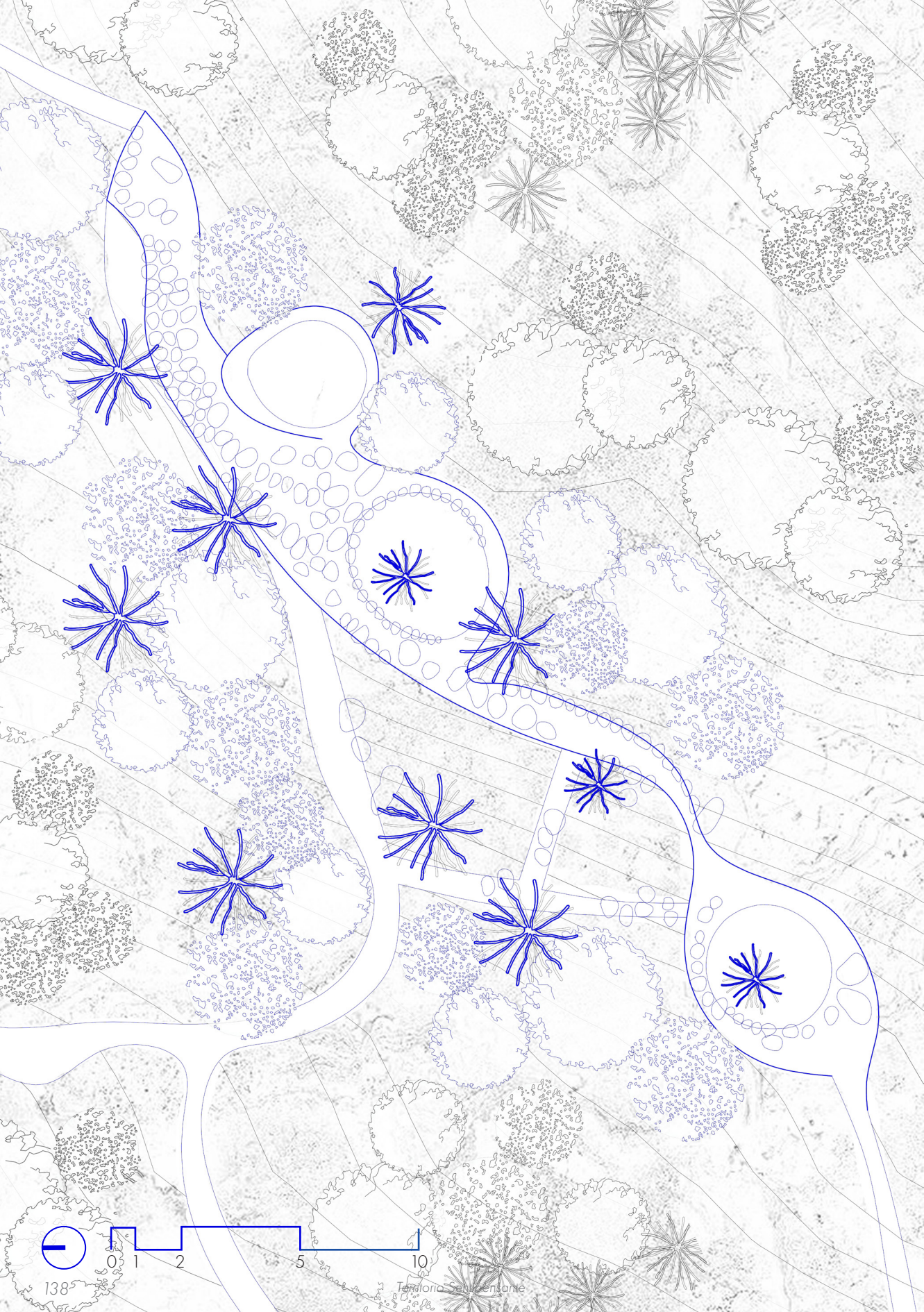
This reading of Teyuna also shows that the settlement cannot be understood only through isolated architectural elements. Its organization emerges from the way terraces, paths, water systems, and different areas of activity work together across the terrain. The site appears as a carefully structured settlement in which architecture responds closely to its mountainous environment and to the practical needs of inhabitation. However, once these relationships are organized mainly through categories such as function, circulation, hierarchy, and construction, a particular interpretation of the territory begins to take shape. It is this way of organizing what can be observed, rather than the individual drawing techniques themselves, that needs to be examined more closely in the following section.

149 - *Serje de la Ossa, Margarita. "Organización urbana en Ciudad Perdida." Cuadernos de Arquitectura Escala, no. 9, Bogotá: Escala, 1984, pp. 1–22.*

150 -*Mayorga Hernández, María Isabel. El agua como elemento constructor de territorio y arquitectura en Colombia. Caso de estudio Teyuna, Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. Tesis doctoral, Universidad de Granada, 2023/2024.*

Fig. 48
Zoom Secondary Territorial Cluster.
Daniela González, 2026.


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Here, "Western cartographic representation" does not refer simply to where a particular map was produced. **It refers to a specific way of organizing and understanding space.** Drawing on Tim Ingold's distinction between networks and meshworks, this approach treats territory through points, boundaries, and connections that can be identified and measured. Instead of following the many relationships that make up a living landscape, it tends to break space into elements that can be located, recorded, and compared.[151]

Within this approach, territory is treated mainly as physical space. Plans, sections, and axonometric drawings are made to show certain things clearly: dimensions, distances, construction systems, spatial relationships, and changes in topography. Their accuracy comes from this specific purpose. They make it possible to measure and compare different parts of a place, but this also means that other ways of experiencing or understanding the territory are harder to include in the drawing.

This does not mean that archaeological drawing is incomplete or inaccurate. On the contrary, its precision is what makes it such a valuable tool for documenting the built environment. The limitation lies elsewhere. The more accurately this language records the material configuration of the site, the less capable it becomes of representing those dimensions of the territory that cannot be translated into measurable data. Humidity cannot be represented through contour lines. Spiritual relationships cannot be expressed through scale. The cyclical movement of water cannot be reduced to topographic elevation. Memory, reciprocity, ritual practices, and the continuous relationships between human and non-human beings remain largely absent—not because they are less important than terraces or retaining walls, **but because they belong to forms of knowledge that exceed the epistemological framework of cartographic representation.**

In this sense, the absence of these elements should not be understood as a failure of archaeological drawing. Rather, it reflects the questions that archaeological drawing was designed to answer. It provides an extraordinary understanding of the physical organization of Teyuna, but it cannot fully account for the relational, experiential, and cosmological dimensions through which the territory continues to exist for the Kogi. This limitation becomes particularly evident when archaeological documentation is contrasted with the Kogi understanding of Teyuna. The difference does not lie simply in two ways of documenting the same place, but in two fundamentally different ways of understanding what the territory is and, consequently, what should be preserved.

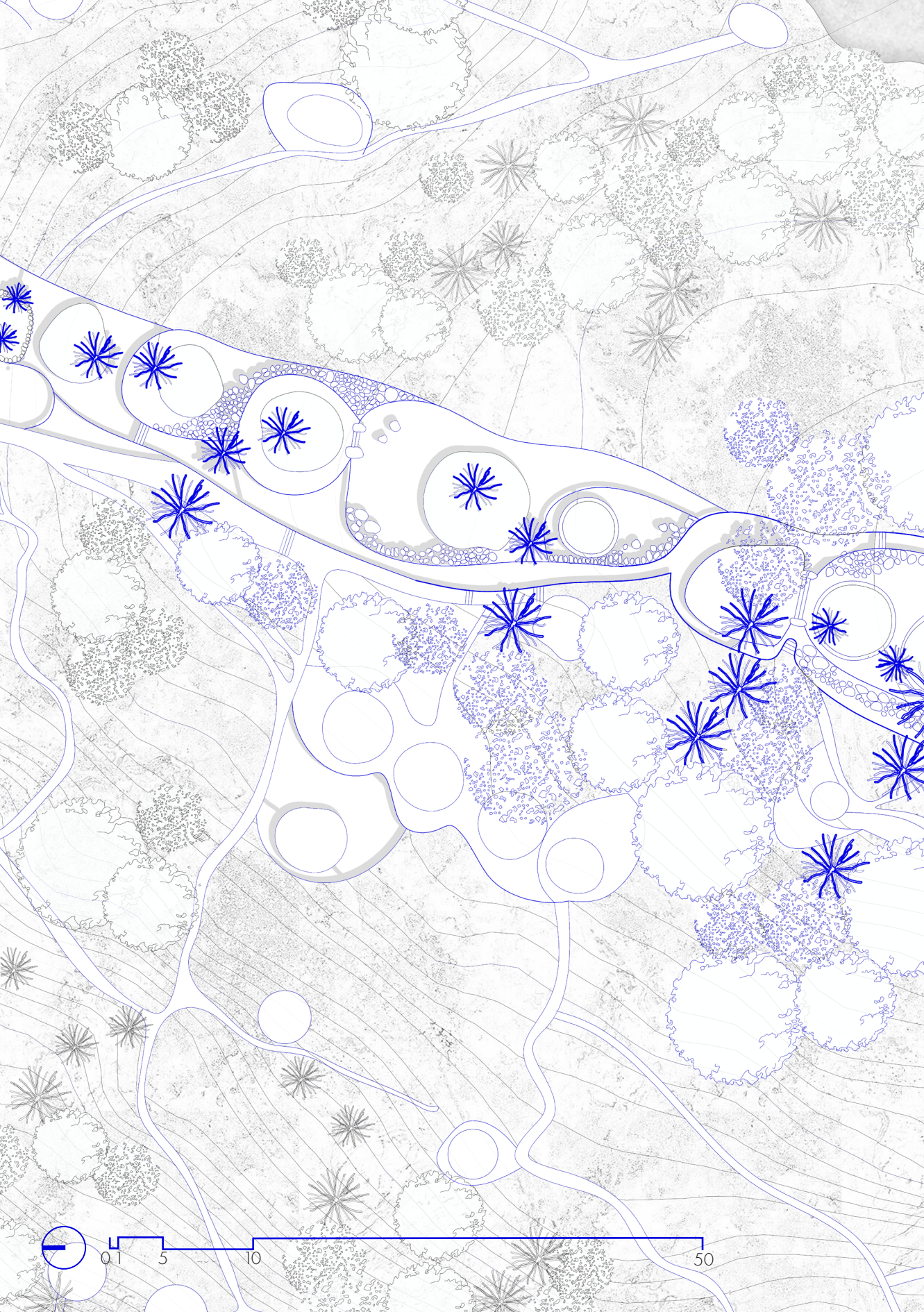
Most archaeological and architectural studies have understandably concentrated on the physical remains of Teyuna. They have documented terraces, stairways, retaining walls, paths, construction techniques, and the way the different spaces are organized. This work has been important for understanding how the settlement developed over time and for supporting its conservation. Without these surveys and records, a large part of the material history of Teyuna would be much harder to understand.

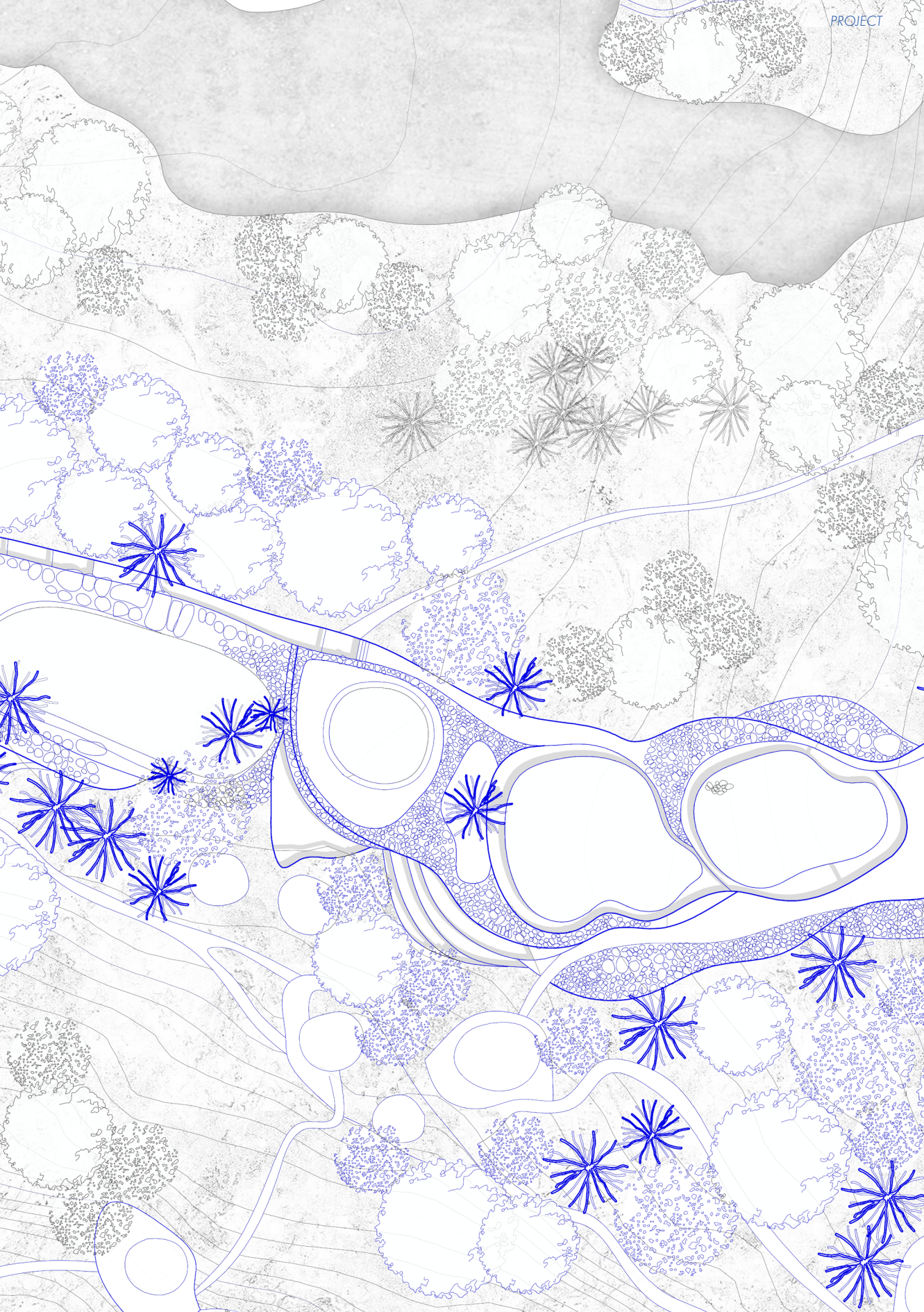
Fig. 49
Peripheral Residential Landscape.
Daniela González, 2026.

However, this perspective also reflects a broader heritage tradition in which conservation is primarily understood through the preservation of **physical structures**. The territory becomes legible through what can be surveyed, measured, mapped, and documented. Architecture, in this sense, is approached as an object of conservation whose material permanence guarantees the preservation of heritage. For the Kogi, what must be preserved is not only the physical fabric of the settlement, but the balance that allows these relationships to continue.

151 - *Ingold, T. (2007). Lines: A brief history. Routledge.*

Fig. 50
Central Ceremonial and Territorial Core.
Daniela González, 2026.


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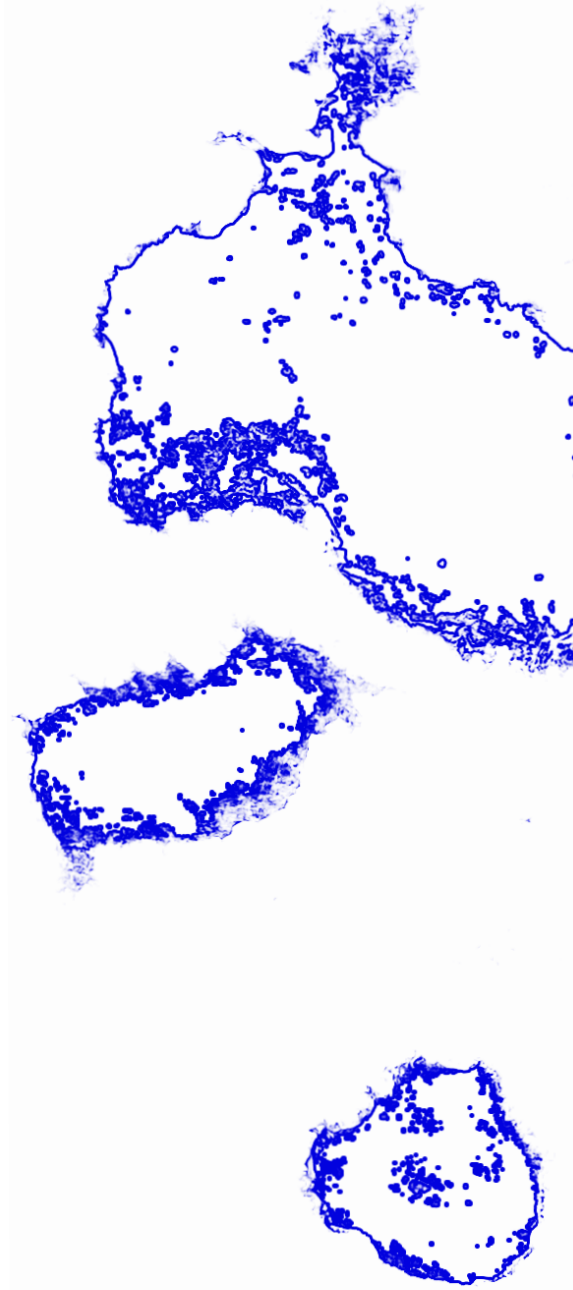


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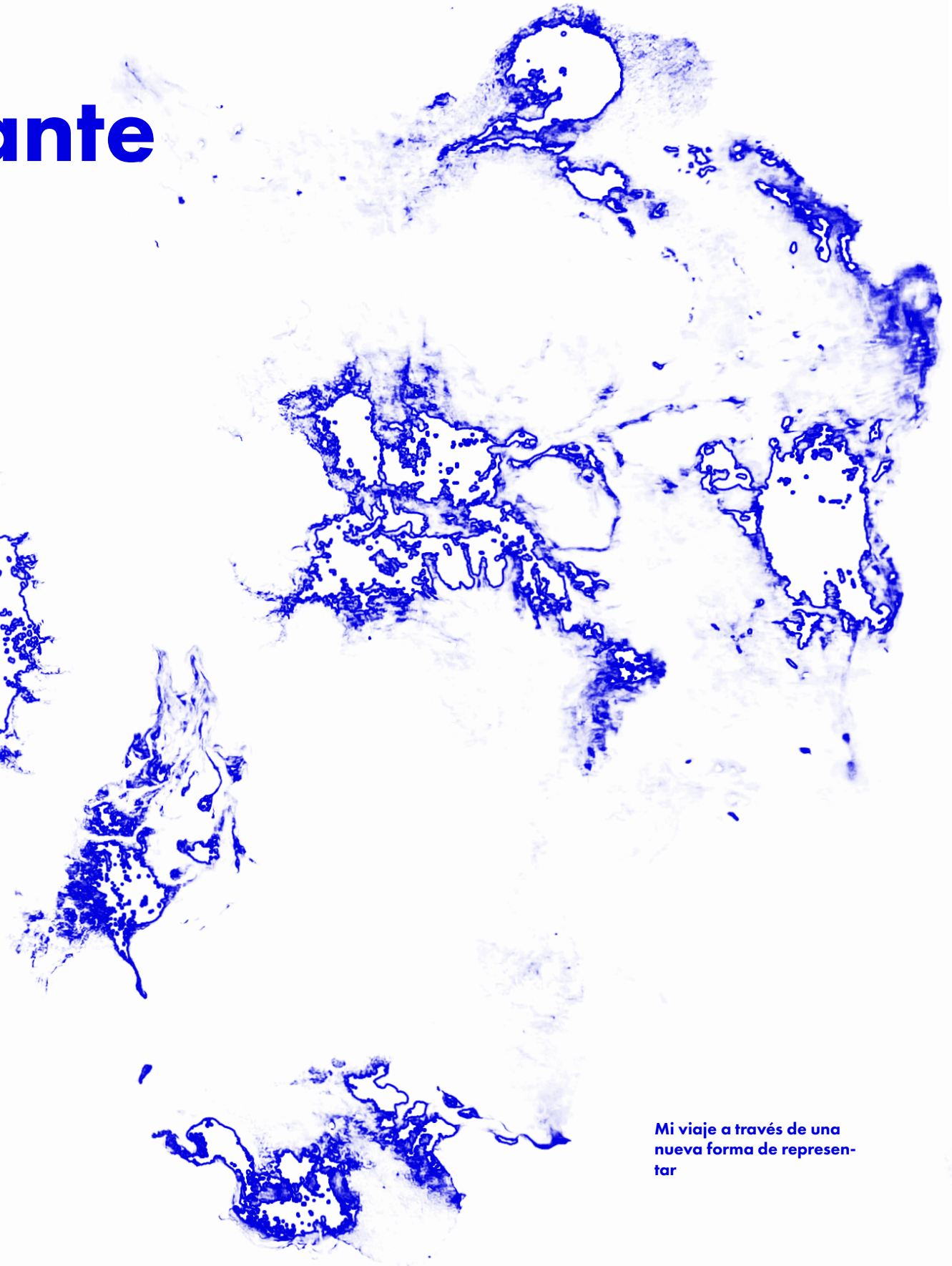
This journal documents my personal journey through the visual experimentation developed during this research. It is written in spanish as a conscious choice to preserve a more intimate space for toughts, sensations, uncertainties, and reflections that emerged throughout the process.

The journal documents the gradual transformation of my approach to representation: from an initial sense of containment and control, towards the search for fluidity through watercolor, and finally to the unpredictable intervention of materials such as salt and sugar. Rather than describing this final images alone, the journal records the decisions, doubts, discoveries, and changes in perception that shaped them.

The following pages are therefore presented as a personal record of the process, offering a complementary perspective to the analytical discussion of the thesis.



ante



Mi viaje a través de una nueva forma de represen-tar

PARTE 1
La construcción de un lenguaje propio

Como anteriormente se ha mencionado a lo largo de esta investigación, la representación final sentipensante atravesó una serie de procesos de deconstrucción de las formas que los propios cánones de enseñanza colonial y moderna han establecido para aprender y producir arquitectura. Ese otro lenguaje no apareció como un hallazgo estético ni como una decisión de estilo. Tampoco fue pensado inicialmente como una propuesta basada en la búsqueda de grosores de línea correctos, hatches establecidos, profundidad, proporción o una representación que respondiera a aquello que convencionalmente entendemos como correcto. Por el contrario, este lenguaje apareció como consecuencia de la propia investigación.

Después de aproximarme a diferentes formas de representación indígena y decolonial, estas comenzaron a abrir otra perspectiva sobre la geometría, sobre la imagen y, especialmente, sobre el mensaje que se busca comunicar a través de un proceso tan íntimo como la producción de una representación. La investigación permitió entonces interpretar el territorio desde una perspectiva más amplia, en la que ya no solo importaba qué elementos podían ser representados, sino también cómo se producía esa representación: qué materiales intervenían, qué relación establecía el cuerpo con ellos, qué posibilidades ofrecían sus comportamientos y, sobre todo, cuánto espacio podía dejarse abierto a aquello que no podía ser completamente controlado.





[imagenes generadas con IA 2026-04]

El proceso de deconstrucción de las formas habituales de representar en arquitectura comenzó, paradójicamente, **desde una posición de miedo y contención.** Durante buena parte de mi formación, aprender a representar arquitectura significó aprender a controlar la imagen. Controlar la línea, el grosor, la profundidad, la geometría, el color y, finalmente, aquello que la imagen debía comunicar. La precisión aparecía como una garantía de que aquello que estaba haciendo era correcto.



[imagenes generadas con IA 2026-04]

Ese aprendizaje se convirtió también en una dificultad cuando intenté representar algo que, desde el comienzo de esta investigación, se resistía a ser reducido a una forma estable. ¿Cómo representar un territorio que no podía comprenderse únicamente como superficie? ¿Cómo dibujar las relaciones entre el agua, la montaña, los árboles, el cuerpo, la memoria y la espiritualidad? ¿Cómo representar algo que no podía ser observado desde afuera como un objeto terminado? Al principio me costaba de gran manera imaginarlo e iniciar a crearlo.

Y esa falta de confianza en mi propio proceso me llevó a buscar afuera las herramientas que sentía que yo todavía no tenía. Comencé entonces una búsqueda casi interminable de referentes, imágenes y posibilidades que pudieran comunicar aquello que todavía resultaba difícil de explicar. En ese momento apareció también la inteligencia artificial. Una herramienta facilitadora para producir imágenes que, en mi mente, podían acercarse más rápidamente a aquello que estaba intentando encontrar.

Mirándolo ahora, puedo reconocer que sabía que algo no funcionaba. Había una parte de mí que entendía que ese no era el proceso que debía seguir. Sin embargo, también existía la sensación de que aquello que estaba afuera tenía las herramientas adecuadas para representar lo que yo no sabía representar. **Era como si la imagen correcta ya existiera en algún lugar y mi trabajo consistiera simplemente en encontrarla.**

Las primeras imágenes producidas desde esta búsqueda eran limpias, comprensibles y visualmente atractivas. Si alguien las observaba sin conocer el proceso, probablemente podía identificar con facilidad una estética determinada: imágenes abstractas, ilustraciones, composiciones que buscaban comunicar una idea de territorio y de las relaciones que los Kogi establecen con la Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. Pero, precisamente por eso, algo faltaba. Eran imágenes que hablaban sobre el territorio, pero todavía no conseguían hablar desde la relación con el territorio.



■ [primeros dibujos 2026-06]



con acuarela

Había logrado reconocer una conexión profunda entre las diferentes partes de la Sierra: sus valles, el agua, los árboles, el suelo, las montañas y las relaciones que los atraviesan. Sin embargo, esa lectura seguía siendo, en cierta medida, superficial. Estaba interpretando una información que había recolectado durante meses y buscando una forma visual de comunicarla, pero todavía no estaba permitiendo que esa información transformara realmente mi manera de representar. El problema no estaba solamente en la imagen.

Durante un largo momento existió una batalla constante entre querer representar a la perfección y sentir que no tenía las habilidades suficientes para hacerlo. Quería llegar a una representación final, correcta y convincente, pero al mismo tiempo entendía que esa necesidad de encontrar una respuesta definitiva estaba reproduciendo justamente aquello que la investigación había intentado cuestionar.

Fue entonces cuando comencé, poco a poco, a soltar.

Soltar la necesidad de que una montaña tuviera que parecer una montaña. Soltar la necesidad de que una línea tuviera que delimitar algo. Soltar la idea de que una representación debía ser inmediatamente comprensible para ser válida. Y, sobre todo, soltar la necesidad de saber de antemano cuál debía ser el resultado.

Comprendí que una representación sentipensante no podía ser una imagen específica a la que debía llegar. No existía una representación sentipensante establecida que pudiera simplemente reproducir. El proceso mismo de búsqueda debía formar parte de ella.



[primeros dibujos con acuarela 2026-06]

Comencé entonces a preguntarme qué me hacía sentir e imaginar toda la información que había recolectado durante meses. No solamente qué había aprendido, sino qué imágenes aparecían en mi mente cuando pensaba en las relaciones entre ambiente y cuerpo, entre agua y montaña, entre materia y memoria. Apareció entonces una necesidad muy concreta: **transmitir fluidez**. Una sensación de movimiento continuo, de algo que no pudiera ser completamente contenido dentro de un borde.

“Y fue desde ese momento que comenzó mi experimentación con la acuarela”



[primeros dibujos con acuarela
2026-06]

PARTE 2
El agua como materia de representación

La elección de la acuarela no fue inicialmente una decisión teórica. Fue, antes que nada, una intuición material. Necesitaba trabajar con algo que pudiera moverse, expandirse, mezclarse y escapar parcialmente de mi control. Necesitaba un material que no me obligara a decidir cada línea antes de dibujarla. La acuarela comenzó a ofrecerme precisamente eso.

El agua no funciona aquí únicamente como un medio para transportar pigmento. Su comportamiento modifica la imagen a medida que la imagen está siendo producida. Se desplaza por el papel, arrastra el color, lo concentra, lo diluye y, en ocasiones, lo lleva hacia lugares que yo no había previsto. **La mano inicia el gesto, pero no determina completamente su resultado.**

Esta característica adquirió una importancia particular dentro de la investigación porque el agua ocupa, a su vez, un lugar central en la comprensión Kogi del territorio. Dentro de esta cosmología, el agua no es simplemente un



■ [continuaron los dibujos con acuarela 2026-07]

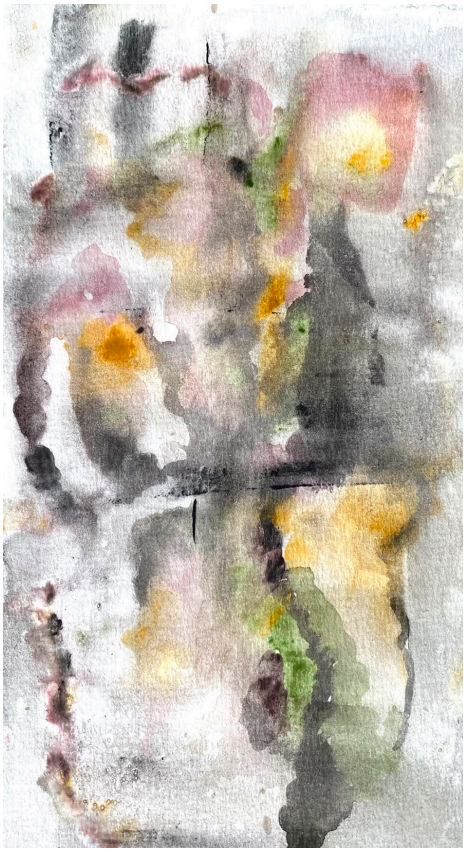
elemento físico del paisaje: participa en las relaciones que mantienen vivo el territorio, comunica y habla por la Sierra. Trabajar con agua significaba entonces introducir en el propio proceso de representación una materia que ya poseía un significado fundamental dentro de aquello que estaba intentando comunicar.

El agua dejaba de ser representada para convertirse en parte del acto de representar.

Por eso, trabajar con acuarela —un medio que literalmente no puede prescindir del agua para existir como técnica— permitió que esta investigación no ilustrara esta cosmología únicamente desde afuera, sino que intentara practicarla materialmente desde la propia técnica. Pintar con acuarela se convirtió en un ejercicio de dejar que el material fluyera, de permitir que una parte de la imagen ocurriera sin que yo pudiera determinarla completamente.

Esta relación con lo húmedo comenzó además a vincularse con otra dimensión que fue adquiriendo importancia durante el proceso: la comprensión de la Sierra como un cuerpo vivo y, particularmente, como un espacio asociado al útero del mundo. Lo húmedo dejó de ser solamente una propiedad física del material y comenzó a relacionarse con aquello que permanece vivo, que se transforma, que contiene y que permite el nacimiento de otras formas.

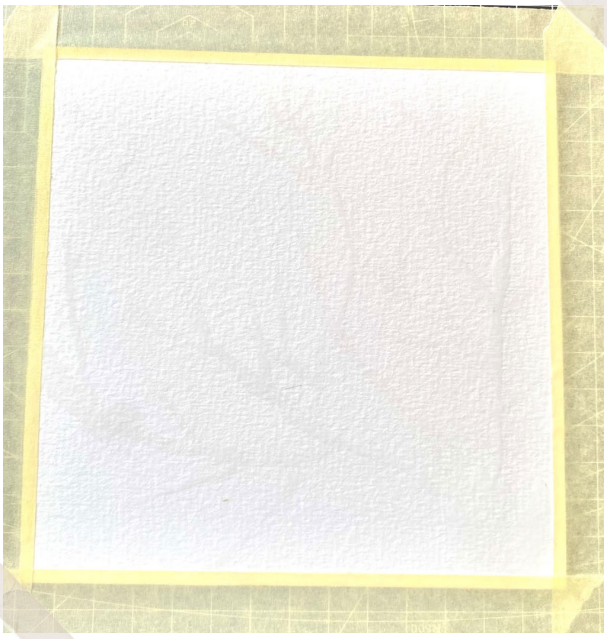
En este sentido, las reflexiones de Siri Hustvedt (2010) sobre el cuerpo, la percepción y la experiencia creativa me ayudaron a comprender esta dimensión desde un lugar más visceral. La producción de una imagen no ocurre únicamente en la cabeza. También ocurre en el cuerpo: en la mano, en la respiración, en la tensión, en la intuición y en aquello que se percibe antes de poder ser explicado.



[continuaron los dibujos con acuarela 2026-07]

Esto modificó progresivamente mi manera de entender la representación. La precisión dejó de ser el objetivo principal. La representación comenzó a adquirir valor precisamente en aquellos momentos en los que no podía controlar completamente lo que estaba sucediendo.

Fue también una manera de romper con los límites de aquella perfección que la tradición moderna de la arquitectura había establecido como sinónimo de rigor. Y, al mismo tiempo, de cuestionar la sistematización producida por las nuevas tecnologías de representación, donde la línea puede ser infinitamente precisa, el error puede eliminarse y cada elemento puede ser modificado hasta alcanzar un resultado previamente imaginado.
Aquí, por el contrario, el resultado debía conservar algo de aquello que había ocurrido durante el proceso. Fue en este punto cuando comprendí algo que mi profesor de tesis me había dicho alguna vez: **debía dejar de intentar comprender la representación únicamente con la cabeza y empezar a sentirla también con el estómago.** Esa frase permaneció conmigo.



■ [proceso de aplicación de agua con azúcar]

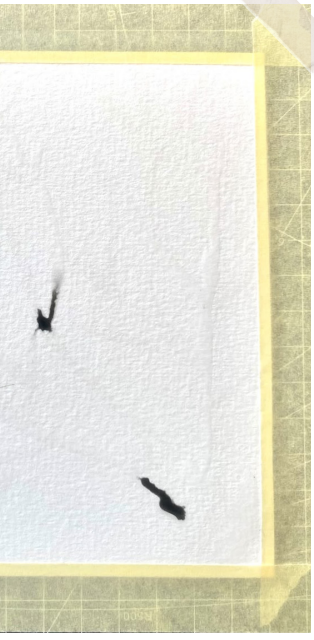


■ [primeras pruebas de pigm

Porque sentipensar no significaba simplemente añadir emoción a una representación racional. Significaba permitir que el pensamiento y la sensación ocurrieran simultáneamente. Significaba que la investigación pudiera ser comprendida intelectualmente, pero también experimentada corporalmente mientras estaba siendo construida.

La representación comenzó entonces a convertirse en un espacio donde podía pensar, sentir, probar, equivocarme y volver a empezar. Una fuerza difícil de explicar me permitía entrar, a través del dibujo, en otros escenarios y lugares que no podía alcanzar únicamente mediante la razón. La representación dejó de ser solamente el resultado de la investigación y empezó a convertirse en una forma de habitarla.

En este sentido, la representación se convierte en una practica de sentipensar: pensar a través de los materiales, recordar a través de los gestos y construir conocimiento.



nento en la mezcla]



[exploración con la pigmentación y textura de la mezcla]

PARTE 3
La materialidad como lenguaje

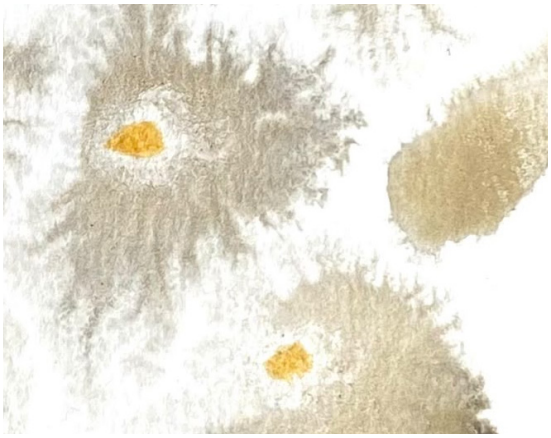
A medida que continué experimentando con la acuarela, el material comenzó a adquirir una presencia cada vez más activa. Ya no se trataba solamente de encontrar una técnica que me permitiera representar aquello que quería decir, sino de observar qué podía decir el material por sí mismo. Esta diferencia fue fundamental.

En la representación colonial y en buena parte de las convenciones modernas de representación arquitectónica, el material funciona principalmente como soporte neutro de información. La línea representa una delimitación, el color identifica una categoría, el hatch diferencia una superficie, la geometría organiza aquello que existe independientemente de la representación. El medio desaparece detrás de aquello que está siendo representado. En la representación sentipensante ocurre lo contrario.

El material no únicamente ilustra: comunica.

Comencé entonces a experimentar con diferentes formas de intervenir la acuarela. Entre ellas, descubrí el comportamiento particular que aparecía al introducir agua con azúcar sobre el pigmento. A medida que el líquido se desplazaba y comenzaba a secarse, las diferencias de concentración, viscosidad y tensión superficial generaban desplazamientos irregulares del pigmento. El agua tendía a moverse hacia zonas con diferentes condiciones de humedad y concentración, mientras el azúcar modificaba el comportamiento del líquido y, durante el secado, podía dejar concentraciones y bordes de pigmento que producían estructuras ramificadas.

Lo que aparecía sobre el papel no era una forma que yo hubiera dibujado. Eran formas que habían ocurrido.



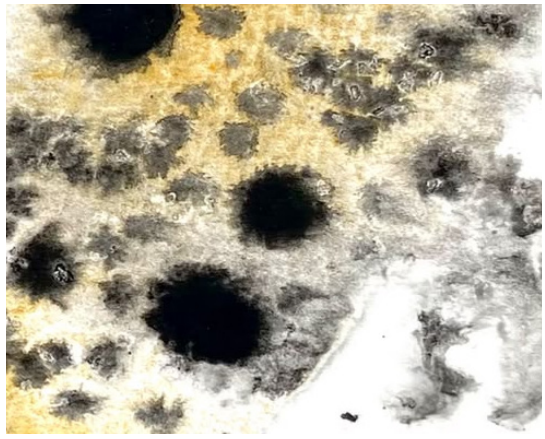
[estructuras ramificadas]



[fragmentación en la acuarela al secado]



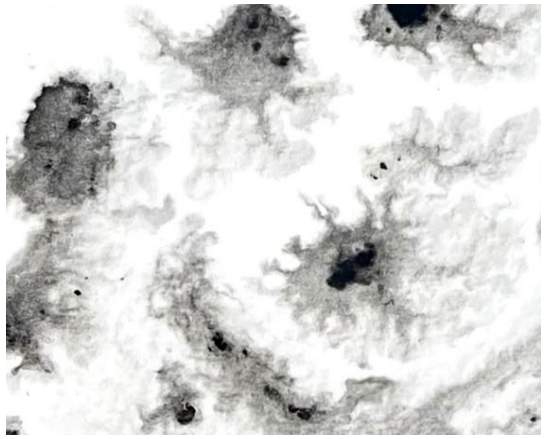
[mezcla fluida entre colores]



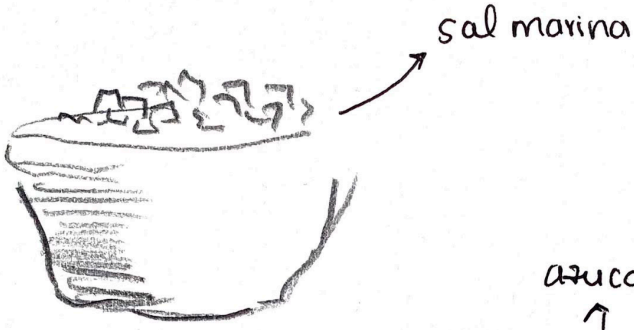
[concentración de pigmentos y cristalización con sales]



[desplazamientos de pigmentación por viscosidad de la mezcla]



[estructuras ramificadas]







"Existía,
entonces,
una
colaboración.
No una autoría
única. Materia, agua
y cuerpo comenzaban
a producir la imagen
conjuntamente"

Ese descubrimiento abrió una nueva posibilidad. Las ramificaciones recordaban a raíces que se extienden bajo la tierra, a ramas que buscan espacio en el aire, filamentos microscópicos, a vasos sanguíneos o incluso a las conexiones neuronales que atraviesan nuestro propio cuerpo. No porque fueran representaciones literales de estos elementos, sino porque compartían una misma lógica: la expansión, la conexión, la ramificación y la construcción de relaciones a través de redes que no poseen un único centro visible.

La materia comenzaba así a generar relaciones que yo no había diseñado previamente.

Esta experiencia reforzó una idea que encontré también en el trabajo de artistas como Amanda Mijangos: forma y contenido no pueden separarse completamente. No existe primero un contenido que luego deba encontrar una forma adecuada para comunicarlo. El modo en que una imagen es producida ya forma parte de aquello que está diciendo. En mi caso, esto significó comprender que la forma de la representación debía ser coherente con la forma en que estaba comprendiendo el territorio.

Si Teyuna es un territorio que se transforma, se conecta, se relaciona y permanece vivo, una representación completamente cerrada, estática y controlada produciría una contradicción metodológica. El territorio estaría siendo definido mediante un lenguaje que negaba precisamente aquello que la investigación intentaba reconocer en él.

La acuarela cumplía aquí una función que ningún otro medio utilizado durante el proceso podía sustituir. Al trabajar con agua, cedía parte de la decisión formal al comportamiento mismo del material. El pigmento se desplazaba, se acumulaba, desaparecía de algunas zonas y se concentraba en otras siguiendo una lógica que no obedecía enteramente a la mano que sostenía el pincel.

Los medios convencionales no desaparecieron de este proceso. El lápiz, el marcador, el pincel y la propia acuarela continuaron formando parte de la experimentación. Sin embargo, fueron adquiriendo nuevos significados dependiendo de la distancia que establecían entre mi cuerpo y el material. El pincel media. La mano no.

Por eso, el uso directo de las manos comenzó a ocupar un lugar central dentro de la representación. No como un recurso expresivo añadido para hacer que la imagen pareciera más espontánea, sino como una manera de reducir la mediación instrumental que caracteriza tanto a la representación cartográfica como a buena parte de la práctica proyectual arquitectónica.

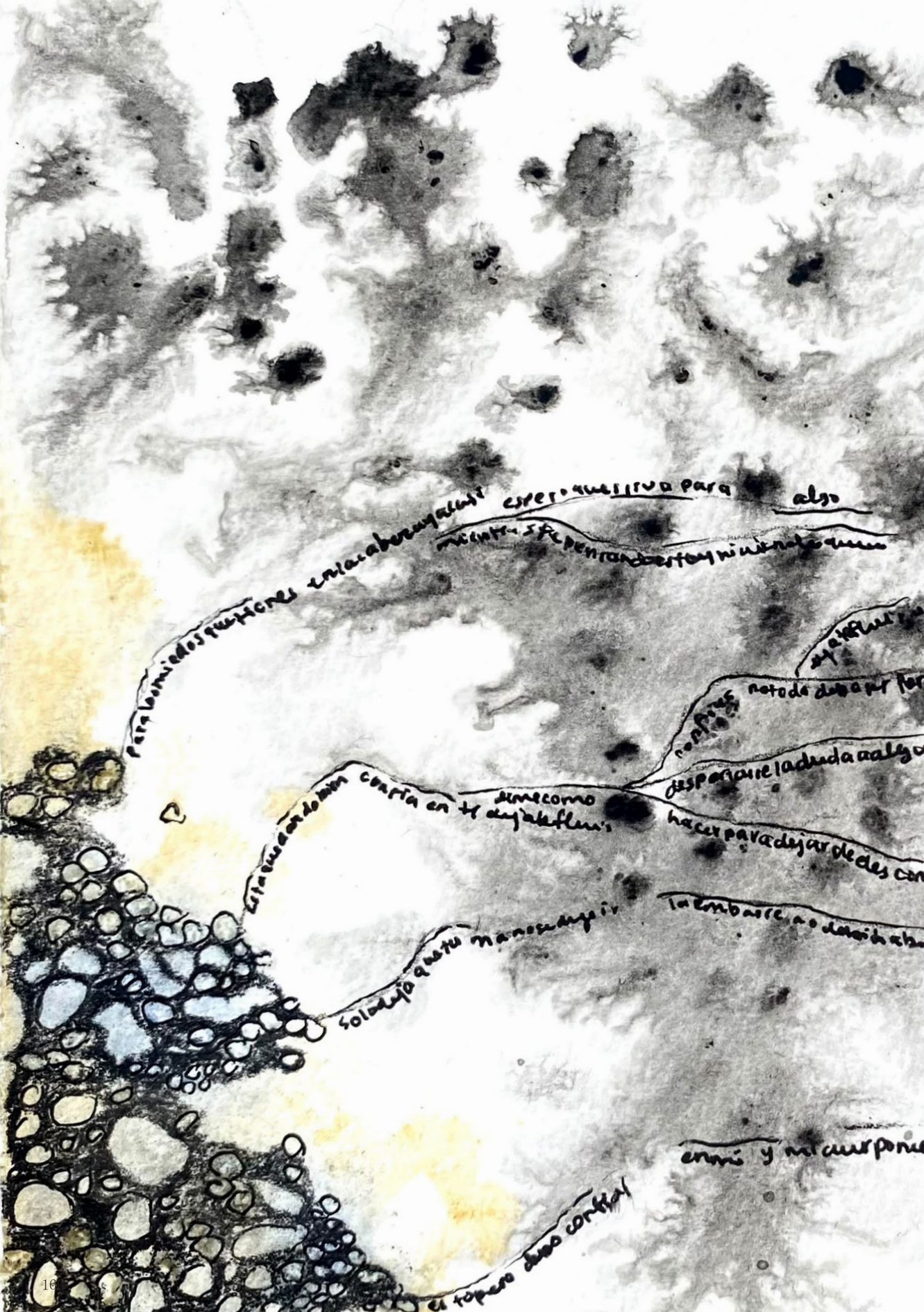
Trabajar directamente con las manos implicaba tocar el pigmento, extender el agua, arrastrar el color, presionar, borrar, manchar y aceptar que algunas marcas permanecerían. El gesto dejaba una huella directa del cuerpo sobre la representación, el error dejó entonces de ser un accidente que debía corregirse, la mancha dejó de ser un defecto, la irregularidad dejó de ser una

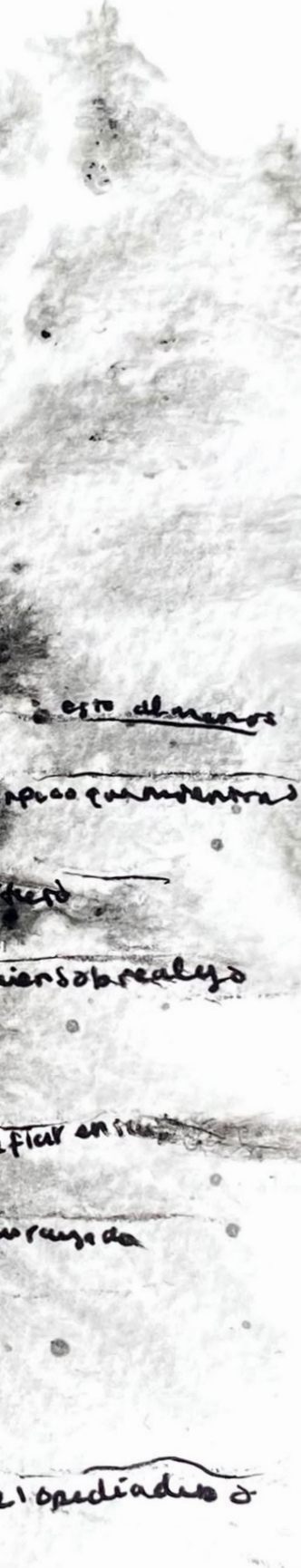


falla de precisión. Todos ellos comenzaron a formar parte del registro.

La representación sentipensante no busca, por tanto, sustituir una forma correcta de representar por una forma incorrecta pero más libre. **Busca cuestionar la necesidad misma de que exista una única forma correcta.**

El dibujo deja de ser únicamente una ventana desde la cual observar el territorio y comienza a convertirse en un territorio en sí mismo: un espacio de relaciones entre agua, pigmento, cuerpo, gesto, memoria y pensamiento. Y es justamente en esa relación donde la representación comienza a adquirir su carácter sentipensante.


algo
notodo
despareceladudaaalgo
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solodejaatumanosalgo
ennié y micuerpo
el topeco



PARTE 4
“Pensar es vivir”

Fue gracias a este proceso de dejarme ser libre, de fluir y de sentir que comprendí que, sin haberlo planeado completamente, estaba haciendo justamente aquello que los Kogi describen: estaba pensando y, por ende, estaba viviendo.

Esta comprensión llegó hacia el final del proceso, pero en realidad atravesó toda la investigación. Durante mucho tiempo pensé que sentipensar era un concepto que debía comprender para después encontrar una manera adecuada de representarlo. Sin embargo, fue únicamente cuando dejé de intentar representarlo directamente que comencé a experimentarlo. Al permitir que el agua se moviera, que la materia decidiera parte de la forma, que mi mano se equivocara y que la imagen no tuviera que responder a una única lógica, entendí que el sentipensar no era solamente algo que estaba estudiando. Era algo que estaba haciendo.

La investigación me llevó entonces a preguntarme qué significaba realmente para mí representar, y no solamente qué significa representar un territorio, sino qué implica que yo, desde mi propia posición, decida por qué ese territorio debe ser visto. Y esta pregunta me llevo inebitablemente a la siguiente pregunta: ¿qué significa para mí descolonizar?

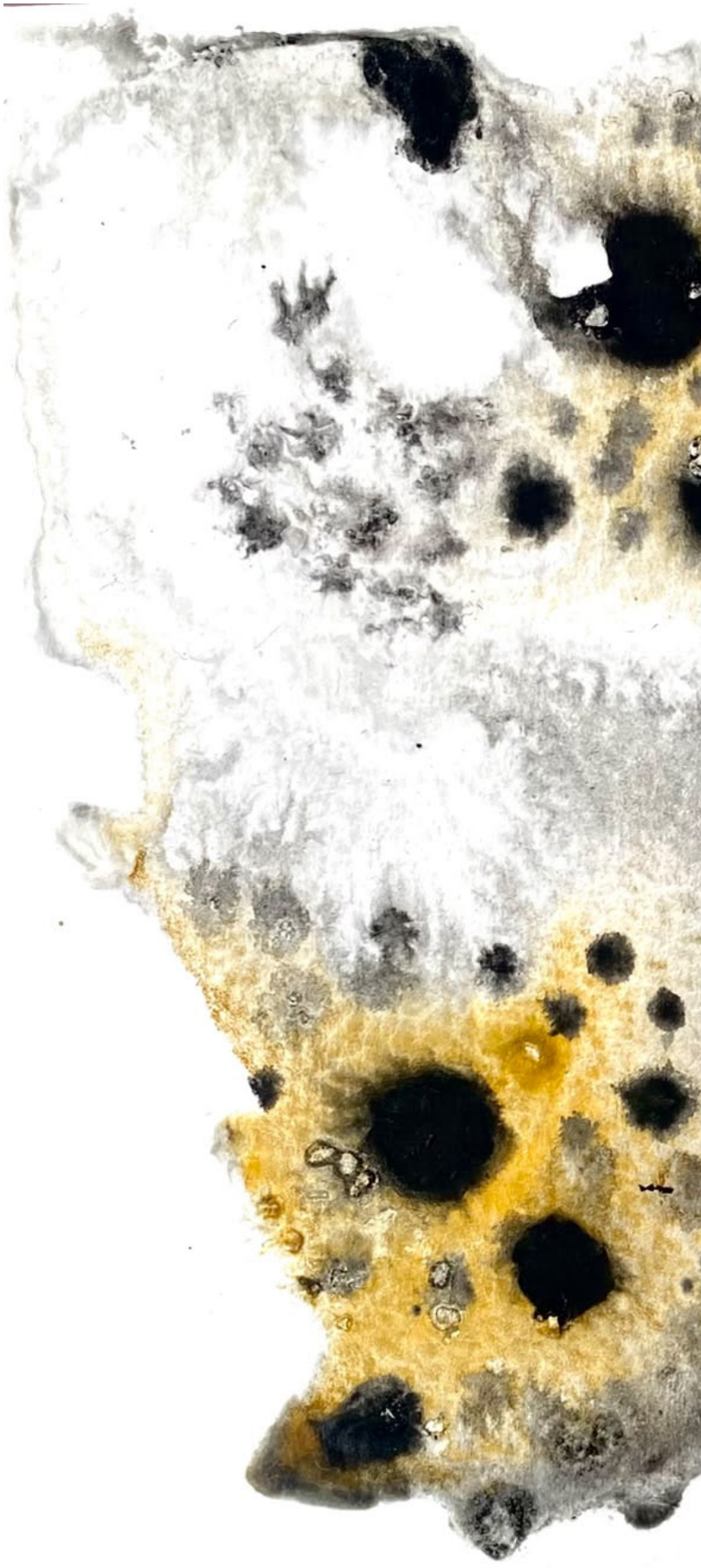
Durante este proceso comprendí algo que inicialmente resultaba incómodo: venir del Sur no significa necesariamente pensar desde el Sur.

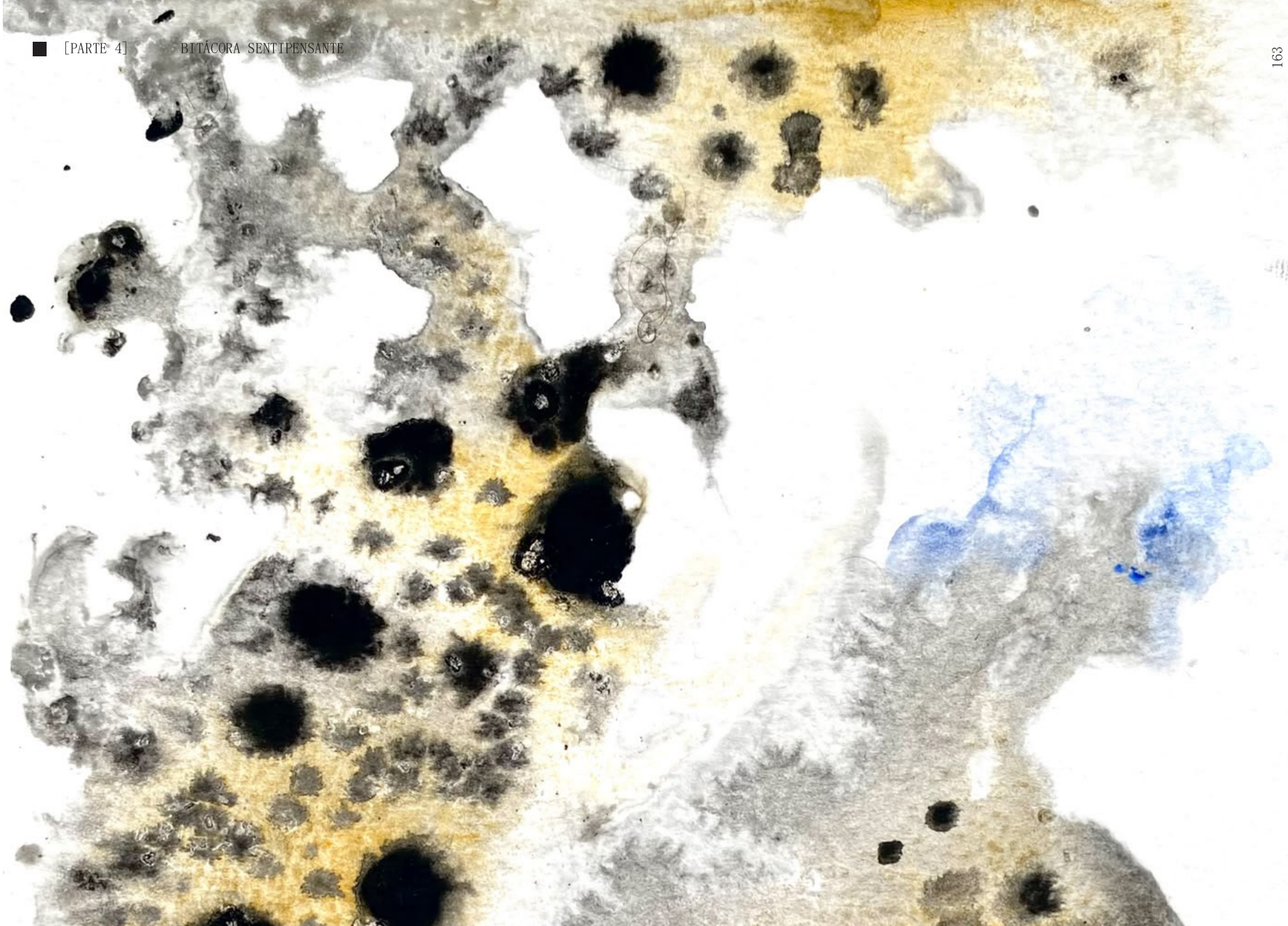
Muchas veces pensamos con las herramientas que hemos aprendido a considerar universales. Construidos desde determinadas posiciones históricas de poder, y terminamos reproduciéndolos incluso cuando nuestro propio territorio, nuestra cultura o nuestra historia se encuentran en oposición a ellos. Yo misma había aprendido a representar de esa manera. Había aprendido a confiar en la precisión de la línea, en la estabilidad de la geometría, en la claridad del dibujo y en la posibilidad de controlar aquello que estaba representando.

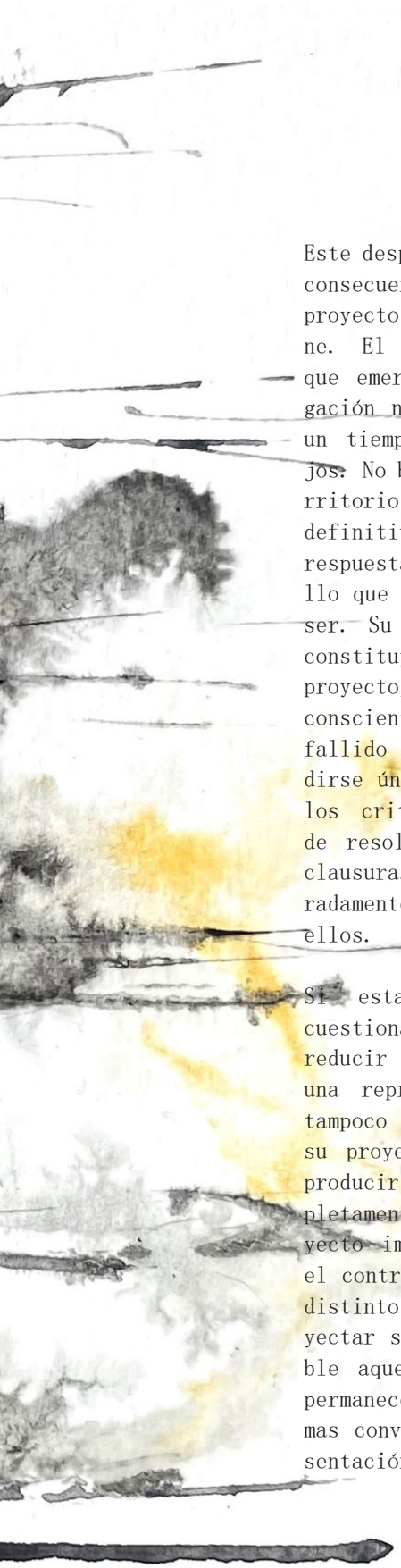
Descolonizar mi representación no significó entonces simplemente buscar formas indígenas para sustituir las formas occidentales. Significó comenzar a cuestionar desde dónde estaba mirando.

Estudiar la Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta y aproximarme a la comunidad Kogi no significó únicamente conectar con unas raíces que históricamente han sido invisibilizadas. Significa también reconocer las ruinas que dejó la experiencia colonial y preguntarme qué puedo construir sobre ellas desde las condiciones del presente. No se trata de regresar a un pasado idealizado ni de pretender recuperar una forma de pensamiento que ya no puede existir exactamente como existía antes. Se trata de construir desde lo que permanece, desde lo que ha resistido, desde lo que ha sido transformado y también desde aquello que todavía está por imaginarse.

En este sentido, la descolonización no aparece como un punto de llegada. Es una posición desde la cual seguir pensando.







Este desplazamiento tiene una consecuencia directa sobre el proyecto que aquí se propone. El proyecto imaginario que emerge de esta investigación no tiene un lugar ni un tiempo completamente fijos. No busca resolver el territorio mediante una forma definitiva ni establecer una respuesta cerrada sobre aquello que Teyuna debe llegar a ser. Su carácter abierto no constituye una carencia del proyecto, sino una decisión consciente. El proyecto no es fallido porque no pueda medirse únicamente a través de los criterios tradicionales de resolución, eficiencia y clausura. Se niega, deliberadamente, a ser medido por ellos.

Si esta investigación ha cuestionado la posibilidad de reducir un territorio vivo a una representación estable, tampoco tendría sentido que su proyecto final intentara producir una solución completamente cerrada. El proyecto imaginario opera, por el contrario, en un registro distinto: uno en el que proyectar significa hacer visible aquello que normalmente permanece fuera de los sistemas convencionales de representación.

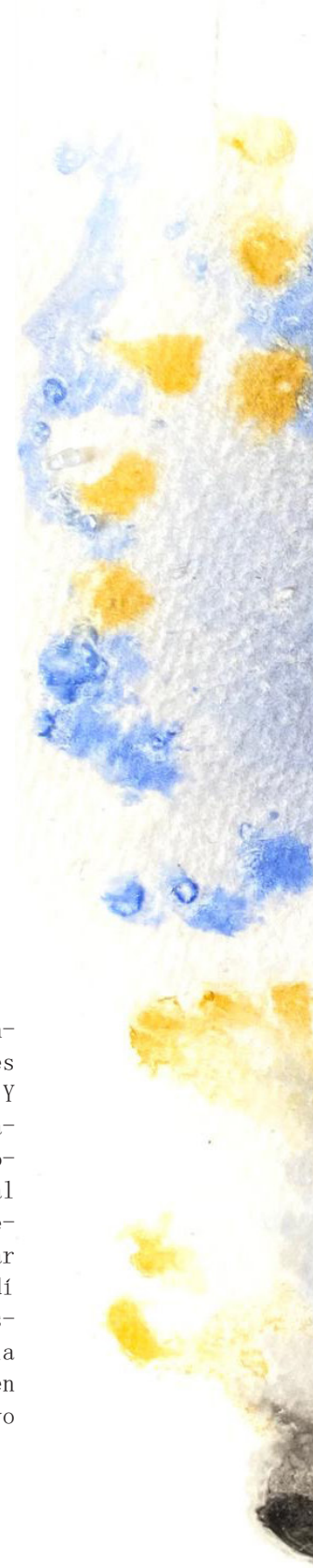
No se entiende lo político únicamente como una intervención directa sobre las estructuras institucionales que regulan el territorio. Lo político aparece también en el acto de hacer visible. En volver disponible aquello que el presente ha aprendido a ignorar, clasificar como anormal o mantener fuera de los lenguajes reconocidos. Representar desde otra posición significa, en este sentido, producir una interrupción dentro de aquello que normalmente entendemos como visible, representable y legítimo.

La representación se convierte entonces en una forma de resistencia. Y es precisamente aquí donde la memoria adquiere para mí otro significado.

Esta investigación me hizo pensar en el otro, pero de una manera diferente a como lo había hecho al principio. Ya no se trataba simplemente de estudiar a una comunidad distinta a la mía y tratar de comprender su relación con el territorio. El proceso me hizo sentir parte de esa pregunta. Me hizo entender que existe algo que muchas personas del Sur no estamos dispuestas a abandonar: nuestra capacidad de construir conocimiento desde la experiencia, desde el cuerpo, desde la memoria y desde relaciones que no siempre pueden ser traducidas a los sistemas de conocimiento dominantes.

Por eso, el proyecto adquiere finalmente una dimensión política no porque pretenda ofrecer una solución definitiva, **sino porque se niega a aceptar que aquello que no puede ser resuelto de acuerdo con los parámetros existentes deba permanecer invisible.** La representación sentipensante se convierte así en un acto político porque hace audible y visible esa anormalidad que el presente impide reconocer.

No busca hablar por el territorio ni por los Kogi. Busca, más bien, cuestionar las condiciones desde las cuales hemos aprendido a mirar. Y quizás esa sea la transformación más importante que produjo esta investigación: al principio buscaba una manera diferente de representar Teyuna. Al final, comprendí que lo que necesitaba transformar no era únicamente la representación, sino también la posición desde la cual yo misma estaba mirando.









Conclusions

This research began with a question about Teyuna and the possibility of understanding its territorial logic through architecture. As the research developed, however, the question expanded beyond what Teyuna is and towards how it has been understood and represented. This shift made it possible to recognize that the difficulty does not lie only in representing a complex territory, but also in the limits of the tools traditionally used to interpret it.

The first conclusion is that Teyuna cannot be fully understood as an archaeological site, an architectural settlement, or a collection of physical remains. These readings remain important and necessary. Archaeological surveys, architectural drawings, maps, and historical records have made it possible to document and preserve the material organization of the site, making terraces, paths, channels, structures, and topographic relationships visible. However, they do not account for everything that gives the territory meaning. The study of Kogi cosmology reveals a much broader system of relationships. Teyuna is therefore not simply a place where architectural forms were constructed, but part of a living territorial system that continues to be understood, cared for, and experienced through relationships.

This also changes the way the archive can be understood. Archaeological and architectural documentation is not only a collection of information about the past. **Every map, drawing, photograph, survey, and record also reflects decisions about what should be documented and which forms of knowledge are considered relevant**. The archive therefore preserves certain aspects of a territory while making others more difficult to access. In the case of Teyuna, the existing documentation provides extensive information about its physical organization, but forms of knowledge related to memory, spirituality, embodied experience, and relationships with water, mountains, and sacred places do not leave the same kind of trace as a measured terrace or architectural plan. This does not reduce the value of the archive. Instead, it demonstrates the importance of reading it critically and recognizing both its contributions and its limits.

The research also demonstrates that representation is not a neutral act. A drawing does not simply reproduce an existing reality. It determines what becomes visible, how elements are related, and what types of information are considered relevant. The Western architectural and cartographic systems examined in this research are highly effective at describing physical space. Their strength is also their limitation: because they are based on particular understandings of space, they have difficulty expressing relationships that cannot be reduced to measurable categories. The problem, therefore, is not that these systems are incorrect, but that they cannot fully communicate forms of territorial knowledge that fall outside the conditions for which they were developed.

This recognition also changes the role of representation within the research. The objective is not to replace conventional architectural drawing with a supposedly more authentic Indigenous visual language. Such an approach would risk reducing Indigenous knowledge to a collection of formal references that can simply be adopted by architectural practice. Instead, the experimentation with watercolor, water, organic materials, direct gestures, stains, and unpredictable processes became a way of questioning how the image itself is produced.

The resulting representation is therefore less concerned with reproducing a fixed appearance of Teyuna and more concerned with expressing relationships, movement, material interaction, and the possibility of leaving certain aspects unresolved.

This is where the relationship between art and political discourse becomes particularly relevant. Art does not become political only when it explicitly addresses political subjects. **Representation can also operate politically by questioning what is made visible, what is considered legitimate knowledge, and which forms of experience are allowed to enter a disciplinary language.** In this research, the political dimension of representation does not consist in speaking on behalf of the Kogi or attempting to reproduce their worldview. Rather, it emerges through a questioning of the conditions under which territory becomes visible and understandable. Refusing to produce a completely controlled and closed image becomes a way of challenging the assumption that a territory must first become fully legible in order to be considered known.

The research also demonstrates that decolonization cannot be understood simply as the replacement of Western knowledge with Indigenous knowledge. A more difficult question concerns the position from which knowledge is produced in the first place. Coming from the Global South does not automatically place a researcher outside colonial systems of thought. Academic education, architectural training, and disciplinary conventions can continue to reproduce ideas developed through Northern and European traditions, even when the territory being studied belongs to a different historical and cultural context. Precision, measurement, control, technical clarity, and certain forms of representation can appear universal simply because they have become deeply established within professional and academic practice.

Recognizing this condition is important because **it prevents decolonization from becoming another simplified opposition between "Western" and "Indigenous" knowledge**. Within this research, decolonization is understood instead as an ongoing process of questioning the categories through which territory is approached. It involves asking why certain forms of knowledge are considered more rigorous than others, why some representations appear more legitimate, and what is excluded when a particular epistemological framework is treated as universal. From this perspective, a situated position from the South is not defined by an automatic distance from colonial thought, but by the continuous effort to identify and question the ways in which that thought remains present.

The concept of sentipensar becomes particularly important within this process. At the beginning of the research, sentipensar could be approached as a theoretical concept that needed to be understood and represented. Through the development of the project, however, it became a methodological principle. Thinking and feeling were not treated as separate stages of the research. Understanding emerged through drawing, through material experimentation, through bodily perception, through mistakes, and through observing processes that could not be completely controlled. The body therefore became more than an instrument for producing the final representation; it became part of the process through which knowledge was produced.

In this sense, the Kogi principle that "to think is to live" acquires a significance beyond its theoretical explanation. It suggests that thought is not detached from the relationships through which life is sustained. Applied to the research process, this understanding allows representation to be considered as a form of participation rather than simple observation. **To think about territory also means to establish relationships with materials, bodies, memories, environments, and forms of knowledge**. Sentipensar therefore becomes not only an object of study, but a way of approaching research itself.

Another important conclusion concerns the role of representation as a research method. The drawings produced during the project were not simply visual outcomes developed after the theoretical investigation. The process of making them generated knowledge that could not have emerged through textual analysis alone. The behavior of water, the irregularity of pigment, the resistance of materials, and the marks produced through direct bodily interaction became part of the investigation. Representation therefore operated as a space of experimentation in which ideas could be tested, questioned, and transformed.

For this reason, the research does not propose a definitive representational system for Teyuna. Developing another fixed language could reproduce the same problem that the research has attempted to question: the transformation of a living and changing territory into a stable image that can be completely understood and controlled. Instead, **the research proposes a way of working in which representation remains open, situated, material, and conscious of its own limitations**.

Ultimately, the main transformation produced by the research concerns the position from which Teyuna is represented. The initial problem of finding a different way to depict the territory gradually became a broader question about the conditions through which territory is made visible and understood. The difficulty of representing Teyuna therefore ceased to be treated as a problem that needed to be solved completely and became part of the knowledge produced by the research itself.

The concept of territorio sentipensante provides a way to understand this shift. It does not describe a territory that simply thinks or feels in the same way as a human subject. Rather, it points toward a different understanding of the relationships through which life, knowledge, memory, and responsibility are produced. Approaching Teyuna from this perspective requires not only new forms of representation, but also a reconsideration of the assumptions that determine what representation is expected to do.

The research therefore concludes with an **open position rather than a definitive answer**. If architecture is to engage with territories that are living, relational, and shaped by forms of knowledge different from those traditionally recognized by the discipline, then its methods of observation, representation, and knowledge production must also remain open to change. The value of the final representation does not lie in its ability to provide a complete image of Teyuna, **but in its capacity to make visible the limitations of representation itself and to propose another way of engaging with territory**.

In this sense, sentipensar becomes both the subject and the method of the research. It describes not only a way of understanding Teyuna, but also a way of producing spatial knowledge through the relationships between body, material, territory, memory, and thought. The research does not seek to close these relationships into a final image. Instead, it leaves them open as a possible direction for architectural practice and for further forms of research into territories that cannot be fully separated from the ways in which they are lived, remembered, and cared for.

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