

International  
Institute of  
Social Studies

The logo for the International Institute of Social Studies, featuring the word "Erasmus" in a stylized, cursive script.

**Storytelling and resistance:  
Community cooking pots in the south of Bogotá  
during Colombia's national strike**

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(Colombia)

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for obtaining the degree of  
MASTER OF ARTS IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Major:

**AFES**

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December 2022

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## Abstract

This investigation is based on storytelling and aims at understanding and showing the role of the community cooking pots in the south of Bogotá during Colombia's 2021 national strike. The investigation takes a decolonial perspective delinking from the idea of objectivity and retakes storytelling as a central tool for knowledge cultivation. Thus, through the voices of fictional characters, the stories show the role of the community cooking pots. For the analysis, this paper relates to Latinamerican and ground-based theories. It highlights the importance of different forms of resistance, including the production of commons, the body and the place.

**Key words:** resistance, storytelling, production of common, community cooking pot, Colombia.

## Acknowledgements

I owe this research paper to the people who participated in the community cooking pots in the south of Bogotá and generously shared their experiences with me. Thank you for your trust. All my respect and admiration to them.

Thank you to Rosalba for introducing me to a new way of thinking and for believing in my ideas. Thank you for opening spaces for me to do it inside academia.

Thank you to my friends who have helped me throughout this process. Who, with love and patience, have read and listened to me and given me feedback. A special thanks to those from the decolonial class for opening a safe space for other ways of cultivating knowledge. Thanks to my dad for his support in my dreams and help in the final process of this paper.

A final thanks to the ISS, a space that opened my mind in many aspects and taught me so much.

# Introduction

## What is this investigation about?

A social outburst<sup>1</sup> took place in Colombia in 2021. Thousands of people took to the streets to demand a change in the country. Among the different expressions of resistance, the community cooking pots were very visible and appeared all around the country. The most visible ones were in two of the main cities, Bogotá and Cali.

The community cooking pots consist of pots placed on the streets, where people cook food to be shared with persons for whom food is not a given and hunger is in everyday's panorama. In Colombia's 2021 national strike, permanent community cooking pots emerged in the *puntos de resistencia*<sup>2</sup> to help sustain the protests and feed the people. However, their role ended up being much more than that. This investigation aims at sharing stories of the community cooking pots in Bogotá to answer the question: what was the role of the community cooking pots in the south of Bogotá during Colombia's 2021 national strike? To answer this question storytelling will be used. The stories you will read are built from the voices of people who participated in three specific community cooking pots located in different *puntos de resistencia* in the south of Bogotá: "Portal Resistencia", "Puente de la dignidad" and "Sur Oriente".

Overall, this investigation is about collectivity, production of commons, resistance, cooking, eating, and about stories and voices that have been silenced.

## Justification and relevance of the topic

This investigation gives visibility and space to the stories of people who resisted on the strike from the community cooking pots. As part of the repression process undertaken by Iván Duque's government and strengthened by the media, the people who actively participated in the social outbreak have been called "guerrilleros", criminals and have been strongly persecuted. When talking to them, I heard the desire and need to tell their version of the story and for it to be heard; for the new generations to know all the collective processes undertaken to resist and the central role that cooking and eating played on the process. This research contributes to avoiding a single story of the resistance and to help make space for other stories, for other versions of what the strike was. Furthermore, this investigation highlights the political element that food related social processes have.

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout the text the word social outburst, social outbreak and national strike will be used interchangeably.

<sup>2</sup> This can be translated as resistance place or resistance point. These were places appropriated by the demonstrators and that became nodal for the strike since were permanent resistance standing places.

### **How is this framed in the development studies?**

The mainstream conception of development is based on “globalocentric frameworks” (Harcourt & Escobar, 2005) driven by ideas of progress and poverty alleviation, through the intervention of the State, NGOs or international institutions. In contrast, this Research Paper (RP) is framed in the critical development field and focuses on place-based, local, and non-state centric political processes that emerged from the people, in a particular context of social outbreak and resistance. The latter depicts other ways of transforming the realities through, joint action, producing commons, nurturing the body and the community and putting life in the center by the practice of organizing around something so vital as cooking and eating.

### **Positionality**

I am a Colombian who has lived most of her life in Bogotá. As a middle-class woman, I have never had to experience hunger or poverty. In the context of Colombia, I am a very privileged person. I studied sociology at a private university and now I am doing a master’s at a university abroad. Despite not feeling the injustices in my own body, I have also felt the pain and rage of the injustices created by elite, indolent, oppressive governments in my country and have actively participated in the social outbreaks we have had. During the strike of 2021, I participated in the marches in Bogotá and donated to the community cooking pot of “Portal Resistencia”.

I am a person who is deeply touched by the realities of Colombia and compromised with the social change that I believe is necessary for the country. I also have a deep belief in the power that food has to get people together and strengthen social processes. This thesis is a way of political compromise. I compromise by listening to the stories of people who made the community cooking pots possible during the strike and helping weave some of the many stories about the community cooking pots in Bogotá and their role in the resistance. This is a compromise with voices that have been silenced and criminalized. I am accountable to those people.

### **How can you approach this investigation?**

This investigation has two important elements in constant interaction: the stories and the weaving of the analysis through the concepts. Inspired by Toliver, (2022) and Fals Borda (1981) to keep the storytelling in a non-academic language, I decided to separate it from the conceptual analysis, presenting them in constant interaction but separately. To accomplish the latter, the work is presented in two different channels: A and B. Through channel A run the stories. Through channel B, runs the theoretical analysis of some parts of the stories. Both channels are connected through hyperlinks.



**Specific instructions to the reader:**

Dear reader, after having read the methodology, you will get to channel A. There, while reading the story, you will find some hyperlinks to channel B. Use the hyperlinks between channels to approach to the conceptual analysis. Is very easy: when you find a hyperlink to channel B click on it. This will take you to the analysis of that part of the story, and at the end of the channel, you will find another hyperlink to go back to the story. If you prefer, you can also read just channel A, to engage only with the stories, and skip the analysis. It is up to you what to do.

## Methodological approach

I approached this investigation using decolonial lenses. This means to be open to knowledge other thoughts different from modernity, aspects linked to the construction of *un mundo otro*. This passes through the recognition and deep listening of stories that have been subaltern (Escobar, 2007) and even erased or criminalized. I follow here the call to “take seriously the epistemic force of local histories and to think theory from the political praxis of subaltern groups”. (Escobar, 2007 p, xx).

Decolonial lenses also mean to take seriously the concepts that I use to engage with the analysis but also, how the research was conducted and presented. I depart from the idea that knowledge is not produced but cultivated, this means that is collective and embodied (Sheik, 2022). Knowledge is also situated: there is no universal social knowledge. Every knowledge is constructed and valid depending on the bodies, the places and the realities that cultivate it (Haraway, 1988 Mignolo, 2018; Leyva Solano, 2019) Following the latter, I distance myself from the thought of detached and neutral objectivity<sup>3</sup> and from the belief in the existence of a single story, which is often present in modernity. I approach the practice of *sentipensar* proposed by a Colombian peasant and brought into academia by Orlando Fals Borda in which feeling is not dissociated from thinking but is part of the same process. Thus, Sentipensar requires detaching from the rational idea of objectivity, and eliminating the verticality between thinking and feeling (Ramos, 2020) Sentipensamiento entangles a compromise related to the development of consciousness of the researcher and the recognition of other knowledges (Rodríguez Castro, 2021) Thus, I aimed at doing deep listening and storytelling as committed ways of *sentipensar*. The theories that inspired my methodology and that inform my analysis come from the enfolded and enacted knowledge constructed by the people organizing and seeking to create new realities based partly on solidarities to sustain life. (Botero-Gomez, 2019).

From a decolonial perspective, I understand my positionality as a researcher directly and profoundly related to the epistemological and methodological approaches in which “the old dichotomies of researched-researcher, subject-object, and action-structure are questioned. It implies the researcher's involvement as a subject interested in overcoming the societal model forged in the last decades” (Gemsal- Instituto Gino Germani, 2008, p6). Therefore, I engaged emotionally with the stories I heard. I also connected with the people who told me their experiences and stories and feel accountable to them.

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<sup>3</sup> This is what Castro Gómez called the hybrid of the zero point. See Castro Gómez (2021) *Science, Race, and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century Latin America*. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

### **The inspiration: methodological approaches**

Four main approaches inspired my work. All of them are related to storytelling as an outcome but also as a process. However, each of them provided me with different inspirations and ideas. In the following, I will explain them and how they interconnect.

The first approach is developed by Alfredo Molano, a Colombian Sociologist who dedicated most of his life to understanding Colombia by listening to the voices of rural people. He did a storytelling process that contributed enormously to the collective memory of Colombia. Molano travelled a lot around the country listening to people's stories, and then writing fictionary characters that were created from the mix of all those voices and lived experiences.

In a beautiful text called "people don't talk in concepts unless they want to hide" he writes about the importance of listening and storytelling. He argues that disciplinary academia often lets aside the core of the stories to hide in the concepts that don't allow listening to what people have to say to get to the heart of what they are sharing (Molano, 2009, p4) Molano believed that travelling and consciously listening were key elements to challenging those dominant ways of producing knowledge through concepts. "The difficulty begins when the one who tries to write does not hear because he is dazed with judgments and prejudices, which are precisely the matter that must be erased to get to the bone." (Molano, 2016, min 3:34) This does not mean that concepts and academic work are unimportant, but for Molano they could not be the predominant thing that informed knowledge. Taking that into account, I try to give more space to the stories of the different pots (channel A). However, recognizing the academic context in which I am presenting this paper, I engage with conceptual analysis in some parts of the stories. (channel B) seeking to find an equilibrium between the two of them.

### **Endarkened storywork**

A second source of inspiration is the endarkened story work proposed by black scholar Toliver. This methodology is "a method of nurturing, not countering" (Toliver, 2022 P.xix) It is based on indigenous storytelling and endarkened feminist epistemologies.

The endarkened story work is based on the politics of refusal, meaning that it refuses objectivity and traditional social sciences methods and focuses on the voices of the people without trying to quantify them or decode them, instead using the art of storytelling. Like Molano, Toliver highlights the importance of listening to people's voices and telling stories. She argues that this is something that academia has done for data collection but, precisely because the voices are thought of as data, few times, academia is bound to tell stories. (Toliver, 2022, p xv). Thus, an important part of the process is engaging in telling the stories and not only with attentive listening.

As part of refusing objectivity, endarken story work asks the researcher to be open enough to receive the stories, listen to them, and “locate ourselves within the work” (Toliver, 2022, pXX) The latter means to involve ourselves as investigators and to have reciprocity and accountability with the people who are part of the process. This is directly entangled with the researcher's positionality and epistemological and methodological position, all aspects that are not delinked from one another. Toliver presents in her book the methodology and the conceptual analysis as companions at the end of the text, giving more relevance to the stories. I take from the endarken storywork as from Molano, the importance of telling the stories and engaging with them, not seeing them from a detached point. Also, I am inspired by the idea of not decoding the stories, and giving them a central place. Thus, the separation of the stories and the conceptual analysis.

### **Escribanías**

The third source of inspiration was the project book “generaciones en Movimiento y movimientos generacionales” a collective work written by different social groups, popular organizations, and academics from Colombia and published by the autonomous editorial Retos. From a myriad of voices they depict how new generations undertake political processes based on art, solidarity, and creativity (Botero-Gomez, 2019) From this process, I take the possibility of creating and presenting knowledge that is detached from academia and approach other languages such as stories using local people slang, paintings and non-academical writings. The latter highlights other ways of knowing associated with the feelings and the body and not only to western rationality. Furthermore, The escribanías are an inspiration for autonomous cultivation of knowledge that is collective, in a choir of voices that, come together to tell different stories as do the pots.

### **Feminist science**

Finally, the fourth source of inspiration was Feminist science. Scholars such as Donna Haraway and Anna Tsing have highlighted the importance of multispecies storytelling for world-building knowledge (Tsing, 2015). They focus on interspecies relations and on the agency of the more than human, recognizing the deep interlinks that exist between humans and more than humans and how the latter have been silenced as part of a rational understanding of nature (Haraway, 1988). Multispecies storytelling is mediated by human voices, is the human voice narrating it and thus a positioned body. Their ideas are inspiring for me since they put the focus away from just humans. Despite this stories not focusing on other species, the pot as material and symbolic plays an important role. To highlight the latter, in an imagination process, I give voice to the pot to center her concrete material and social experience. Hence, the pot as a product of material and social relationships is the one that tells part of the story.

### **The exercise of storytelling**

Based on the inspirations mentioned above, I tried my best to embrace the exercise of listening and opening to the stories of the people. Following Vázquez "To listen means to bridge the

colonial difference, the rift that separates the visible and the invisible, 'the real' and 'the absent'. It poses the challenge to listen to those who have been disavowed and silenced. The practice of listening is an opening beyond the modern/colonial order." (Vázquez, 2012, p 7) Thus, I, who have been formed in western academia in which modernity plays a central role, but at the same time have been learning and experiencing with feminist science, decoloniality, and critical perspectives, seek to listen before trying to say. seek to learn, before trying to teach, and open myself to be touched and changed before trying to "save". The process of active listening is a way of critically seeing academia and decolonizing myself, is a way of *sentipensar*.

Every story I heard, touched me very deeply and showed me a reality of my country that is very much present. It opened my eyes to a new perspective and made me question my place in the world. Molano argues that listening to stories is a way of understanding the investigator's positionality in the world and that listening generates also new ways of relating to oneself (Molano, 2015) Storytelling and listening are also a way to "facilitate processes of critical intimacy as opposed to the groundless distance of the Prophet [...] This involves transgressing the one-dimensional Prophetic subject constituted through splitting in which the knowing self is separated from and gains control over the feminized heart and body" (Motta, 2016, p.41 ) Thus through the sharing of their stories and the exercise of mixing them to create characters, I was affected and transformed.

### **The investigation processes**

The stories were created based on the gathering of voices and stories of people who had different roles in the community cooking pots in three different places in the south of Bogotá during 2021 national strike. The process of this investigation and the creation of the stories can be related to the process of preparing a *sancocho*<sup>4</sup>. The *sancocho* is a typical Colombian soup. It is made mixing many ingredients in a pot and cooking them for a long time until they boil together, creating the soup. Thus, the community cooking pot was a *sancocho* of helping hands and solidarities. In this text, I make *sancocho* with the voices of the people. At the same time. I make a soup of words that are mixed to create this meal that are stories of the community pot in the national strike in three places in Bogotá. Through the exercise, of listening and writing, I became a storyteller too, una *sancochadora de historias*.

The purpose of creating stories that are not the direct testimony of one person has two reasons: first, given the persecutions and difficulties, some of the people who participated in the pots had to face I do not want to make identifiable stories. Second, the process of the community cooking pot was collective; the stories built by many voices highlight this aspect. Some stories are told by human characters, and others by the pot as a social construction. Highlighting the

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<sup>4</sup> The idea of using the *sancocho* as a metaphor came from storytelling practices such as the quilting (Toliver, 2022) and the mushrooms (Tsing, 2015)

active subjectivity not only of people but of the pot aims to show the pot's power for gathering people and building other realities.

The stories you will read were constructed based on eleven informal online conversations and semi-structured interviews. These interviews and talks were undertaken with people participating in the process of the community pots in “Portal resistencia”, “puente de la dignidad” and “Sur Oriente” in the south of Bogotá<sup>5</sup>. I chose to focus on these three places since they were central to the strike, particularly in the South of the city<sup>6</sup>. It is in these areas where the strike in the city was the strongest<sup>7</sup>.

As the pot is a collective process, to braid the stories it was essential to listen to the different groups of people who participated from it in each place. There were people who cooked, ate, organized, and donated. I talked to people who engaged in the pots in different ways. The semi-structured interviews and conversations were performed focusing on relationality and holding accountability (Kovach, 2010). I made two compromises with the people who I worked with: one, disseminate the stories outside the country. Two, give them the stories back for them to use. For that reason, and inspired by Colombian Sociologist Fals Borda, I made the decision to write two channels on the RP: Channel A, where you can find the core of this RP, the stories. Channel B, where you can find some analysis of them. The stories were initially written in Spanish to honor the local expressions and the nuances present in the voices of people, which get lost in translation. All of the photos that you will find on channel A were shared with me by the people who participated in this investigation. The authorship of the photos is named when it is known who took the photo (in many cases it is not known) or when it does not represent a risk for the person.

### **The limitations of the online investigation**

The online process has, of course, limitations. The way I built trust with people and how communication happened was not as if it were in person. Not having the bodies interacting already leaves a part of the possible connection aside. Furthermore, not feeling the places with my own body and not having experienced placing my body on the street to cook also changes the way I can relate to it. Despite this, I believe one can also travel and be interpellated if one is open enough to be touched by the stories, to be questioned by them, and to let them get into the heart; that is what I tried to do.

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<sup>5</sup> Although I heard voices from the three places, you will only find stories of two of the places. The reason is that in one of them “portal resistencia” I could only speak with one person and thus I felt that there was not enough information to build the story.

<sup>6</sup> that in the geographical imaginary and material division of the city are the most marginalized areas.

<sup>7</sup> Some pots in the north were very strong as well such as that in Suba, but I did not include them in this work because of time).

## Channel A: The stories

*"The country is full of prejudices; subjected to them, they have been methodically constructed, calculated. They arise in the interests of the powerful, and they overwhelm, envelop and destroy. Not only do they not let you hear but they do not let you see, or rather, only let you see what they want you to see through their dark glasses. A world of good guys and bad guys where the latter are never them. For more than a century this wall, this frontier, has been in the making. Transgressing it has costs. [...] It is not possible to continue looking at ourselves with only one eye. It is necessary to undress ourselves to know who we are to be able to live together all our weaknesses and all our mistakes."*  
*Alfredo Molano, 2015, min 6:10<sup>8</sup>*

### Dear reader,

In the following section, you will find a *sancocho* of voices in the form of stories or testimonies that, from different perspectives, show the role of the community cooking pot in the south of Bogotá during Colombia's national strike of 2021.

The community cooking pot itself narrates the first part of the story. Then she invites you to try some of the elements of the *sancocho* that made her possible in particular places. The latter will be done by reading the stories of a woman telling about her participation in the community cooking pot and by two of the pot versions in different *puntos de resistencia*. Throughout the reading, you will find hyperlinks that will take you to the conceptual analysis of particular parts of the stories. You have the option to click it and read the analysis, or to keep on the story and just read the full story without conceptual analysis. To have a more in-depth experience with the reading, I suggest you click it. At the end of each analytical section, you will find a link to take you back to the story. Let yourself be guided by the hyperlinks and enjoy the reading.

### In the heat of the struggle: the re-memories of the community cooking pot

I have existed for many years. In me, thousands of fires and gatherings have accumulated over time, allowing me to earn a pearl of wisdom linked to care, food, and resistance. I have been where people have helped people, where there is hunger and need. My heart beats in Latin America, where I have often occupied the streets in collective processes. I have several names: "olla común" in Chile, "olla popular" in Argentina, "olla comunitaria" in Colombia. I have existed mostly in popular neighbourhoods thanks to the solidarity and the effort of organized groups of people to sustain everyday life. I have also existed during social outbreaks and

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<sup>8</sup> Self translation.

struggles(Agencia de Información Laboral, 2021; Caffentzis & Federici, 2014; Neufeld & Cravino, 2001) I became much stronger during the Covid-19 pandemic when I emerged as a temporary alternative from the community to alleviate the hunger incremented by the crisis. Whew! Hundreds of little fires all over *Abya Yala*<sup>9</sup> were lit to try to chase away the hunger that was spreading through our region like a disease almost as deadly as Covid-19 (Aguila et al., 2021; Aparicio et al., 2020; Colmán Benítez et al., 2020; Rieiro et al., 2021).

I am the collective and popular process that sustains human life and strengthens the community by cooking food in public, thanks to the solidarity and the mixture of many different bodies and hands. My presence only requires a street or sidewalk, fire, a pot, water, food to put inside and people placing their bodies, efforts and gathering around in solidarity.

I have seen and lived many things. Some are painful, like seeing people's hunger and desperation. Some others are exciting, like people working together pushed by the desire to help others and seek change. I have seen the power that food has to bring people together, to generate dialogue. Imagine seeing people from opposing sides talking to each other around a plate of food, children smiling, and strong women placing their bodies in the streets to cook for solidarity and affection.

Both material and social elements compound me. I could not exist without the aluminum pot (which can vary in size depending on the place), the wood, the fire, the cooking ingredients, the plates, and the clutter. However, my essence is made of social relations created around those materials. Preparing the pot, getting the ingredients to cook, lighting the fire, assembling the pot on it, chopping the ingredients, boiling, and cooking become moments of sharing, dialogue, and listening. Through the effort of many different people, I have come to life. I am an alternative to the individualistic and capitalist modernity that is so present in the cities and leaves hunger, invisibility, and silence.

I could tell stories from so many places. The one I recall today is that of my presence in Colombia's 2021 social outbreak, especially in Bogotá, the country's Capital. It's been days since I've been out on the street, at least here in Bogotá. It's difficult now, you know? I still exist thanks to some collectives, but now, many permits are needed to cook in public places. The persecution by the police and new laws that limit my existence on the streets have curtailed my essence. I have had to transform myself. The police do not want to let me exist, I think they are afraid of me. Since I can no longer be produced on the streets as often or in the same way as before, I spend my time remembering. Lately, I have been reminiscing a lot about the 2021 strike in Colombia, especially in Bogotá. During those days, I was strong as the aluminum of the pot,

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<sup>9</sup> This is the name given to Latin America in Kuna language. It has been popularized to name Latin America in its own terms.



helping to sustain the struggle. I want to tell you this story to show how part of the resistance in the social outbreak was linked to me.



*Figure 1 The community cooking pots looking at Bogotá.*

The one who narrates this time is me in my Bogotá version. I am the *ollita*<sup>10</sup> bogotana, the *rola*, the *capitalina*, the one from the south. As I had many versions and many people helped to make me, I will give them the word as well so you can try a little bit of the *sancocho* of voices of each place.

I remember with great emotion those days when I was so active in the streets, helping the people to resist, to dream of a different country, and to build another reality. Days when the fire burned and the food boiled in the pot while the sun shone in Bogotá, that city at 2600 meters above sea level that is so often cold and cloudy. I also remember those rainy and cold days when the *agua de panela*<sup>11</sup> boiling in the pot warmed the bodies that resisted in the street. Regardless of the weather, I never stopped being present at the strike. I was always summoned because during this outbreak, the people never stopped feeding the people. The fire burning and the food boiling were constant.

I also remember with pain and rage all those times when the police gassed me, knocked down the pot with the food inside, and tried to eliminate me. But let's go by parts, we'll get there. This whole story is framed in Colombia's 2021 national strike. Dear reader, do you know what happened then? I want to give you a bit of context so that you can understand better why my presence was so important.

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<sup>10</sup> Spanish for little pot. (*ollita* is a word that many people used to refer to the pot. It is an affectionate way of calling it).

<sup>11</sup> Traditional warm drink made of sugar cane. Is typically drunk to heat the body.

## The national strike of 2021

The national strike was the explosion of many discontents in the country that had been adding for several years and were worsened by Iván Duque's government (2018-2022) and the pandemic. This discontent came from consecutive years of poverty, social inequality, and governments that did not listen to the people. It also came from the increase of activists' assassinations, the police brutality in previous manifestations and frustration with the non-compliance of the peace agreements<sup>12</sup> with the FARC guerrilla (Indepaz, 2022; Plataforma Colombiana de Derechos Humanos Democracia y Desarrollo et al., 2022).

In November 2019, a little over a year of Duque's government, there was a social outbreak that lasted a month and showed the people the power of collective resistance in the streets. In that strike, I was present a few times, but the truth is that I was not so visible.

In 2021, after a year and a half of living through the pandemic and its economic and social ravages, including worsening poverty and hunger, people could take no more. The government tried to implement a tax reform that sought to tax some goods in the family basket and broaden the spectrum of people who had to pay taxes (Agencia de Información Laboral, 2021). And you know what? Something happened that was the straw that broke the camel's back. The Minister of Finance at that time, Carrasquilla, stated on public television that a bucket of eggs had a much lower price than it had. This showed that he was unaware of food prices and the reality of the country: that people do not have enough money to buy food.

On April 28<sup>th</sup> began the strike that lasted two months and was the most significant social uprising in Colombia in decades. Please remember this date, because it is super important! 28/4, 28 of outburst, of popular force, of no more, of change, of *#elparonopara*.<sup>13</sup> Despite the pandemic being in one of its higher peaks in the country (France24, 2021), hundreds of thousands of Colombians across the country took to the streets to protest<sup>14</sup>. People lost their fear of Covid-19 or overcame it because they could not bare so much poverty, hunger, and government negligence. People were tired of the same old thing. A lot of youth were on the streets protesting every day. They said they had nothing to lose: had no possibility of studies, no work, and

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<sup>12</sup> At the time, these agreements gave hope to many sectors of the country that did not want more war and saw them as a way out of an internal conflict of more than 50 years.

<sup>13</sup> This was a famous slogan during the national strike. It means the strike does not stop.

<sup>14</sup> The social outbreak represented a moment when organized social groups such as The national unitary committee and the national strike committee (formed on the 2019 social outbreak) were central. However, the river of people who took to the streets was not only people moved by the strike committee but also from the neighborhood, university, labour union, indigenous, black and feminist organisations or even groups of friends or individual people who came out to protest. The strike was the manifestation of popular discontent from many sides and, thus, was a strike less vertical and more dispersed in different types of people (Saldarriaga Hernandez, 2021).

sometimes not even enough to eat. They argued they had no future and they were fighting to get one.



Figure 2 Resistance. Author:AFP

The 2021 social outbreak was a historic moment for Colombia. For two months, in all major cities and towns, people rose to demand several things from the government of Iván Duque: the withdrawal of the proposed tax reform, a reduction of hunger and poverty, public education, the implementation of the peace agreements, the cessation of murders of activists, more possibilities for the youth etc. In sum, a change in the country that has been on hold for many years.

The social outburst was a way to demand from the government. Still, it also became a process of popular power in which the people reconfirmed the strength to come together and create solutions and organizational processes that do not depend on the state(Saldarriaga Hernandez, 2021) My presence there is an example of the latter.

Unlike previous demonstrations in the country, where the movement was towards the central squares of the cities, this strike quickly evolved to create standing points where the resistance was held. These *puntos de resistencia*<sup>15</sup>emerged mainly in central places of working-class neighbourhoods in the cities and in nodal points on main roads. These places were taken by the demonstrators and renamed with something allusive to the process of resistance such as “portal de la Resistencia”<sup>16</sup> or “puente de la dignidad”<sup>17</sup>. Additionally, those places were intervened with paintings, art demonstrations, and assemblies, giving them a new significance and a different way for people to relate to them by appropriating the public space (Medellín Aranguren, 2021). On

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<sup>15</sup> This can be translated as resistance point or resistance place

<sup>16</sup> This can be translated as resistance portal

<sup>17</sup> This can be translated as puente de la dignidad

many of the *puntos de resistencia*, an ample community space for art and cooking emerged, showing the resistance is also creative and not only violent, despite the constant police attacks on the them and the defence processes the people had to undertake (Suacha en imágenes, 2021; Sur Oriente Popular y Resistente, 2021; UMBA FILM & Media, 2021) Demonstrators created local assemblies both in the *puntos de resistencia* and in different places in the city to debate the demands to the government and how things were dreamed of

At the *puntos de resistencia*, different lines of people were organized to resist. On the front line were the youngest and bravest; those who, with self-made shields and stones, faced the tear gas and gun attacks of the police. They were called the front line because they were the first line of defense. On the second line were the medical brigades: groups of people who knew first aid and medicine and volunteered to cure those who arrived wounded. There were also human rights and I, the community cooking pot. Each *punto de resistencia* had its lines of local people who organized.

Throughout the whole social outbreak, the government and some citizens attempted to delegitimize and shut down the people organizing by calling them guerrilleros and criminals. The government started persecuting many people in the first lines, in the health brigades and even people who participated in the process of doing me. They judicialized and put unjustly in jail some of them (Caro, 2021 Infobae, 2022) They were trying to silence their voices and to disarticulate the process Besides, the police brutality was immense. I don't mean to overwhelm you with numbers but I think it is important that you know that being on the streets protesting was not easy. In the two months that the national strike lasted, there were 75 homicides, 83 ocular aggressions, 28 victims of sexual violence, 1832 arbitrary detentions, and 1468 cases of physical violence (Tembloros ONG & Instituto de Estudios para el Desarrollo y la Paz, 2021).

The social outbreak showed people's discontent and the power of the union of many people for a change. It helped to create a lot of conscience in the population. People who perhaps did not think about the importance of demonstrating started to do it, to go out and get involved in collective processes. Thus the strike represented an essential process of politicization and social organization.

### ***Sancocho* of helping hands**

As I told you, I was at the *puntos de resistencia* feeding people. Without food, there is no social outburst that lasts and the *pelados*<sup>18</sup> needed to eat to be able to continue the struggle. I was feeding the people protesting, but my role ended up being much more than that. Let me tell you a little about some of my characteristics because they are key to understanding my role.

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<sup>18</sup> Local way of calling the young people.

I am the product of the coming together in solidarity of many people who put their grain of sand and helped to build me. However, my existence on the strike was not always an organized and coordinated process. It depended on the people's will and the possibilities of giving at each moment. When you make a *sancocho*, the quantities and ingredients vary, and each ingredient gives its particular flavor to the soup. So this is how I was in the different places. My versions had varied flavors and characteristics, as some will tell you later. However a central characteristic is the *sancocho* of helping hands coming together to help. Every person that helped was important: the person who got the firewood, the one who lit it, the one who lent the pot, who helped carry it, those who donated food, who collected it, who helped by giving water, those who chopped, who cooked, who ate, and then who cleaned and organized. All the people who gave of themselves were essential for my existence. ([Channel B: see conceptual analysis about resistance](#))

### **Making hunger visible**

I also ended up helping to make visible the hunger that people suffer in Colombia. Cooking in the street is very visible and eye-catching, so many people came to help and eat. It was also a way for people to notice the daily hunger that is often unseen or ignored. So many people not participating in the social outburst came to me, seeing the possibility of eating that day. During that strike, I saw elders come looking for a plate of food. Street vendors. Homeless people. Moms who came to help chop food and then took their little pot of food home. Even five, seven, eight-year-old boys or girls came with little pots to see if they could bring food to the family because they had not eaten for days. They all were so thankful for my presence. They were not few because hunger is the silent scourge of Colombia. (See appendix # 1 for further information about hunger in the country)

Hunger is not often thought of at a human level. I don't know how much hunger you have experienced in your life, but imagine that your main concern is having to look for something to eat, and not getting it. And not just for one day, but for many days. Day after day. So life becomes a constant thought about getting food; how to feed the family, how to get rid of that pain in the stomach, the weakness in the body, the blurred mind due to the lack of food (Caparros, 2014).

In the process of feeding people, I have seen how often they have new ideas and find new solutions to their problems after eating. And I am not saying that I, the community pot, am the solution to the problem of hunger in Colombia. I know that this is a structural food system problem, that goes beyond preparing and serving a plate of food. However, from what I have seen, my presence does help. A hungry person has the energy only to think about solving their hunger situation. This is convenient for authoritarian and right-wing governments because it is easier to keep things as they are.

Hunger is a form of oppression, a form of control because if people have nothing to eat, they do not have time to question themselves, to say, hey, this is wrong, nor do they have the mind to organize themselves. It does not allow space for anything else, it curtails imagination. Everything is focused on finding something to eat. The process of creating me shows how people rescue each other through food. Around food and eating, solutions arise. Creativity, cultural acts and organization also occur. The saying goes: full belly, happy heart. However, it is much more than that. It is also: full belly, creativity. Full belly, organization.

I think that's precisely why police did not like me. With the ESMAD<sup>19</sup> it was a problem. They threw tear gases at me, and people had to throw away all the food. Can you imagine how hard it is when tear gas falls on the food? Not only does it damage it, but it also affects those people who are there cooking, because those gases asphyxiate and make people's eyes burn. Also, sometimes they would push the pot, and all the boiled food would fall and roll on the floor. Food for 300, 400 people was all wasted. It burns my heart as the fire that burned under the pot to remember those moments. Oh, what pain and anger I felt! But of course! they knew that I was the center of the strike and that I helped to give strength to the people, to resist, they were afraid of my power. In the end, they managed to impose a ban on me in the streets, which is still in place today and is why my presence is not on the streets that often anymore.

### **Some generalities of my organization**

As you will read later on the stories of some of my versions, the process of making me would have specific characteristics depending on the place. However, there are some generalities. Most commonly, a woman, a feminist collective, or an organized group of older women or youth would bring me to life for the first time. They would take the pot to the street and set up something to eat an *agua de panela* with bread or a *sancocho*. I started by someone who saw the need for food in the resistance and, with their pot or a borrowed one, took to the street occupying the space by cooking.

Another common element was that most times, those who brought me alive for the first time had been previously involved in processes of making me in other places. However, people who had never been part of a community cooking pot before also started to come to help. They were attracted by the possibility of helping by being part of producing me; little by little, they began to stay, to come every day.

Many people found in my process the possibility to contribute to the social outbreak, to feel that they were doing something for others and serving the community. They felt the need to contribute to change and found a way to do it by putting their bodies, money, or efforts in the

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<sup>19</sup> Riot Police Squad

process of making me. The latter was very important because, at the end of the day, they assumed a political position that some did not have before.

I was made by the people and belonged to them. My essence is broad and generous because there is no monetary profit linked to me. Food is free, and nobody is profiting from the process of producing me. I do not exclude but include. I would feed whoever came and receive help from whoever wanted to give it. The people who came to help or to eat were not looked at. How they looked, how they were dressed, or spoke, it did not matter. I am an example of spontaneous help of people around a cause. For example, many times in the different *puntos de resistencia*, people passing by or hanging there would come and say, well, how can I help? Or a neighbor would arrive and say: look, here is this pound of rice or these plantains and so on. Whether you showed up to nibble to donate, any help was received. Many were the people who came to help by chopping, donating, or setting things up just for one or two days. However, my constant presence would not have been possible without the participation at each place of certain people who organized and were there everyday. People who put their bodies and hearts into the process of building me and making me a daily reality during the strike. ([Channel B: see conceptual analysis of producing the common](#))

### **Creating community**

When people ate, it was a moment and place to be together and chat. You know? the fire and the boiling of the food in the street have something magical, like hypnotizing. I don't know, maybe a plate of hot free food with love feels a little bit like home. While cooking or eating people talked they realize that they have many things in common. Even sometimes, dreams of future projects were created. The gathering that emerged around me was very special because it allowed people who think differently or do not talk to each other to meet and realize that they are not so different after all. It creates a place for encounters of different ages, old and young, who come to eat, but also of people in different conditions. Homeless, who are normally neglected, are heard around the food. Neighbors who never had taken the time to talk to each other. Even once or twice, despite the strong antagonisms with the police, a pact was made between them and the demonstrators so they, who are also *pueblo*, could eat from the pot. As all those who have made me real say: “a plate of food should never be denied.”

### **Platico a platico**

Remember that I was saying how sometimes projects would emerge around me? Well, “platico a platico” is one of them. With my presence in 2021 social outbreak, this network of community cooking pots was created at a national level. It gathers 26 pots in 6 cities., The network still exists and collects money through Twitter to give to the pots. The existence of this network has helped people from different parts of the country who are fighting for the same cause and in the same way to know each other and join forces.





Figure 3 Red nacional de ollas comunitarias "platico a platico".

However, in many places, at least here in Bogotá, the conditions for gathering now differ from those during the strike. For one I can no longer go out on the streets as often or in all my splendor. Fire and the pot are no longer allowed in many public places, and the police continue to chase us. So people have to cook in a house, privately, and bring the food already made. That curtails part of my existence, that is made in the heat of the fire and the cooking together on the street. For another, after the social outbreak ended, sustaining me was harder, solidarity was less frequent, and the gathering around me reduced since life “went back to normal”.

### **Not everything was bright**

Let me tell you that there were some internal problems too, not everything was bright. Some people wanted to use the donations received for the pot for their own private good. That generated many problems and ruptures inside the different processes of making me, because it breaks the basis of my being, which is solidarity without interest. It also happened that in some places people started to demand food as if it were an obligation for us to be there. And no, it doesn't work that way. I am not a given and it is not an obligation for the people to make me. I am created as something in common precisely because it is out of the will of many different people who take me in their hands, In spite of these problems, I was able to continue existing during the strike.

Now, dear reader, I want you to try a little of the *sancocho* of hands and versions of me that made my existence possible. I pass the voice to some of my versions and to people who made me possible. They will tell you their stories about my role in the social outburst. They will highlight specific characteristics of me.



## Yolima, the woman who cooked

My name is Yolima. I was born and raised in Bogotá but my parents are from the coast. I am a mestiza. Like many in Bogotá, I became a woman here but my roots are from somewhere else. Bogotá is the city that welcomes everyone. The city of opportunities.

This concrete jungle has built me. I love this city because it has given me everything, but it is so hostile to those inhabiting it, especially those who live in the margins, in its periphery, forgotten by the State. So many indigenous and Afro-Colombians, so many people who due to the war had to flee their homes and arrived to the periphery of the city. They so many times had to go through hell to survive. I am not gonna lie, sometimes I think about leaving this city, but then I say: no, where would I go? this is my place, I won't leave.

All my life I have lived in the south of the City, that place so marginalized but at the same time resistant. Fortunately, I have never had to suffer from hunger. But my life hasn't been easy either. I have had what every Colombian working-class -who survives struggling- has.

I have always stood in solidarity with unjust causes. Trying to help others in the way possible for me, maybe with some food, clothing, or even with listening. I don't know where I got that from, maybe from seeing my mom always helping others. I have always been a leftist, maybe because I am sensitive to the needs of others and I see them reflected in me. Seeing the cruel realities around me is that I have gotten into social movements that have become a central part of my life—helping people is very important for me, putting my grain of sand to contribute to change. To demand workers' and kids' rights, to help build another reality in the collective. As the saying goes: Who is not good to serve is not good to live.

Injustices move my soul, and there are so many in this country... don't think it has been easy to help, hah?. It's been hard because our governments are always on the rich and paramilitary side. They don't like that people get organized and demand or denounce things. They don't like the proletarians helping each other. I have gone through hell in different moments because of that. To lose my job and my house, be persecuted and be physically damaged. I had to learn to live, carrying a lot of fear in my body. But you know what? All of that has made me stronger and I refuse to be silent, they won't shut me down. I am stronger now that we do it together, that we, the *pueblo*, got organized. That is why the national strike made me so happy. Seeing so many people gathered around the cause of change. So many being solidary, taking awareness.

Since this story is about the community cooking pots on the strike, I want to tell you that during those two months, I put my energy, body, and life to make the community pot a reality. I was on the street every day, holding on, cooking, feeding and resisting. I put my heart into helping the people protesting, especially those *pelados* that arrived hungry and ill and kept fighting for change despite that. We owe them so much.

You might be wondering why cooking? Well, because how were the *pelados* supposed to resist without eating? That is why the community cooking pot is so important because without food, there is no strength to resist and food gets people together. In the end, the pot is the soul of every strike. But you know what? The pot also helped show the people's reality: hunger.

Seldom had I cooked for so many people. I was used to cooking just for my family and sometimes at a community kitchen that I used to help, but no more. But I said, ok I have to do it, and I did it. After some days, I was used to it and became very good. I was the one who said: put this much salt; to that amount of rice, we need that much water etc. The pot and I became intimate, and in the end, everything tasted good.

You might ask, what did we cook? Remembering makes me laugh because we use to call it by different names depending on the ingredients. However, there was never a specific dish, it depended on the ingredients we had that day. Rice, plantain, potato, onions, garlic, *panela*<sup>20</sup> and casava were the most common ingredients, because they are basic for Colombian cooking. But we did not always had all of them or in enough quantity it depended on the availability and prices. For example, if there was a lot of food and many ingredients, we did the *sopa maravilla*. If there was little food it was soup just with some bones to give substance and then it was called *sopa milagrosa*. Sometimes we did a mix of everything we called *sopita de todo*. Sometimes at night or in the early morning, we did *agua de panela* with bread when it was cold. That gave a lot of energy and helped to cope with the cold and the police attacks.

Do you know what the most beautiful thing of all this process was? It was to see people's solidarity; to see that the pot was something collective, a common in which everybody who participated gave what they could. We cooked there and when the food was ready somebody screamed: the soup is ready! And then everybody started to gather around to eat. Around the pot, a lot of enjoyment was generated. Eating together and sharing some words of strength and some laughs. We laughed because sometimes the *chinos*<sup>21</sup> would goof around while we ate or the children would play. Sometimes we would also organize while we ate: we need this, who is going to help with this, and so on. But it was also hard to see the reality of hunger, wasn't it? Painful. It was like the two sides of the same coin.

At the beginning of the process, my family used to tell me, Stop going there! Why are you risking your life out on the street? My kids told me: mom, if you are sick (because I have been struggling with some body pains for a while), what are you doing standing day and night there. But, how was I not going to do it? How do I go home arm crossed to see on TV how people try to change things, and I do nothing to help? How can I see people struggling with hunger and

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<sup>20</sup> Panela is a product derived from sugar cane. It is used to make a hot drink called *agua de panela*.

<sup>21</sup> Equivalent to *pelados*. Is a typical way from Bogotá of calling the young people.

doing nothing? I genuinely enjoy giving part of me to help, is part of who I am. And think, if we all don't move this together, then what? I am convinced that only the people can save the people and that is how we can achieve some change. My family, little by little started to understand, to see the importance, and then they started to support me too. I always have taught them to be supportive. They were saying those things to me because they feared for me, right? But you have to overcome fear and know how to take care of yourself and others, because as I told you, it is not easy.

Sometimes it rained a lot and we used to get very wet, and with that cold weather of Bogotá. Some other times, as the pot was telling you, the robocops of the ESMAD attacked us and ruined the food. How can you damage the food that feeds the *pueblo*? But you know? There were also persecutions and harassment by the government. Once or twice I saw some weird people following me, and was afraid. But I was lucky, nothing bigger happened to me this time. However, other friends had less luck than me and got judicialized. Imagine that! Being judged for cooking, being judged for sustaining life!

Participating in the pot allowed me to get to know many people. To bind more with people I had been working with before and engage with new people, the young, the neighbors, and the elder. While we chopped, we started to talk: where are you from, and how is it there, and so on. Also, when people come to eat, you speak and hear stories. That way, little by little, we became friends. We started to cultivate strong affection for each other. As the saying goes: love moves mountains. Right? I think that food does too. I realized that food allows us to see that we are more similar than we believe, that we can build other realities if we work together, and that resisting is creation at the same time; it is knowing and learning together, sharing the joy of imagining a different reality. And for me, that is the power of the community pot. ([Channel B](#)  
[See conceptual analysis about the importance of the body on the pots](#))

## The community cooking pot of "Sur Oriente"

Sur Oriente was a *punto de resistencia* in the locality of San Cristobal in the south of Bogotá. In this *punto de resistencia* I was blue, blue of football *barra*<sup>22</sup>, blue of *millos*<sup>23</sup>. Many of the people that make up the point are *barra*. But do not be confused, many believe that they are only hooligans, bandits, but they are more than that. They care about their municipality, about their community. Here I was a strong and young pot, heiress of the soccer pots that the *barra* used to organize, but also a product of the *juntanza*<sup>24</sup> of multiple people, the organization and the love of Doña Marti, a woman whom people in this *punto de resistencia* came to call mother. The mother of the "Sur Oriente".

From the first days of the strike, I was present in this municipality, when Doña Marti began to take the pot to the street. Here it was very special because the resistance was all built around me. I was the center where all the pedagogy for resisting and organizing was done. The fire and the burning pot were what guided it. They made me there and I never left. I was there until the last breath of the social outburst. But it wasn't easy. On the one hand, because the interaction with the police was very hard, it was a constant clash. They persecuted us a lot. They didn't like my presence, not even a little bit. Because I was so central here, they had it in for us. Many times, the *pelados* had to lower their heads and not fight the police to protect me. They also had to try to create many spaces for dialogue with local mediators, with the local mayor's office and so on, so that I could exist.

It was difficult, also, because at the beginning there was a lot of disorder and each *parche*<sup>25</sup> pulled to its own side. But then, little by little, they began to organize at the pot's heat. They said well, we have to put things to make it work, otherwise, this is not going anywhere. All the small front lines, got together into a bigger one. They also created a human rights group. I saw them many times talking, organizing, and remembering that they were fighting for a better future for their municipality, their place, and that it wasn't just a violent outburst with no meaning.

Several discussions and a voting process were carried out to decide the line's and the *punto de resistencia* name. Through a discussion and voting process, they decided to call themselves "Sur Oriente". The reason was because of the area where they were located and in honor of historical processes of popular struggle in the municipality of San Cristobal in 1974. The *punto de resistencia* was born this way, and the order was maintained until the end. Everyone helped when it came to making me. People felt very adrift if the fire didn't burn and the food didn't boil.

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<sup>22</sup> Barra is the way to call the fans of a football team. Similar to hooligans.

<sup>23</sup> Millos is the short for Millonarios, one of Bogotá's main football teams. Their color is blue.

<sup>24</sup> Get together

<sup>25</sup> Local way of the young people to call a group of people or friends who do a lot of things together.



Figure 4 the Sur Oriente pot burning on the night.



Figure 5 Community cooking pot Sur Oriente lucha..

My presence helped to maintain order. I belonged to everyone, and as such, they defended me. Many different people from different parts of the municipality arrived at the *punto de resistencia*. However, they all organized around me because it was said that I, the community pot, was going to be central.

Since I was in the same place every day and people gathered around me, they also began to feel the *punto de resistencia* as their own. Sur Oriente resists! So my presence there helped the people to appropriate the place, the point of resistance because the fire calls people together and

the food made them feel at home. They started to paint the walls with messages. They also made puppet shows, stamps and theater.

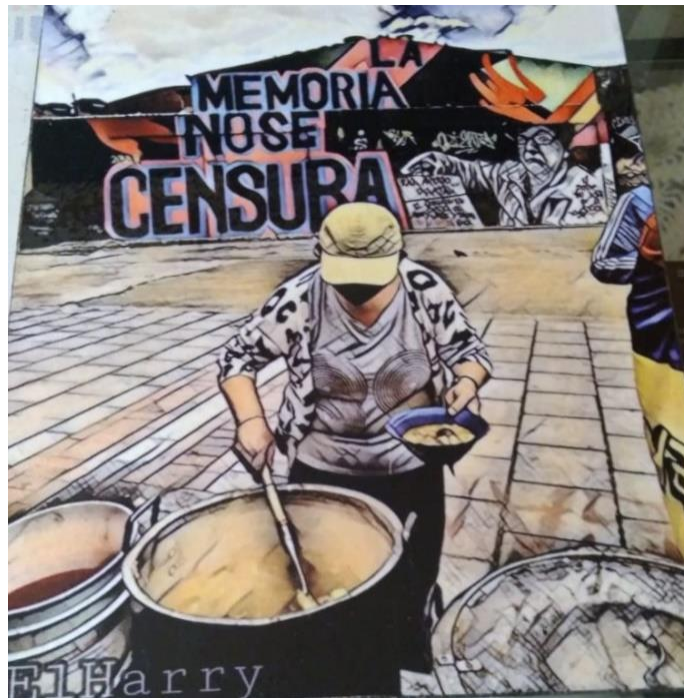


Figure 6 *Punto de resistencia Sur Oriente. The mom of the pot. Illustration made by: El Harry*

My presence in the Sur Oriente had the characteristic of being fraternal. Here I was the product of a small group in which everyone, from the brave young people on the front line to the women who cooked, participated in making me. As I said, the key here was the Sur Oriente mother's presence. She was there at the point every day, helping organize and cook. But everyone here was vital for me to be able to exist because everyone contributed. We became like a family.

One of the important elements of my material being here was a market cart. With it, the mother from Sur Oriente and some of the young people would go out through the streets of the nearby neighborhoods to collect food from the stores. Store by store, they would ask for food, explaining that it was to do the community pot, and little by little the cart would fill up. However, collecting food was not easy because the owners of the stores could not always donate.

Different from other places, we never received here any donations from outside, there were no online donations or anything. Almost everything was based on what the neighbors gave and what they were able to collect with the cart. But you know what? People producing me found other creative mechanisms to be able to get the food. They came up with the idea of asking for donations when they were doing artistic processes. It started because one day one of the girls proposed to make a T-shirt stampathon for the people who came to accompany them. The activity was very successful so the group said, " Well, why not keep doing this and start asking



for 500<sup>26</sup> pesos per print so we can cover some of our expenses? They did that. All that money went into a piggy bank. When it was full it was broken in the presence of the people who were part of the process. Many times that money was used to buy food for the next day if what was collected in the market cart was not enough.

I had never a chicken breast or meat, because there was not enough money to buy those. My protein was always giblets or bones that were given in the butcherstore, that the neighbors donated, or what we could afford with what was in the piggy bank. Because the donation and money were never too much, we could never choose what to prepare. The menu was whatever was possible with the ingredients that were at the moment. However, we were able of doing so much with it. (to read a specific anecdote of the Sur Oriente pot and her encounter with Nasa indigenous Minga, go to apenix #2)

## Usme, The Pot Revolution



*Figure 7 To feed the people that the State kills is a revolutionary act.*

In *Usmekistan*<sup>27</sup> I was a very resistant and artistic pot. I was nurtured by many collectives and wills, by much-dignified rage. I was brought alive one cold night with an *agua de panela* and I

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<sup>26</sup> Less than 10 cents of euro.

<sup>27</sup> This is how people re-named the locality because of their resistance process on the strike.

stayed. They made me under the “puente de la dignidad”<sup>28</sup>; the one that was re-named that way in 2019 by the people of Usme in honor of the popular uprising in Chile. In the 2021 popular strike, this became one of the strongest *puntos de resistencia* in Bogotá. Here many people were helping, and there were also different *parches* making me. Usme is a huge municipality, the largest in Bogotá in extension and also one with a lot of history of resistance and defense of its territory (Umba Film & Media, 2021). Because Usme is so big, during the strike, there were several *parches* doing me and even some vegetarian versions of me emerged. However, not all of them stayed for the whole time.



Figure 8 The pot revolution beneath puente de la dignidad.

Usme is part urban and part rural. Much of its area extends outside the city to peasant areas and the Sumapaz páramo, which is the largest in the world (Umba Film & Media, 2021) The peasants here sell their products in the city's marketplaces but, like so many other peasants in the country, they have a hard time because they receive very little money for the food they produce. One of my characteristics here is that I was very close to the rural areas. During the strike, some local peasants contributed to the pot, bringing potatoes, one of their main harvests, at very cheap prices so I could be assembled.

I was a visible pot, because the *punto de resistencia* was also very notisable. The police was so brutal with the people here that this became visible through alternative media and support began to come from outside: from other parts of the city, of the country and abroad. Some of the

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<sup>28</sup> It can be translated as bridge of dignity.



people received the money and organized me. So a central element of my version in this place was the international support Through Twitter and Facebook people made visible what was happening and the ways resistance was being held. It is impressive how international solidarity networks were created, because some of these people were outside the country and did not know anyone in Usme, but they became organized and began to help. While neighbors and friends helped a lot by giving food, an important part of the ingredients used to make me here came from donations of money from people who were abroad and linked to the process through Twitter. During the social outbreak, the donations of that kind were many and that was very good because we could make good meals for many people, with meat and a lot of vegetables for a good period of days. I never looked for recognition, the people who made me did not look for anything more than to be able to help, to build together.

Something special here was that there were many old people who ate from me and helped to prepare me. This was thanks to one of the collectives that helped organize me. They had been working for a long time with a group of elders for whom they cook and do art and recreation processes. Through my presence on the “puente de la dignidad”, and thanks to all the donations, they found a way to facilitate the food for the elders and support the resistance in the strike. Therefore it was common to see elder people cooking on the pot. They also did dance performances.



Figure 9 Dancing group beneath puente de la dignidad.

So my presence at the *puente de la dignidad* helped to strengthen already existing processes and facilitate new ones through people who got to know each other through the encounter around me. (To read about the day they prepared food for a thousand people, go to the appendix #3)

It is sad, but people could not make me under the bridge throughout the whole social outbreak. Although the police attacked us many times and knocked all the prepared food to the ground three times, what made us leave the bridge was something else. One day a man in plain clothes arrived, threatening us with a gun and forcing people to dismount me and not to go back there. He branded the process as support for vandalism and guerrillas. It was very scary and sad, but we did not give up. First, the people who made me started to cook in a nearby community hall and to take the food already cooked to distribute at the *punto de resistencia*, but it was not the same because there was no longer the opportunity for people to come to help and the fire no longer united those who ate.

However, later, although I was no longer made under the bridge, the process of making me did not stop because they kept taking me to the neighborhoods, to the places where hunger abounded. I moved around a lot, from neighborhood to neighborhood lighting the fire of hope. Then the people who were making me decided to create a group called "the pot's revolution", a process that seeks to take my process to many of the most impoverished neighborhoods of Usme. Associated with this process came the idea of thinking of urban gardens so that my presence was not only about alleviating hunger but also contributing to food self-sufficiency. They have thought of me as a pedagogical tool where art processes are also included.

Today, more than a year after the popular strike, the Pot's revolution is still ongoing, travelling through different neighbourhoods. However, it is difficult. When the strike ended and life normalized, donations dropped a lot and getting food for cooking is increasingly difficult. Even some of the people abroad donate but not as often and although the solidarity of the neighbors is still present, it is difficult to collect the necessary food because I am no longer so visible. Luckily, we receive weekly support with markets from the network of community pots "platico a platico". ([Channel B See conceptual analysis about the place](#))

[\(If you decided not to go to the analysis, click here to go to the final reflections\)](#)

## Channel B: The analysis

What are the main analytical ingredients of the community cooking pots in the south of Bogotá during 2021 social outbreak? In this section, you will find some of the ingredients that, for me, are key for responding to the question of what was the role of the community cooking pots in the south of Bogotá during Colombia's national strike? As the cooking pot is possible thanks to a *sancocho* of helping hands, here you will find an analysis linked to a *sancocho* of theories that help explain part of the stories and deeper understand her role

I depart from the need for a thought grounded on the experience of the subalterns in Latin America. Following Instituto Gino Germani, (2008) the processes of building a different reality cannot be read only from a western perspective but need their own concepts to be understood. Hence, most of the concepts I engage with for this analysis are produced in Latin America and seek to explain the realities lived there. Some of them are concepts that emerged from popular struggles or women's lived experiences<sup>29</sup>. Hence, they are emergent from the ground and are close to the realities they seek to understand and explain.

At the end of each section in this channel, you will find a hyperlink to get back to the story. Just click on it.

### Conceptual elements to analyze the resistance of the pot

One of the main elements to explore around the community cooking pot is the idea of resistance. In this section, I will analyze the different aspects of resistance that I identify in the process of the pots. First, I will introduce how I approach resistance and show some of its main elements. Then, I will show its link to the idea of community. Finally, will explain the three resistance levels that I see in the process of the pots.

For this investigation, Resistance is understood inspired by the ideas of Chicana feminists Maria Lugones and Gloria Anzaldúa, who see it as the collective and creative process of facing oppression and creating something new (Lugones, 1992). For María Lugones, resistance is always in reaction to oppression, in opposition to it (Lugones, 2003) Resistance does not necessarily need to be violent, loud, or even greatly visible. It can take many political forms, even if these would not be recognized as such by some dominant western theories, such as liberalism (Lugones, 2003).

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<sup>29</sup> Most of these concepts are proposed by women which is not a minor aspect given the patriarchal system, women experience the world in a particular way.

Lugones, for whom a multiplicity of stories and versions of the self are central elements, says that resistance can have different levels. The latter means that many forms of resistance can happen simultaneously and contribute to creating new meaning (Lugones, 2003 p8).

Another important aspect of resistance is its procesual character. In her text “Borderland la Frontera,” Anzaldúa talks about resistance as a process and not as an act that happens just in a moment: “If rebellion and creation are understood as processes rather than as acts, then each act of solitary rebellion and creation is anchored in and responsive to a collective (even if the disorganized), process of resistance” (Lugones, 1992) Hence, resistance is not a static, uniform action but a process that can take many forms. And is collective

Despite Anzaldúa not focusing on the sociality of resistance, she says that resistance needs to be a social activity to succeed (Anzaldúa, 1987). Lugones draws from that and argues that “unless resistance is a social activity, the resister is doomed to failure in creating a new universe of meaning, a new identity, [...] a meaning that is not in response to and looking for a response (Lugones, 1992, p 36) Thus, the collective is a central element for resistance.

Out of the collective processes present in the sociality of resistance, a building of community can occur. I understand community following the ideas of community feminism. “Every space where we make collective choices and build our identity can be built into a community, especially when linked to spaces of struggle and resistance” (Paredes, 2018 min 1:44) For community feminists, the community is linked with the autonomy of a group of people who decide to care, support and supply each other beyond the state. “Community emerges when we think about others and concern ourselves for the good of the other people surrounding it” (Guzmán, 2020, min 55:20). It is important to denote that this idea of community comes from Aymara indigenous people and actions. However, they highlight that community is possible in other marginalized contexts of Abya Yala that are not necessarily indigenous.

Let us see how these concepts help us to understand the resistance of the community cooking pots. Following Lugones ideas around the levels of resistance, I identify three different but interconnected levels of the process of resistance around the community cooking pot.

The first and evident one is the process of sustaining the most visible part of the strike by providing food to the people, especially those on the front line. As can be read in the pot’s story, there is no social outbreak that can last without food. Thus, providing food is a way of sustaining the protest, giving fuel for the people to keep standing at the *punto de resistencia* protesting. In the end, it is a process of material and symbolic reproduction of social life that goes beyond Capital through a non-linear nor equally organized process of many hands helping in solidarity to make the community cooking pot a reality.

“The material and symbolic reproduction of life exceeds the individual and is linked to being part of, being with. It is represented in “not losing the possibility of joy, of creating in a collective, of resisting the imposed place[...] Acts that might seem small but are the ones that allow us to be on the world” (Gutiérrez-Aguilar, 2015).

Directly related to the first level, the second one lies in the possibilities of building a community. In this level as in the first one, the sociality of resistance is key, since it is a collective process. However, from that collective process emerges something more. Through collectively caring for each other, through collectively cooking and eating, as well as through processes of dialogue, collective choices and dreamings, a community is built. All of the latter depicts how popular efforts to reproduce life go beyond the State, as the pot tells us at the beginning of her story when talking about the national strike. It is important to highlight that this possibility of community building is not a given and depends also on the dynamics of the place, as will be explained later on. This second level is also related to challenging the dominant system’s space imposed on them: marginalized, poor, and hungry. It is creative since the social processes around the production of the community cooking pot are linked to eating, art, dialogue, solidarity, and joy, despite the fear and rage.

The third level of resistance on the pots relates to the body and feelings: placing the flesh, emotions, and energy on the street to cook, donate, organize and eat. To do it with joy despite the fear of being attacked or persecuted, as so many times happened, is a way of resisting the oppression imposed on the bodies. It also challenges the space of sadness and hopelessness so many times shown by development and shows how joint action can generate joy, hope, and the possibility of dreaming together another reality from the bodies. ([Go back to the story](#))

## The production of the common

In this section, I will link the idea of resistance and community to the production of the pot as a common, element that gives light to a deeper understanding of the role of the community cooking pots and their process of production.

The idea of the commons has been broadly discussed in social sciences and several types of commons have been identified. My understanding of them here will be based on two elements: First, the commons are not things but social relationships (Caffentzis & Federici, 2014). Second, as such, they are produced (Gutiérrez Aguilar, 2020). Focusing on this second aspect my approach to the commons will be guided by the conceptualization done by the working group “Entramados Comunitarios y Formas de lo Político” of the Sociology department of the University of Puebla, México. In their thought process, they shift the focus from the common goods to the process of popular production of them. They do not assume the common as a given and rather focus on the process of how it is produced through social relations. This process constitutes political action beyond the State through communally finding ways to sustain and reproduce life and creating something different from the imposed conditions.

Inspired by the marxism and feminism of the '70s, this group focuses on creative processes and reproduction work specially in moments of struggle. These elements lie behind the productivist view of Capital and help sustain life and reproduce it materially and symbolically (Gutiérrez Aguilar, 2020; Rieiro et al., 2021a, ) They describe the production of the common as:

“produced and reinforced against and beyond capitalist social relations, enabling the very capacity for the unfolding of struggles [...]. The commons is, first and foremost, a social relationship of association and cooperation capable of daily enabling the social production and enjoyment of concrete wealth in the form of use-values, tangible and intangible goods necessary for the conservation and satisfactory reproduction of life.”<sup>30</sup>  
(Gutiérrez Aguilar, 2020, p8)

A central element in the production of the common are the *entramados comunitarios populares*<sup>31</sup> “a heterogeneous multitude of life worlds that populate and generate the world under diverse patterns of respect, collaboration, dignity and reciprocity that are not exempt from tension, and systematically harassed by capital” (Gutiérrez Aguilar, 2017, p33). Gutiérrez Aguilar argues that The *entramados comunitarios* are not a concept with rigid limits but a term that helps see general characteristics of a production process of the common. Putting the focus on the *entramados comunitarios* and the production of the commons aims at highlighting those aspects that have

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<sup>30</sup> Self-translation.

<sup>31</sup> Although translating the word *entramado* is difficult, this term could be translated as social community weaving or social community network.

been denied by the dominant political western state-centric ideas: the possibility of popular collective creation that seeks to put life in the center by commoning and thus constitutes as political beyond the State (Gutiérrez-Aguilar, 2022).

Taking this concept to analyze the community cooking pots gives light to understanding some things around their role during the strike. First, as seen in the section of the story “*sancocho* of helping hands”, the common process of producing the pot happened around the cooking, dialogues, and agreements that occurred at the pot’s heat. In that process, the fight against hunger was re-appropriated communally, showing the strength of the collective to sustain life beyond the state logic in a particular moment. The production of the pot as a common was the process through which community was built in some of the cases.

Secondly, to give a light of understanding of the multiple and heterogeneous ways in which the *sancocho* of helping hands happened around the pots, the idea of *entramado comunitario* is helpful. As the pot tells in the story, the community pots were a nonstatic nor always equal process formed with different interactions that do not necessarily need to be harmonical. However, the solidarity and constant flow of people coming to help plus the people who were there all the time made the pots possible. Thus the *entramado comunitario* was formed of a mix of a non-formally organized process with people who entered and exited it constantly and some who were putting their constant efforts into the pot. Furthermore, These *entramados comunitarios* were the product of people meeting around the pot during the strike and the learnings of previous processes that some of them had been part of. Hence, both formerly existent and emergent elements were necessary for the production of the pot as a common. Highlighting the latter is key since it shows the role the community cooking pots had in creating or strengthening processes of reproduction of life beyond the state<sup>32</sup>. They were a place of collective encounters for dreams and centering life from the popular.

In the story, the pot says that for her existence the presence of women was central. Let us analyze that here, in light of the idea of the production of the pot as a common. It is important to highlight the historical role that women have played in the production of the commons as well as in their defence. Women have been central to the production and maintenance of the commons by putting their work and bodies into it (examples can be found from reproductive work and places of collective feeding to processes of defense of land and nature) (Federici, 2004, 2020) Despite the latter, the capitalist patriarchal system hardly recognize this work. It has been underseen, not valued or taken for granted. Furthermore, Through the sexual division of labor, cooking associated to domestic labor for the reproduction of life has traditionally been associated to women and depoliticized (Federici, 2013)

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<sup>32</sup> Is central to highlight that more research needs to be done on the relationship of this processes and the state, specially now that there is a left government in Colombia that supports the popular processes.

The case of the community cooking pots during the strike is not an exception to any of the above-mentioned aspects. Despite the participation of men, women had a central role in sustaining the process of production of the community pots as commons. I bring that here not to reinforce the gender roles but to highlight the political aspects of cooking, especially when collectively done. As has been read in the story of the pot, and will be seen in the story of the woman who cooked, collectively cooking in public space and especially in the context of a struggle, opened spaces for dialogue, and for dreaming of other realities. The community cooking pots are an example of the importance of the roles of cooking and caring for reproducing life, which has been historically assigned to women. The community cooking pots highlight the political aspect of that activity and all the richness and complexities it entangles that go beyond the act of cooking and eating, as has been highlighted in the story and in the previous section.

Before closing this section, let us take a look at a methodology proposed by Raquel Gutiérrez Aguilar that helps to better grasp the complexities of collective struggles related to the production of commons and their possibilities of generating transformation. Such methodology is based on a *practical scope* and *internal understanding*. The first focuses on the identifiable shared aspects of the struggles and their capacity to challenge the capitalist normality in certain places and times. The second focuses on the specificities of each struggle, its intermingles, and the nuances related to the place (Gutiérrez Aguilar, 2017). Following her proposal, using the *practical scope* of the community cooking pot we can see the sancocho of helping hands, the collective process of challenging hunger, the presence of women, and the strengthening of the community all aspects that, in different ways challenge the capitalist normality since they sustain and reproduce life without a process of profit or accumulation of capital. We can relate this *practical understanding* to the first part of the story, where the pot narrates its generalities. This scope allows us to see transversal elements of producing the pot as a common regardless of the place (Rieiro et al., 2021).

However, the production of the common is situated (Gutiérrez-Aguilar 2022). Hence, the *internal understanding* is linked to the specificities of the *entramado comunitario* in each *punto de resistencia*. It allows us to see the specific elements that each cooking pot had and the nuances for its production as a common: who participated and how, where did the food come from, who ate, what agreements were made among the people, what difficulties they faced and so on, as will be seen in the particular stories of each pot that you will read later. ([Go back to the story](#))



## ***Poner el cuerpo y el corazón (placing the body and the heart)***

Weaving Yolima's story was possible thanks to the voices of three different women who participated in community cooking pots. Despite their voices highlighting particular aspects of the making of the pot linked to each *punto de resistencia*, there were shared elements, motivations, and lived experiences that allowed the character of Yolima to emerge. The experience of resisting through *poner el cuerpo*<sup>33</sup> on the street to cook and the passion and love for doing it, and being able to help, were present in all of them. Furthermore, as can be seen in the stories both of the pot and of Yolima, for the production of the pot as a common, the body (individual and collective), shared joy, and emotions were central. To further think about that, I engage with the concept of *poner el cuerpo* by community feminism and the erotic as power by Audre Lorde.

The importance of centering the body and its political existence and actions has been present in different strands of feminism since the late decades of the previous century, and the idea of body politics has entered into the post-development discourses. (Harcourt, 2019a, 2019b)

In this investigation, I focus on the idea of *poner el cuerpo* by community feminism which can give us some elements to the analysis. They recall the importance of grounding their feminism on the body, on their political action, but also on the territory.

Community feminism is a political position that emerges from indigenous women's struggle and everyday resistance in Abya Yala<sup>34</sup>. In that struggle, understanding by the own terms the oppressions and processes of resistance undertaken appeared as a need. For them, the patriarchal system is the basis of all oppressions (class, race, gender) which are represented originally in the body of women but extended to all marginalized bodies (Guzmán & Paredes, 2015 min 7:40).

Community feminism takes a political stance. It is a way of not only understanding how patriarchy works but of taking action to dismantle it by, among other things, opening pathways to re-believe and dream again. *Poner el cuerpo* is a way of doing that. For community feminism, the struggle is not individual but collective and is related to the body, community, and territory, elements that are not dissociated. For them, the body is the first territory. A territory is understood as a space of signification of life (Paredes, 2018) *Poner el cuerpo*, thus is to place the first territory. It is creative, collective and political practice.

As is beautifully expressed on a poem by Joyce Jandette (2014)<sup>35</sup>

*"Poner el cuerpo es fugarse de "la política" para poder así volver a hacer política.*

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<sup>33</sup> This can be translated as placing the body.

<sup>34</sup> According to Julieta Paredes, community feminism is "The struggle of any woman, in any part of the world, at any time, who fights, reveals and proposes herself in the face of a patriarchy that oppresses her or pretends to oppress her" (Guzmán & Paredes, 2015).

<sup>35</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JabMdko3xRc&ab\\_channel=JoyceJandette](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JabMdko3xRc&ab_channel=JoyceJandette)

*Poner el cuerpo* es sacar la rabia a pasear para que no nos haga mierda en casa.

*Poner el cuerpo* es darle voz a la entraña.

*Poner el cuerpo* es crear y creer otros mundos posibles”

[ *Poner el cuerpo* is is to escape from "politics" in order to be able to return to politics.

*Poner el cuerpo* es is to take anger for a walk so that it does not knock us out at home. *Poner el cuerpo* is to give voice to the entrails.

*Poner el cuerpo* is to create and believe other possible worlds<sup>36</sup>.]

*Poner el cuerpo* is never an individual issue but a collective one. It is related to the desire to create something different, to the passion and joy for doing it collectively despite attacks and invisibilization. (Cabnal, 2018). That joy emerges from the desire to help and the possibility of building together, producing a common and dreaming of a different reality.

*Poner el cuerpo* entangles both the physical body and the emotions. It is an active subjectivity, what in modernity would be called agency. This agency is related to the consciousness of creating and doing collectively. “It is a sense of intentionality that we can reinforce and sense as lively in paying attention to people and the enormously variegated ways of connection among people without privileging the word or a monological understanding of sense” (Lugones, 2003, p8). The latter highlights how *poner el cuerpo* is related to *poner el corazón*. Bringing here what Audre Lorde called the power of the erotic can be helpful to understand the importance of emotions and the joy on the process of *poner el cuerpo*.

Lorde separated the erotic from the pornographic. Erotic is “a measure between the beginnings of our sense of self and the chaos of our strongest feelings. It is an internal sense of satisfaction to which, once we have experienced it, we know we can aspire” (Lorde, 1984, P.88). The erotic is present in sharing joy with other people and in creating something together. She argues that it “forms a bridge between the sharers which can be the basis for understanding much of what is not shared between them, and lessens the threat of their difference.”(Lorde, 1984, p89)

Let us see how the idea of *poner el cuerpo* helps us to understand the role of the community cooking pots.

*Poner el cuerpo* in the streets to cook is not a minor issue. On the physical element *poner el cuerpo* meant putting the body, the flesh, at risk since there were constant attacks and persecutions against people participating in community cooking pots, as you read in Yolima’s story. People placing their bodies out to contribute to the community pot suffered from attacks with tear gas, violence from the police, persecutions, and sometimes detentions. Thus *poner el cuerpo* meant to overcome the fear of suffering those things on the body. Therefore, *Poner el cuerpo* also entangled

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<sup>36</sup> Self- translation.

emotional elements. the body is never just a pile of flesh and bones. *Poner el cuerpo* means putting the energy, emotions, desires, and dreams of change around the pot, as can be read in Yolima's story. *Poner el cuerpo* is *poner el corazón*. Following (Botero-Gomez, 2019) focusing attention on this allows seeing how feelings and emotions that exceed the institutional and seek to create a different reality become political. Thus, *poner el cuerpo* is a way of doing politics.

*Poner el cuerpo y el corazón* around the process of the community cooking pots depicts how that erotic power takes form and is a core part of the production of the pot as a common: without the strength that gives the joy of the collective, the enjoyment of doing it despite the fear, the production of the pot as a common and the building of community would not be possible.

Finally, *Poner el Cuerpo* to cook is consciously weaving the body-territory with the territory (place) where the community is built. Therefore, there is a connection between *poner el cuerpo*, *poner el corazón*, producing the common and creating community ([Go back to the story](#))

## Place and Territory

As can be seen in the stories, the way different elements were mixed and *entremados comunitarios* formed for each community cooking pot to exist, is highly influenced by the specific *punto de resistencia* where each pot was located. Therefore, considering the aspect of the place and the territory is central when looking at the community cooking pots during the strike.

Based on the latter, the design of the story is not innocent. Showing first the voice of the community pot telling her characteristics and then the voices of each of the specific place-based versions has the purpose of highlighting how there are general features to the community pot, but also place-based dynamics that shape the way each community pot is produced as a common in a particular place.

To tackle the aspect of the place, I approach two theories. First, the idea of place posed by post-structuralist theories. Second the idea of territory by Community feminism. The first one seeks to go beyond generalizations and global-centric ideas present in development and pay attention to the importance of the localized experience. They understand the place not only as a geographical concept but as a social construct with particular dynamics generated by the people who give meaning to it (Harcourt & Escobar, 2005). Thus the idea of place is linked to specific vital experiences, identities, and practices that shape it. It is based on the idea that power is everywhere and can be enacted from the place. The importance of thinking from the place lies in the voices that emerge from it and that narrate it, which are, in a certain way, the ones that build meaning in it. The place is based on individual and collective experiences linked to cultural, economic, and political practices (Garzón, 2008)

From the idea of place, Wendy Harcourt and Arturo Escobar develop the concept of politics of the place to name the processes linked to a place in which logics of domination are challenged through the relation with territory, culture, and identity (Harcourt & Escobar, 2005). The politics of the place include the bodies and focused on the “experience of subaltern people aiming to understand those transformative processes linked to the place, to the local, to dynamics that are “place-based but not place-bound” (Harcourt and Escobar, p5).

Regarding the community cooking pots, the specific *puntos de Resistencia*, as geographically located spaces where resistance emerges, can be understood as places. The social and embodied experiences that forged the production of the pot as common in a particular *punto de resistencia* give meaning to the place and particularities to the process of the cooking pot and can be read as politics of place.

As can be seen in the stories of the pot versions: in “Sur Oriente” and “Usme the pot revolution” each *punto de resistencia* had its features, and so did the pot. Every pot had different *entramados comunitarios*. Aspects such as the people who integrate the pot, the particularities of the way they organized, the help they received, and the specificities of the municipality where the pot was located. The different configurations that happened on each place helped enact the power of the community pot to sustain the strike, as we see when applying the *interior scope* proposed by Gutierrez-Aguilar.

In the end, highlighting the experiences of the pot from a place-based perspective is important since it adds two elements to the analysis of the pot: 1. It helps us see how for the particular case of the community pots on the national strike the place was central for each experience. As the stories show us, the building of the community pot in a particular place gave those people a collective experience that join them together and helped build community. They created a collective memory linked to a specific place. It the end enacted particular politics of place 2. It highlights the strengths and difficulties of each process of the pot.

From a very different lived and epistemic background, community feminism also highlights the importance of the place, linking it with the idea of territory and community. As explained in a previous section, for community feminism the territory is a space of signification of life (Paredes, 2018). In that sense, the dynamics that occurred around the community cooking pots on each *punto de resistencia* and that give meaning to life in that specific place turn it into a territory. The links between place and territory lie in the signification that the people give to the place through the social processes that are undertaken on it. They appropriate and claim the place. They make it territory by placing their bodies-territories there and collectively resisting through cooking and eating in the middle of the strike but also through doing art demonstrations, hosting events, painting the walls etc.

Bringing community feminism is important since it provides analytical lenses from Abya Yala ground-based theory. It brings the possibility of using analyses that are created in contexts of action and resistance where the community is created through that resistance. The latter is helpful to analyze a process such as one of the community cooking pots that departs from action and resistance.

Finally, those two theories allow us to see that the process of building community by caring for each other and for the place beyond the State logic is linked to a particular place-territory that is defended and where dreams of different futures take place.

## Final reflections

As we have seen the community cooking pots in the south of Bogotá had several roles during the strike. They had the role of keeping alive the resistance by feeding the people demonstrating. However, their role went beyond that. The process of cooking and eating collectively was possible thanks to the solidarity of the *sancocho* of helping hands, as well as the people placing their bodies- that is both flesh and emotions- on the different *puntos de resistencia* around the pot. The community cooking pot had the role of activating several resistances at the same time where collectives, building community and placing the bodies were central.

Through that process, which was place-based, the pot was produced as a common and communities were built. The community cooking pot was a process of organization that reproduced life beyond the State's logic and showed the importance and strength of the people together. In that sense, The community cooking pots represented a process of politicization for people who were not politicized before and found through the pots a way of contributing to the struggle and to the possibilities of building a different reality. It also opened spaces for dialogue, for opening to other people and for cultivating affection and creating bonds. It was the space of encounter and organization of collectives previously organized, and the building of new ones.

Another of the roles of the pot was to make visible the hunger that exists in the country since many people who were not protesting came to eat on them. But also the strength and possibilities that collective organizing can have to sustain the life of those people who need it. "the people helping the people. Solo el pueblo salva al pueblo. The community pots represent a non- State céntric way of doing Politics

Furthermore, the community cooking pot highlights the central role that the bodies placed collectively on the street to cook played in the resistance. The process of *poner el cuerpo y poner el corazón* highlights how the possibilities of building community and producing commons present in the pots are related to *poner el cuerpo* and to the joy and emotions that were key in the collective process of doing it. Thus, the pot is a perfect example for showing how the body (flesh and emotions) and the production of commons are mixed in the political process of reproducing life both materially and symbolically and dreaming of a different world.

Analytically, the community cooking pot show elements of the importance of popular collective action and production of commons, and how cooking and eating are processes that can become political and central to building community in processes that go beyond the State. Furthermore, the conceptual analysis of the process of the community cooking pots shows how there is a connection between *poner el cuerpo*, producing the common and creating community. Finally, there are some emergent open questions that exceed this investigation but are interesting to bear in mind and ask to both the political process of the pots and decolonial activist academia:

How have the process of producing the pot as a common changed and transformed after the strike?

How do these popular community-based processes sustain over time and how do they interact with left governments and to what costs?

How will the community cooking pots interact with the new left government in Colombia? Will they maintain their community character or will they be institutionalized?

How can the community cooking pots be thought of as part of a transformation of the alimentary system?

What were the specificities of building community around the community pots and the *punto de resistencia* and how are they maintained?

## Appendices

### 1. The hungry in the country<sup>37</sup>

Hunger is not a new issue in Colombia. According to the ENSIN<sup>38</sup>, in 2015<sup>39</sup> 54,2% of the households in the country suffered from food insecurity. The latter is due to the dependency on imported products. With the situation of hunger and food insecurity increased with the pandemic: 71,6% of the households presented some level of food insecurity (Garzón-Orjuela & del Castillo, 2022) 2,8 million people could not satisfy their basic dietary needs and 32% of the households had to make dietary adjustments to cope with hunger (Guevara & Suescún, 2022). Besides the numbers and data, or the specific difference between hunger, food insecurity and the different levels of the latter, the critical issue is to understand that many people in the country were having trouble fulfilling their basic dietary needs or even having food to eat every day and that the problem was unbearable and increased by the pandemic.

### 2. The anecdote of the Sur Oriente pot

One of the most precious memories I lived here was when the Minga of the Nasa indigenous<sup>40</sup>, from Cauca department, came to support the strike in Bogotá and visited us. That day I was the protagonist.

It was July 20, 2021, Colombia's national day. I remember it very well. And I am going to tell it to you as I lived it:

The day was sunny. Early in the morning, around 7am, you could already see people preparing things, cleaning the *punto de resistencia*, organizing, and moving everywhere. The *pelados* organizing for the battle that would surely come later with the police. You could see some kids running around and a small group of people stamping clothes with the slogan *#surorienteresistente*. The energy was latent; excitement was in the air.

To be able to make me that day, very early in the morning, people began to arrive to peel *recado*<sup>41</sup> and then to light the fire. First, to give breakfast to the people at the point and then, to start preparing for the crowd that would come. And what a crowd! About four thousand people ended up eating that day at our *punto de resistencia*. Then, little by little we had to put more and more pots, and because we did not have them so go look for them! That a neighbor could lend us one, that from the thrift shop they gave us another, and so in the end we managed to set up the seven pots and give food to all that crowd. I shined that day, I remember it with such joy.

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<sup>37</sup> It is important to notice that I recognize that the statistical number do not the whole problem of hunger on the country and many times leave aside the human level. However, they are useful to get an idea about the general situation of the country.

<sup>38</sup> National survey of food security and nutrition

<sup>39</sup> It was the last time this survey was performed.

<sup>40</sup> The Nasa are an indigenous group that has resisted so much in the south of the country

<sup>41</sup> Local word for calling the groceries.



Towards midday, the *minga*<sup>42</sup> arrived in their *chivas*. People made a way of honor for them and threw some fireworks they had bought into the air. There were some exchanges of words, they spoke and those of the point also did. There was also an exchange of elements. The Nasa gave them some of the handkerchiefs that are a sign of their resistance, and the *pelados* gave them shields. Then lunch was served. That day we made soup of everything. From the seven pots the plates of food were taken out. The first pots came out with a lot of bone and substance, but the others already had almost no substance. It didn't matter, the food still tasted good and fed not only the belly, but also the conversation. While eating, people started talking and the children made paintings with some boards that the people from Sur Oriente had prepared for them. Sharing that food allowed the exchange of experiences of those who resist from different parts of the country.

Oh but it burns my heart to remember how after the indigenous minga left, the police came to attack the *pelados*. The fight lasted nine hours, nine! I have the consolation that they had eaten well and had the strength and inspiration of the resistance the indigenous people gave.

### **3-The anecdote of the revolution of the pot in Usmekistán**

A month after the popular strike started, something incredible happened here that strengthened me a lot and gave me a lot of life. On May 28th we managed to feed 1000 people with my presence. That was the first time that international donations were received at the *punto de resistencia*. With that money the people bought pots and lots of ingredients for cooking: meat, plantain, rice, potatoes, onions etc. For it to be possible, it required the support of many people because it was all from one day to the next, but we managed, and that day a thousand people ate from the pots. But it was not only the eating. There were also artistic presentations; for example the group of elders did traditional Colombian dances and there was theater and fabrics as well. I say that my presence here represented unity, because around me people gathered to eat, to talk, to get to know each other and in the meantime there were theatrical processes, plays alluding to what was happening in the strike. So art and I went hand in hand.

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<sup>42</sup> The word minga means a reunion of people to do something together. However in the case of the Nasa indigenous community of Cauca it refers to the marches they do to protest.

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