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**Travelling to the World of ‘Remesas’  
A Decolonial Perspective**

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## **Abstract**

This document will explore the practice of remesa, which consists of sharing with family and relatives in the city the food that has been produced in the countryside. This will be done from a decolonial perspective, describing how this practice is configured and the various ways in which it puts in tension the mainstream conception of development, linked to the modern/colonial matrix that understands land and food as a good that can be commodified to obtain money; and people as individuals who respond mainly to selfish interests. Furthermore, tensions and contradictions within this practice will be discussed.

## **Key words**

Remesa, modernity/coloniality, solidarity, reciprocity, tensions, contradictions, resistance.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

My first contact with remesa was at home, because every month my father sends two boxes of food produced on the farm where he works. Boxes travel from Chinchiná, Caldas to Bogotá with oranges, tangerines, plantains, avocados, lemons and sometimes honey. One box contains only oranges, while the other contains other food. Since it is too much food for my mom, my brother and me, my dad tells us to share with others. We share with my aunts and their families, with the building's employees where we live, with my wife, and sometimes with some of my friends. Like he sends us remesa, he also shares with his siblings and his wife's family, to whom he brings remesa on weekends. This is my father's experience, who works managing a large agro-industrial farm with varied crops and cattle. However, this practice has been in my family for long time, since my grandfather, who had land in Caldas and Antioquia, shared what was produced there with his family.

People around me during my childhood and adolescence in Manizales had similar experiences. Many families had close connections of different kinds with the countryside. Later, when I moved to Bogotá, I understood that these connections are not common there, which led me to question this practice. The fact that my dad sends food in boxes from so far away amazed my friends in Bogotá, but not my friends from Manizales who also lived there, and who with their families have benefited from my father's remesa.

At first glance, remesa may look like a disinterested act of solidarity in which a person shares food produced in the field with friends, acquaintances, and relatives. But what is behind this practice? Remesa, in addition to being a gift or an act of solidarity, is a world to which certain people belong, built through certain relationships and practices, which in many cases can be unequal and even violent, while in others they can be of deep care and affection. It is important to give voice to these multiple experiences linked to a practice that might tell us about a fairer redistribution of food through gift giving, care and solidarity, but at the same time encloses relations of power and domination.

This practice is known as 'remesa' in Colombia, specifically in the region under the influence of the antioquian colonization<sup>1</sup>. I will focus on Manizales and its surroundings because I was born and raised there and is where I have been closest to this practice. This closeness to the region is part of my decolonial position because, as Smith (2008) states, traditional western research seeking objectivity is nothing more than an illusion disguised as neutrality, which has responded to colonialist interests. For this reason, it must be kept in mind that the researcher's context, as well as their personal experiences, function as a lens through which to look at what is being investigated. This is why I decided to investigate this practice of which I am a part, clearly stating my positionality and rejecting the supposed objectivity of western academy. This region is where I have been able to see and be part of the world of remesa, where I have witnessed how it is carried

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<sup>1</sup> Antioquian colonization consisted of a historical process that took place in the 19th century in which landless peasants began to colonize territories located towards the south of Antioquia. These territories belonged in many cases to large landowners and their families, whose titles came from concessions granted by the crown. After long processes of discussion and violence, as well as appeals to the new institutions at the beginning of the republican period, agreements were reached that allowed the colonists to own parts of these concessions. These processes led to the ownership of small and medium-sized territories distributed among the settlers, a characteristic that is still maintained in Caldas to this day.

out, and where I have had the opportunity to listen to the stories that are woven around it. This is why I have decided to conduct this research in a place where I am part of. However, I cannot ignore that despite wanting to write a document that does not respond to colonialist practices of Western research, being part of an educational institution and having to abide by certain parameters implies a limitation to this end.

We have been taught to think and understand the world, our relationships and ourselves as fragmented, as one thing or the other, under dichotomies and hierarchizations crucial to the modern/colonial matrix (Lugones, 2022). This modern/colonial matrix is based on Western thought that seeks homogenization under its parameters and organizing the world in its favor based on racial and gender classifications. It also focuses on the constitution of binary thinking that feeds the fragmentation and promotes individual benefit over the collective construction of life.

I refuse this understanding of the world. By refusing fragmentation, we open the door to plurality, transitions, the chance to imagine outside that modern/colonial matrix (Sheik, 2023). Approaching remesa under a plural gaze allows us to understand the multiplicity of experiences that may underlie it, as well as the practice itself. Those experiences may embody at the same time joy, solidarity, reciprocity, violence, separation, fragmentation. It is not about one thing *or* the other, but about one thing *and* the other. The importance lies in presenting the complex relationships and multiplicity of voices that this practice may carry within.

This plural gaze allows for a broader understanding of the world of remesa, as I present below. Likewise, in this paper I show how this multiplicity of experiences around remesa allows this world to function as a rhizome, a multiplicity of roots that can be connected in a permanent or transitory way, that allow the coexistence of those experiences that initially can be seen as contradictory, that connects those who inhabit this world. This rhizome can be broken on one end, while generating new connections on the other, without this meaning its destruction. Consequently, relationships on which remesa is built can be of multiple nature, connecting new beings and spaces, at the same time, allowing others to exit that world. This is what I will seek to expose in this document.

In this chapter I will first present a general geographic and historic context of Manizales and the department of Caldas, to understand where remesa takes place. Then, I will describe the research problem and how I arrived at the questionings that guide this paper, and to close, I will present the research questions and objectives around which I organized my work.

## **1.1. Context**

To understand remesa, it is important to contextualize it in the place where it happens. As mentioned, due to my belonging to Manizales and my proximity to people who practice remesa there, this research took place in this city and its surroundings. Manizales is the capital of the department of Caldas and is located between the western and central mountain range of the Andes in Colombia. It was founded in 1849 by a group of what is known today as Antioquian settlers,

who were moving south of Antioquia with the purpose of ‘abrir monte’<sup>2</sup> and creating new settlements in the region due to its good climate and fertile land, but also because of the poverty in which they found themselves in Antioquia, as they could not own land.

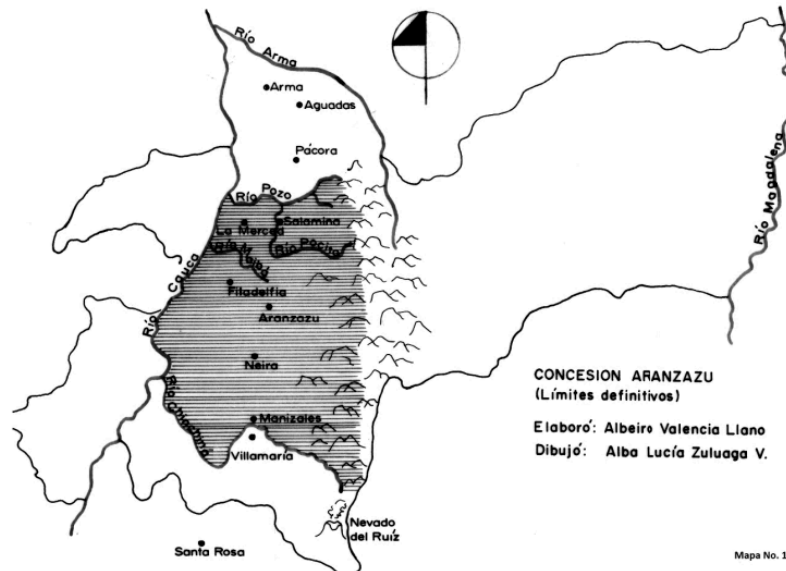
During the Spanish colonial period, different indigenous communities lived in the territories known today as Caldas such as Quimbayas, Armas, Pozos, Carrapas, Ansermas, Picaras, Paucaras among others (Mazo and Uribe, no date, pp. 29–30). Around 1539, according to documents from the colonial period, the territory of present-day Manizales was mainly inhabited by Quimbaya and Carrapa communities, who farmed along the right bank of the Cauca River (Valencia Llano, 2015, p. 31). As Jiménez (2019) explains, the passage of the Spaniards through this territory almost completely exterminated the native population, either through violence or diseases brought by them. Jiménez (2019, p. 5) also explains that, because of this, the area and its surroundings maintained low population rates, which is why in the accounts of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries they are described as areas covered with jungle.

According to the 2018 census, there is approximately 55,800 indigenous people in Caldas (Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadísticas, 2019), and the largest communities are the Cañamomo, Embera, Embera Chamí and Embera Katío (Observatorio del Programa Presidencial de Derechos Humanos y DIH, 2008). However, in Manizales and its surroundings white-mestizaje is predominant, with only 1.04% of the population recognizing themselves as indigenous. Nevertheless, in the rest of the Department, indigenous self-recognition increases to 6.09% (Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadísticas, 2019). It is interesting that when this story of Antioquian settlers opening up the forest to the south is taught, there is no mention of the indigenous communities that, although diminished, were and are still present there.

These Antioquian settlers, mainly mestizos, who were parceling, cultivating, building roads and, in general, opening up forests, had to face the reality that these territories they 'conquered' already belonged to a large landowner, Juan de Dios Aranzazu. He had inherited them from his father, José María Aranzazu, to whom were given in concession by the Spanish crown with the condition of settling, distributing lands and lots among his companions, as well as residing there for at least 5 years. These conditions were not fulfilled, so ownership lawfulness was questionable (Valencia Llano, 2013, pp. 49–50). After the transition from the Spanish colonial period to the Republic, Juan de Dios tried to legalize the titles of a portion of land that covered an important segment of what is currently the department of Caldas (Valencia Llano, 2013, p. 58), as can be seen in the following map (Valencia Llano, 2013, p. 53):

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<sup>2</sup> To “open the mountain” with their machetes and axes.



These attempts to legalize the territory between Aranzazu and the settlers led to violent confrontations and National Government intervened, forcing Aranzazu to distribute a large portion of the concession among the settlers, legalizing the property for many families (Valencia Llano, 2013, p. 58). As Jiménez explains, towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, settlements consolidated and agricultural activities diversified, cultivating tobacco, sugar, plantain, cacao, and coffee -which later gained notable relevance-, and land had been adapted for cattle (2019, p. 6). This process of colonization of the area was strongly marked by the desire of human domination over nature, in what this author calls 'the ethos of the axe' (Jiménez, 2019, p. 8).

This region was also characterized by the presence of muleteers, who oversaw merchandise and food-trade through the region by means of mules (Jiménez, 2019, p. 6). These figures of the settler and the muleteer have been determinant in the construction of a collective identity in this region, exalting the tenacity and courage of these men who went deep into the jungle with their mules and families to create new settlements and commerce through difficult terrain, bringing 'progress' and 'civilization' to the mountains. By the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, coffee haciendas were prevalent in the region, as well as the presence of cities that became increasingly important, such as Manizales (Jiménez, 2019, p. 11). The predominant figures of muleteers and coffee growers were mixed since coffee traveled on the back of mules in the beginning. This association exists to this day, being so relevant that the logo of Juan Valdéz, one of the most recognized brands of Colombian coffee, is a muleteer-coffee grower (Juan Valdéz himself, a fictitious character) with his mule Conchita.

Now, as Giraldo and Andrade (2022, pp. 176–179) explain, in the territory that would become Caldas, an identity matrix was configured linked to certain attributes of gender, race, geography and family. To the almost mythical figure of the settler and the muleteer were attributed characteristics such as energy, generosity, altruism, industriousness and virility (Giraldo-Zuluaga and Andrade-Álvarez, 2022, p. 189). These authors emphasize that the imaginary of this community was marked by the white and patriarchal family model, also characterized by a strong hierarchy of gender and race (2022, p. 195). Among the travelers' diaries are descriptions indicating that settlers who left for southern Antioquia, what is known today as Caldas, were part of a 'rather noble strain' that chose this territory for its 'mild climate', which was attractive to the 'unmixed white race'. The 'good manners' of the population were attributed to these racial categories



(Giraldo-Zuluaga and Andrade-Álvarez, 2022, p. 196). In this model of society, family played a fundamental role, as it was directly linked to the work of the land (Giraldo-Zuluaga and Andrade-Álvarez, 2022, p. 197).

In addition, discipline, a strong bond with Catholicism and the importance given to marriage were exalted, in contrast to early 20<sup>th</sup> century descriptions of other regions of the country, where family and marital relations were described as 'lax' (Giraldo-Zuluaga and Andrade-Álvarez, 2022, p. 198). In the collective imaginary, the idea was consolidated that these characteristics of apparent homogeneity in the area's population were determinant for the civilizing advances of the region (Giraldo-Zuluaga and Andrade-Álvarez, 2022, pp. 198–199). As time went by, some of these settlers got rich mainly thanks to the coffee grown there, which turned Manizales into an important financial center in Colombia and, as Lozada explains (2021, p. 82), led part of the identity of Manizaleños to appear closer to the big European cities, with their luxuries, moving away from the agricultural aspect. Despite this, as Lozada explains, images of the time show how these people moving around in automobiles, exhibiting their luxuries, coexisted with peasants who traveled barefoot on horseback (2021, p. 82).

Later, the territory of Caldas focused more on coffee, initially sowing it together with other crops. Then, after the boom of the 70's and the arrival of the coffee berry borer, species being sown changed for one more resistant to pests, which had to be planted in full sun, reason why other products that were grown together with coffee were cut down to plant it extensively. Later, rust arrived, another plague that led to the destruction of more crops that were still planted next to coffee. Recently, there has been a renewed interest in diversifying plantations again, among others, due to coffee prices dropping. This diversification has taken place as a complement to coffee planting, and in some cases replacing it completely.

To cultivate these lands, not only family is fundamental, but also peasants with little or no land. In the past, *andariegos*<sup>3</sup> played a central role in coffee cultivation. Currently, this figure has been decreasing, in part due to labor regulations that have occurred over time. Another common figure is the popularly known '*agregado*', who oversees cultivating and caring for the farm owner's land. This reveals a class configuration in which it is common for some to own the land while others work it, even on small farms.

It is in this society, which appears to be urban but maintains strong ties with rural areas, that *remesa* occurs. Although it is not exclusive to this region, it may vary from other locations and embody certain regional values. The way in which *remesa* is lived may also vary as the experience of a small agricultural producer who works the land with his hands is different from the one of a land manager who has access to surplus production, and at the same time these differ from the experience of families who are not focused on agricultural production for sale, but have a land for resting where they have small crops for self-sufficiency. It is important to highlight these multiple voices around *remesa*, as they are the ones that show us the possible tensions or contradictions within its world, and at the same time allow us a deeper understanding of this practice.

This great discourse of coffee culture and the development tied to it has obscured other forms of supply and ways of understanding land outside the modern/colonial capitalist matrix that

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<sup>3</sup> Harvesters who traveled around the country looking for work in the crops that were being harvested.

seeks the commodification of everything, in this case land and food. Given this scenario, remesa could be posed as a practice that exists outside, in relation, tension or contradiction with that matrix. It is not a question of one thing or the other, but of multiple experiences that I wish to highlight in this paper. Remesa comes from large, medium, and small extensions of land, farms of rest, or home gardens. Those other voices that do not correspond completely in many cases with the capitalist guidelines speak to us of other worlds that deserve to be named and from which we can learn.

## **1.2. Description of the research problem**

Manizales is in a mainly mountainous region with a wide climatic variety. This region achieved accelerated economic development in the 20<sup>th</sup> century thanks to coffee exploitation, which is of very good quality and led to important economic gains. This narrative of the coffee identity, which is based on the modern/colonial matrix, is linked to the capitalist notion of development, and has positioned itself as dominant, becoming present in the daily life of Manizales people. This has led to other forms of economic and social organization being relegated or silenced. For this research, it is relevant to analyze the historical context of the region, which resulted in its land distribution and use.

As mentioned earlier, history of Caldas is framed by modern/colonial values, represented in a patriarchal family, where men (muleteers and settlers) venture to 'open the mountain' to dominate wild lands, while women were responsible for caring for children and the home. Likewise, nature is understood as an appropriable and exploitable other for human benefit, framing it in a nature/human dichotomy. This dominant narrative will later pass into the coffee culture.

The idea of 'race', which I will discuss later, was also crucial, since settlers were considered 'white' or 'unmixed', so they were attributed qualities such as generosity, laboriousness, dedication to the family (Catholic and patriarchal), bravery, among others. Life in these territories was mainly agricultural and cattle-raising until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when cities established in these territories, such as Manizales, began an accelerated urbanization thanks to the profits obtained from the exploitation of the land, mainly from coffee cultivation (Lozada-Castellanos, 2021, p. 85). These dominant narratives have been part of the creation of Manizales as an imagined community that shares common stories on which an identity and a sense of belonging is built (Anderson, 1993).

Considering the above, I will explain remesa as a common, and how it can open the door to understanding a multiplicity of relationships and other practices beyond remesa, and how there may be tensions and contradictions inherent to this world, which are part of questioning dichotomous thinking in which something is understood as one thing or the other, leaving out a wide range of options where situations that at first appear to be exclusive, may coexist.

For the search of those other narratives that have been silenced by the dominant ones, it is also interesting to see how remesa links the countryside with the city. Through the positionality of the people who connect around this practice, I believe that new narratives can appear as our experience in the world varies depending on our relationship with respect to the modern/colonial matrix (Cairo, 2021, pp. 81–82). This approach will be developed from a decolonial gaze because,

as Vázquez and Mignolo explain, decoloniality is a movement that allows us to re-exist beyond the violence produced by the modern/colonial matrix (2013, pp. 4–5). Following this posture, I would like to show the other worlds, voices, narratives, and relations existing in this territory, beyond the dominant ones.

### 1.3. Research question, sub questions, and objectives

Given the above, the question of **how the world of remesa is constructed** will guide this paper. To answer this question, I will follow a series of steps linked to the sub-questions of **how to study remesa in a non-extractive way**, so the silenced voices are exposed and not only the dominant narratives. I will also explore if **there are tensions among these silenced voices around the practice of remesa**, and if **there are tensions regarding the understanding of territory and its uses**.

Starting from the main question, the central objective of this research will be **to describe and analyze the practice of remesa from a decolonial perspective**. This objective connects directly with the secondary objectives that will focus on first, **building a theoretical and methodological framework that allows non-extractive research** based on the concepts of modernity/coloniality, the anthropocentric construction of nature, reciprocity, care, and commons and ‘lo común’; and using world traveling and storytelling to approach those people and their stories that practice remesa. Second, to **explore whether within those voices that have been silenced there are tensions or contradictions with respect to the modern/colonial conception of individuals**. Third, to **inquire into possible tensions with respect to the capitalist understanding of land**.

### Chronogram

CHRONOGRAM					
Project time frame	July	August	Mid August-Mid September	October	November
5 months (July-November)	Semi-structured interviews via Zoom	Construction of in-depth interviews	Journey to Manizales. Application of in-depth interviews.	Analysis/Systematization. Start writing the final report	Write final report

## 2. THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

### 2.1. Theoretical framework

In this section I explain the framework and main concepts that help me guide the research. These concepts will serve as a lens to analyze the information gathered during my experience in Manizales learning in depth about remesa. Based on those, I identified the main categories to be analyzed in the findings, and which respond to the research question and sub-questions. Likewise, these concepts highlight the importance of this paper, as they allow to direct the research outside

hegemonic logics, opening the possibility to explore remesa as a practice that embodies multiple voices, relationships, and knowledges that, in some cases, may not correspond to the modern/colonial matrix of the dominant West. These concepts are interconnected, despite possibly presenting some tensions between them. These tensions are not obstacles, but opportunities to see the complexity of an issue that seeks to give voice to silenced narratives that can be understood from different positions.

## **Modernity/coloniality**

How does modernity/coloniality impact the practice of remesa? Since remesa does not take place in a space empty of meanings, it is essential to understand what colonialism is, its link to this practice, and the importance of studying it from a decolonial perspective. Quijano (2000) explains how the arrival of the Spaniards in the 15<sup>th</sup> century to the territory today known as America completed the consolidation of modernity which, together with coloniality, constituted the modern/colonial matrix characteristic of Eurocentric thought. Under this conception of the world, in the Renaissance the human started being considered as the center of the universe and, at the same time, Cartesian thought was configured, where experience with respect to the world came to be understood in dichotomies. This Eurocentric and anthropocentric project of modernity was based on the oppression of all those peoples who understood the world from other perspectives. Thus, as Mignolo (2017) explains, we cannot understand modernity without coloniality, which is why we speak of a modern/colonial matrix.

This process of colonization and expansion of the modern/colonial matrix, which, as Quijano (2000) explains, consists of the coloniality of power, and is based on the construction of the concept of 'race', thus creating a hierarchy where the white man was at the top, while the rest of the populations became subordinate, 'the other' that could be subjugated and whose worlds and knowledges could be erased. Later, Lugones (2016) would enrich this position by arguing that, in addition to a coloniality of power, there is a coloniality of gender where enslaved people were not considered 'human', so they lacked gender. Under this conception of the world, this allowed their enslavement, or their subjection to a wide variety of violence. It is interesting to see how these colonialities were determinant in the constitution of world capitalism, which, beyond being an economic system, is a system of social relations of domination of the other and Earth.

As mentioned previously, much of the dominant identity narrative in Manizales is strongly marked by the Catholic, patriarchal family, gender roles and a self-perception of whiteness associated with certain positive values. People's positionality regarding this modern/colonial matrix can lead to varying experiences associated to remesa, opening the door to multiple circumstances that can show us the possible tensions existing within it, as well as help us get a clearer understanding of the practice itself. Because, as Cairo (2021, pp. 81–82) explains, we are all traversed by a colonial/modern framework that locates us socially, which provides us with certain privileges but also subjects us to certain oppressions. Our place with respect to this framework constructs our positionality, which will be decisive in our life experience and how we perceive and interact with the world.

## Care

Care work can be understood from different perspectives. From political-economic feminism, it is understood as that which allows the reproduction of labor force, done without pay mainly by women (Bauhardt and Harcourt, 2019, p. 4). However, it can also be understood as the way in which communities organize themselves to supply their needs, beyond reproduction of the labor force (the following generations and current workers). Care work also involves care of the needs of those who cannot look after themselves, whether paid or unpaid (Bauhardt and Harcourt, 2019, p. 4). It should not be overlooked that in many cases, despite the great effort involved, these jobs can be done with love, affection, and interest in others (Bauhardt and Harcourt, 2019, p. 3). These jobs, from this point of view, imply a burden of time that has historically fallen on women, and the fundamental value they have in sustaining communities has been ignored.

On the other hand, there is a way of understanding care that, as Harcourt (2019, pp. 4–5; 2023, p. 157) explains, includes not only humans but also more-than-humans. Thus, we can speak of interspecies care that brings up the permanent relationship between humans and nature, which breaks with the binarism of the anthropocentric construction of the world. As Harcourt explains, this care implies a reciprocity between humans and more-than-humans based on respect for the existence and agency of those involved. Throughout this paper it will be seen how care appears both as that form of feminized work on which the reproduction of life is based, and which is often downplayed within communities, and as care that involves humans and more-than-humans in exercises of reciprocity and care for the territory, including the beings that inhabit it.

## Reciprocity

The concept of reciprocity is important for this research because remesa is a gift that is given and received. To explain this concept, I will focus on the postulates of Marcel Mauss who, despite coming from a Western matrix of thought, makes a description that I consider appropriate both of the Gift and of the reciprocity that is woven around it. As Mauss (1990) explains, the role of the Gift implies a whole network of reciprocities within a society that leads to shaping and sustaining social relations. This reciprocity that is woven around the Gift, in this case remesa, consists of the obligatory nature of giving, receiving, and returning. As this author (1990) explains, gift and reciprocity are not always horizontal or supportive. In many cases the social relations that are woven involve unequal power relations by involving gifts that cannot be returned in the same proportion, as will be exemplified during this research.

## The anthropocentric construction of 'nature'

This modern/colonial matrix that places the human (male, white, heterosexual, western) at the top of the pyramid also creates a subordination of nature, where the world around us is constructed as an 'other' that can be appropriated and exploited. Under this conception of nature as an

exploitable resource, voices of communities that had different relationships with what we understand as 'nature' have been silenced from a dominant Western or Westernized gaze (Gudynas, 2011, pp. 44–46). These other conceptions about 'nature' invite us to a deep care of the world that surrounds us, building reciprocity that goes beyond humans, in a relationship of mutual care with our environment (NoiseCat, 2016).

This hegemonic construction of nature as a subordinate other has led to the establishment of monocultures centered on the exploitation of the land. In Manizales' case, coffee has been the reigning monoculture. Here the best Colombian exportation coffee was produced throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which led to the transformation of forests into monoculture extensions that resulted in a reduction of the region's natural diversity (Chait, 2015, p. 358). However, coffee monoculture is not the only way of relating to land, nor is it the only means of production in the region. Caldas has been characterized by its great variety of plant and animal species, as well as by the different uses of land. Consequently, it is interesting to see other possible ways of relating to nature that can tell us about the functioning and relationships that are woven around remesa, not only among humans but also with the territory.

### **The commons and building life around 'lo común'**

The world of remesa is built on certain social relations that point towards collective life, which is why I consider that it should be understood as a common. As Gutiérrez (2020, p. 10) explains, the commons, which are those spaces, practices, or goods (material or immaterial) that are shared, are sustained on those particular social relations that produce them. These social relations produce life around 'lo común'. This means that remesa, as a common and as part of the construction of life around 'lo común' cannot be understood or exist isolated from the relationships that sustain it. Gutiérrez's proposal agrees with Federicci and Caffentzis' (2014, p. 56) postulates, who also propose the centrality of relationships in the construction of the commons, of 'lo común'.

It is relevant to clarify that, as Gutiérrez (2020, p. 10) stipulates, the diverse forms of producing the common coexist in an ambiguous and contradictory way with capitalist social relations, as is the case of remesa, where sometimes the origin of the products to be redistributed is linked to traditional agro-industrial regional models. Despite this, the feeling of community and solidarity allows the production of social ties that put in tension the modern/colonial postulates of capitalism and individualism, since remesa also includes practices of care, not only among humans, but also with the territory.

Equally important, Esteva speaks of commoning as a fundamental step in building a new society. As he explains, considering the common as a resource is a mistake, since this notion is part of the idea of separation of humans from nature (2014, p. i148). He considers that the common movement is not an alternative economy, but an alternative to the economy (Esteva, 2014, p. i149), as he suggests that the exchanges that take place there move away from the 'law of scarcity' constructed by the current economic system, and are oriented towards a form of social organization where exchange does not correspond to hegemonic norms (Esteva, 2014, p. 149). This author speaks of commoning as a widespread practice among people who inhabit the margins of the economic world and are constantly challenging it (Esteva, 2014, p. i149). Given this, it could

be argued that commoning can show other experiences between humans and nature, that do not correspond with its exploitation, as expected on capitalism.

## 2.2. Methodology, positionality, and methods

As Lugones (2022, p. 4) explains, we have been taught to perceive in an arrogant way, and for a long time, that was my relationship with the countryside workers, including my father. I enjoyed going to farms and rural areas, but I did not connect with people who lived or worked there because I grew up in a classist and racist context, typical of my positionality at that time, in which I assumed that food came to supermarkets and my table almost by magic. I was not interested in the social relations behind it nor looking for any kind of relationship with them, much less feeling identified or being part of their worlds. Later I began to question myself about my positionality and thanks to my constant contact with the countryside and the patience and wisdom of people I met there in this process, I wanted to go deeper into it, know its logics, the relationship with land and food, the social relationships that are woven around it, the relationships between the countryside and the city.

At university, professors who had strong relationships with the countryside talked to us about 'andar'<sup>4</sup> with people as a way to understand them, their lives, their relationships, their worlds. But this 'andar' in my mind was always framed in an ethnographic process, linked to a western methodology that was historically shaped for the anthropologist, the 'expert', to extract information from the communities. After reading Lugones' (2022, p.5) world-traveling proposal, I understood that this 'andar' could be related to the loving eye as opposed to the arrogant eye. With world-traveling, one does not seek to win or compete, but to be open to surprises, moving away from structured rules and certainties of what and how it is going to happen (Lugones, 2022, p. 16). I based my research on world-travelling as the ethical position from which my research starts, thus allowing the stories that I found to transform me, just as I told my own stories to the people who accompanied me in the construction of this document, since I also inhabit the world of remesa.

But what is a world, according to Lugones? As she explains, a world must be inhabited by people of flesh and blood existing in the present. Likewise, those who have already died, such as my grandfather who also shared remesas, or people known to those who inhabit this world, can also be part of it. In this world, as in societies, there is an understanding of production relations, gender, social structures, among others. It follows certain organizational logics that are proper to it, regardless of whether it is a large, traditional, small, or one that does not follow the dominant forms (Lugones, 2022, pp. 9–10). I consider this point crucial, as the logics of remesa world in some cases may not correspond to the standards of the modern/colonial matrix, capitalism, or individualism.

I see remesa as a world inhabited by those who are bound by it, by their relationships, spaces, practices, and ways of understanding their surroundings. In my youth, I had seen this world from an arrogant perspective, but then I began to identify with those who inhabit it, because I was

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<sup>4</sup> To walk.

part of this world thanks to my father, even though I had not realized it before. I wanted to recognize myself more and more there. Now every time I visit him, we distribute remesas among those who are part of this world, we load the car with the baskets, do the visits that involve distributing them, and receive material and immaterial gifts in return.

As Lugones (2022) explains, worlds allow us to understand the complexity of people and their capacity to inhabit different contexts with different norms, where each one can behave differently and adapt to different dynamics. Although each world has its own order, these worlds are neither completely fixed nor isolated. In many cases they can be interconnected, thus maintaining their dynamic character. Inhabiting several worlds makes us plural, diverse, dynamic beings. After reading Lugones, I understand that what I felt as liminality between my urban and rural being can be understood as 'traveling' between both worlds, where in each I am someone different, I am plural (2022, p. 11).

As Lugones (2022) states, these worlds are not immune to power relations, inequalities, and inequities. The world of remesa is in constant relationship with other worlds, with the agro-industrial capitalism of the region, the unequal relations between landowners and workers, the peasant logics of the region, among others. It is precisely these relationships that allow us to see the diversity and complexity of the world of remesas, and of which I hope to be able to make an initial but not definitive portrait. For this, I traveled to Manizales and its surroundings, I 'walked' with those of us who inhabit it to understand how relationships are knitted inside it, describe it, to let myself be surprised by what we found there together. I revisited my childhood friends who are also part of this world, together with their families. I accompanied those who work the land and share remesas with their families, friends, and acquaintances to understand in depth their world, recognizing myself as part of it. I participated in separating, organizing, and distributing remesas. This, under the premises of an anti-oppressive research (Potts and Brown, 2005), keeping myself accountable to the people who inhabit this world. In the end, the product obtained, even if it remains within the western academic logics, I hope is built from an ethical, non-extractivist and solidary position.

As I mentioned, part of the world-traveling I did was linked to 'el andar'. Likewise, listening and sharing people's stories is central in this exercise. From the ethical perspective of world-traveling, I approached these stories with a 'loving eye', distancing myself from the practices of the prophetic intellectual that exercises authoritarian violence by considering that his proposals (however revolutionary they may be) are the last word (Motta, 2016, p. 34). Given this scenario, I also used Motta's proposed storytelling as the epistemology and practice that allows the collective construction of healing as emancipation (Motta, 2016, p. 33). This way of comprehending storytelling is connected to the understanding of remesa as part of 'lo común', of those commons that allow the encounter outside the dominant logics of modernity/coloniality.

As Motta (2016, p. 34) explains, to decolonize these violent politics of knowledge in which the researcher seeks to position itself as a figure of power and impose his 'authority' as an academic, the figure of the storyteller who moves along the epistemological margins is fundamental. Through storytelling, this knowledge puts in tension the dominant discourse that pretends to be homogeneous and universal, to show the diversity that modernity/coloniality has tried to erase. This storytelling, unlike the knowledge of the prophetic intellectual, is intertwined with people's lives and occurs directly in a territory and space, it is situated (Motta, 2016, p. 40). As part of this



world, I consider that it is also my responsibility to tell not only my stories, but the stories of my region that have been silenced under dominant development discourses. Thus, through shared stories, they share other knowledges about the territory, and other ways of relating outside the western perspective. Additionally, since people's stories are not mine, we will jointly decide which ones will be part of this document and which ones will not, because Western academy does not have the right to own all stories, all knowledges.

For this research I talked to 15 people about their experience with remesa. With their consent, I recorded our conversations and accompanied them in their tasks related to this practice, such as cultivation, separation, organization, and distribution of the products. I was part of the conversations, exchanges of products and knowledges that take place when delivering remesa. We visited the territories of Manizales and its surroundings, mainly El Rosario, Guacas, Neira, Kilómetro 41, Villamaría, Chinchiná, and Santágueda. I was able to see different people's approaches to remesa depending on their positionality and life stories. I selected the people through snowball sampling, starting with my friends, family, and acquaintances in the area.

Regarding ethical considerations, I was clear with the people from the beginning, explaining the purpose of this investigation, inquiring about their concerns about what may be obtained from it, and asking them whether they wanted me to conceal their identities for this document. I also requested their consent before recording our conversations.

Throughout this chapter I addressed how to research remesa in a non-extractive way. I explained the theoretical framework that guided my research, considering the definitions of modernity/coloniality, the anthropocentric construction of nature, care, reciprocity, and the understanding of the commons and 'lo común'. These concepts allow me to understand from a decolonial lens the multiple experiences associated with remesa. I also presented the methodological framework in which I explained the relevance of world-traveling proposed by Lugones to understand the world of remesa, and Motta's storytelling proposal to expose those voices and stories that have been silenced in the region of which I am a part.

In the next chapter I will approach whether there are tensions around the practice of remesa among those silenced voices. For this, I will rely on those stories that were shared with me during my stay in Manizales and its surroundings. I will also include what I experienced or saw in these places.

### **3. THE WORLD OF REMESAS AND ITS COMPLEXITY**

In this chapter I explain how the rhizome of remesa is shaped. Likewise, I talk about the tensions that may exist within the social relations on which it is built, from the conversations I had during my fieldwork, and what I observed there. The concepts of modernity/coloniality, care, and reciprocity will be transversal to it. The concept of commons and the construction of life around 'lo común' will crosscut this chapter and the following one. In the first section I expose the work behind remesa, showing the places, people and moments that are central to its production and reproduction, which will be divided in three topics. In each topic I expose the tensions

encountered regarding the modern/colonial matrix. In the second section I show how remesa also encompasses spaces of social assistance, which implies new connections of various kinds within the rhizome. I will end with the general conclusions of the chapter.

### 3.1 The work and people behind remesas

I would like to highlight that people I talked to mentioned that they have known this practice 'since forever'. It was instilled in their home and has been there for generations. Among the participants were people from the city with recreational farms where they had small crops for personal consumption; others with small or medium farms with a single product for sale but with other non-commercial products planted as well; workers on large agro-industrial farms whose production is destined for direct sale to certain clients and who have a high level of product standardization; family farms whose production is mainly destined to share remesa among family members, friends and relatives, and to conserve native species from the region. Despite the use of soil, these lands produce remesa to be shared.

How does remesa work in Manizales? Depending on the origin of food, whether it is from an agro-industrial farm with workers, a personal lot, a recreational farm, these actions may vary. Regardless, remesa maintains its character as a gift that binds or unites and gathers people around it through reciprocity practices (Mauss, 1990). It is important to note that in many cases harvesting food is done by hired workers, who often come from other regions. It is also common for small or medium farms to hire a single worker, informally known as "agregado", who oversees harvesting and farm general maintenance. It is also common for this worker to live on the farm, in a house adjacent to the main house, with his family. In these cases, workers' wives are usually in charge of taking care of the main house or helping their husbands with some of the work on the land.

In the case of some coffee or agro-industrial farms that host many workers, either permanently or during the harvests, it is common for women to cook to feed them with products harvested from the farm and others obtained from the market. They also earn their income from small personal businesses where they sell products to the workers, as was Diana's (2023) case:

My children's father looked for farms [to work as a harvester] and we fed the workers [...] I cooked for them. The largest group I had was 120 [workers]. When I started, I began with 80 and I didn't know how to cook for so many people. (...) What we, the women who fed them, made a living from is the 'estafariato'<sup>5</sup>. So, we sold cigarettes, snacks, soda, milk, or whatever I made, like rice pudding, whatever I prepared at home.

This shows how in some cases the products that will later be destined for remesa are obtained through the work of people who are not the owners of the land or what it produces, as well as through care work provided mainly by women, in many cases, workers' wives. Also, a differentiation in gender roles can be seen, as women focus on care and household work, and on

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<sup>5</sup> Small informal business selling retail products.

their personal businesses, while men work the land and receive a salary. This corresponds to the notion of care as a fundamental factor in the reproduction of work, which falls mainly on women's shoulders (Bauhardt and Harcourt, 2019, p. 4).

However, as I was told in interviews, both farm owners and workers often receive remesa. To illustrate this, I will talk about Mario Zuluaga's farm, located in Neira, half an hour from Manizales. There, the business is focused on raising chickens. Nevertheless, there is also a wide variety of products planted, such as musaceae, chili peppers, guavas, cherry tomatoes, passion fruit, yucca, among others, which are not sold, but only used for remesa that Mario distributes to his family and friends. William, who has been working with Mario for 16 years, lives alone in the house next to the main house and takes care of both chickens and crops. Talking to Mario, he told me that William is allowed to bring whatever food he wants to his mother's house, as he helped produce it.

He carries very little. I tell him to carry, and he doesn't like (...) He hardly carries at all. And he is authorized, of course, he helped to produce. How can one be a bad person like that? But no (Zuluaga, 2023).

From his side, William told me that he usually takes a little yucca, but he is not interested in taking other products, although he could do it. When I asked him if he received other remesas, he explained that other people he knows who produce in small spaces or home gardens shared with him because, as he says, "we are very generous people" (Morales, 2023). This example shows two ways in which remesas are received: in the first, William gets it from Mario, but there is a power relationship in which obtaining remesa is crossed by a boss-worker relationship; in the second, William obtains remesa from his relatives who produce in their own spaces and whose relationships may be more horizontal. Here we can see how solidarity, although well-intentioned, as in Mario's case, can be linked to power relations that prevent it from being a completely disinterested gift, since the boss-worker relationship complicates possible reciprocity. However, this does not mean that the world of remesa in its entirety is traversed by this type of relationship, since, as William describes, remesa also exists outside the relationship with the employer, among the workers' networks of family members and relatives.

The experience of remesa distribution consists of a work that may vary depending on the origin of the products and the interests of both distributor and recipient. After products have been cultivated, in the case of working farms, what will be sold is separated from what will be distributed in remesas. In the case of farms for self-consumption, recreation, etc., remesa is prepared and distributed among those who receive a fixed delivery. It is common that even after having separated what is for sale, internal household consumption and destined for remesa, there is still enough to share with family, friends and relatives who come to visit. I will talk about this later. The process of separating the food implies knowing the interests of recipients. In some cases, remesas are larger because recipients can share with more people. These new people may or may not know the person who delivered the original remesa. It can then be seen how new connections are created between people, adding to the rhizomatic structure of remesa.

In the case of Cenelia, who works as manicurist, she and her retired husband bought a small lot at Kilómetro 41, 45 minutes from Manizales. There they built a resting house and planted some products that they learned to cultivate with their neighbours' help, mainly peasants, with whom they created bonds of neighbourliness and closeness. Cenelia (2023) explains their process of distributing remesa in the following way:

I used to come with that loaded car delivering everywhere. I would bring at least 8 packages with everything [...] who did I bring? Mainly to my daughter-in-law and my son. And then to my sisters. Three sisters and a cousin. And if I had little things in the car "I'm going to go to Doña Martha's" I would bring her lemons. And to Doña Claudia too. I knew she loved tangerine lemons. And Omara. "I'm going to bring them lemons, I'm going to give this avocado to Doña Claudia" and so on. [...] As soon as I left the farm, I would leave with everything ready to deliver it at once.

As I have mentioned up to this point, remesa is linked to reciprocity processes that can be horizontal or unequal, depending on the type of relationship between the giver and the receiver. Likewise, I have briefly discussed the importance of care in carrying out this practice. Both topics will be discussed in more detail in the following sections where I will also identify the fundamental places for remesa. Remesa arrives at people's homes either because someone brings it there or because they themselves receive it directly, either at the farm that produces it or at the home of someone who received it previously. In both cases, homes are a central space for the reproduction of this practice. What is interesting at this point is the centrality of the visits and conversations that are woven into the meetings that remesa promotes.

### **3.1.1 Coming to visit**

It is common that when somebody comes to the house of someone who distributes remesa, either because they have a farm or because they receive it from someone else, they usually leave with remesa, even if it is small. This act can be understood as a gift that goes beyond the simple kind gesture of giving food. What is given can be understood as an act of bringing people together. Those who receive usually feel grateful for the products, while those who give express in this way a desire for the well-being and care of those receiving. Here we can see how caring for others is intertwined with the reciprocity that weaves the social relationships on which remesa is built as a common (Gutiérrez, 2020).

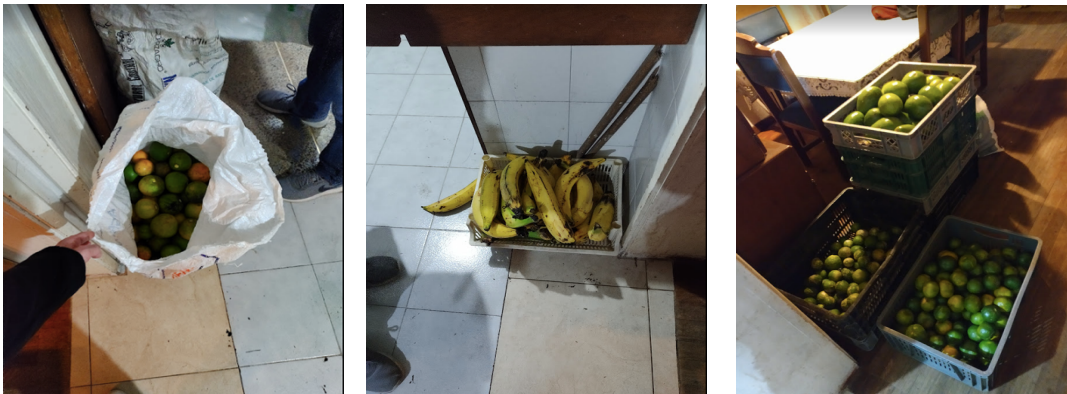
Visits to homes are fundamental in the construction of social ties because it is there and then when reciprocity that builds them happens (Mauss, 1990). Thus, whoever receives remesa when visiting a home is bound in that obligatory nature of receiving and giving back that is inherent to the construction of the commons. In this context, those who provide remesa do so because they have the possibility of doing it, which puts them in a privileged position with respect to those who do not have access to land or production surpluses. This practice could be understood both

as an act of solidarity where a privileged position allows food redistribution in the region, as well as a space of unequal power relations. This is part of the tensions and plurality of remesa world.

The case of my father's family allows us to understand this situation more clearly. My father obtains a large part of remesa he shares from the production surpluses of the agro-industrial farm where he works as an administrator. These surpluses are part of the 'segundas', which are the products that cannot be sold because they do not meet the standards stipulated by the market. He takes large amounts of food to his brothers' and siblings-in-law's homes, and whoever arrives at those houses can get remesa.

I bring remesa and leave at Luis Guillermo's place. For Luis Guillermo and Felipe. And they will see who they distribute to [...] From there, I bring to Irene, their sister, so that she is the one who distributes it to the others. She distributes to her sons, to Patricia, to Oscar, to Silvia, a niece of ours, to Carmen, to Germán and to some cousins, to two cousins, and to the brothers-in-law. To the Castañano's, the Castañano's thank me (González, Ramírez and Ramírez, 2023).

Remesa to pick up from Luis Guillermo, my uncle (photo of my authorship):



Remesa to pick up from Irene, my father's sister-in-law (photo of my authorship):



People come to my uncles' and my father's siblings-in-law's houses to pick up remesa, but at the same time they use the space to ask about family members, friends, cook and share. One could speak here of a "good debt", in which those who are tied, reproduce their relationship by maintaining it through care practices (Bauhardt and Harcourt, 2019, p. 4). How is it repaid? In many cases simply with the gesture of continuing to visit. It is also frequent that, when coming to visit, people bring other types of food or gifts, something to share immediately, such as a cake or something prepared.

Chili grown in a home garden by Oscar, my father's brother-in-law (photo of my authorship):



Oscar, my father's brother-in-law, grows chili peppers in a small garden at his house. When my father brings remesa that others will pick there later, Oscar shares his chili peppers with him. This reciprocity is accompanied by the joy of sharing, conversation, mutual care in knowing more about each other. Now, another way of sharing remesa is when the giver brings it directly to the people who receive it, as I will explain below.

### 3.1.2 Receiving at home

Much of remesa that moves through Manizales and its surrounding areas is taken directly by the person giving it to the homes of those who receive it. This implies a lot of additional work such as separating the products to be taken, loading the car, going to the person's house, unloading the car there. These actions promote the encounter between the person who carries and those who receive it. Upon arrival at the homes, it is common to have a conversation, invite the person bringing remesa to eat or have a drink, and sit down. These moments are used to strengthen the bonds between these people. I will narrate the experience of the Ceballos family. Jorge Mario, who has been my friend for a long time, bought 20% of the family farm that he shares with three uncles and a cousin. Coffee is grown there for sale, but there is a great variety of crops that are used only for remesa. Also, more than half of the farm is destined to recovering native forests.

Harvesting of coffee and other products is done by Omar de Jesús, the worker who is hired for this purpose. Jorge Mario explained that before he bought part of the farm, Omar did not have a labor contract or social benefits. Jorge Mario formalized his contract. He explains that, despite the legal consequences for a farm owner to have a worker without an official contract, it is common

for this to happen. It can be deduced from this that the informality of many of the workers who oversee collecting the products that will be distributed in remesa can lead to situations in which their rights are violated in case of a work-related accident, or because they do not have clarity about the functions they must perform, among others.

Now, after Omar has collected remesa, Guillermo, Jorge's father, picks it up, separates it according to the needs of each person he is going to share it with and takes it to their homes. Guillermo often takes photos of the delivery of remesa to share through his family's WhatsApp group.

It is rare that more remesa arrives than we need. Because Guillermo sends us a remesa every 8, every 15 days. But he calculates. For Juan Pablo's, he leaves one package; for my aunt's, he leaves three packages. If there are three people, he calculates how much those three people eat in 8 days. It also depends on the person who arrives with remesa (Castañeda *et al.*, 2023).

Photo taken by Guillermo Ceballos (posted with Guillermo's permission):



These practices of separating remesa, keeping in mind the needs of each person to whom it is to be taken, taking it himself to each of the houses, the conversations he has with the people with whom remesa is shared can be understood as care work from what has been proposed by political-economic feminism, since it allows the reproduction of labor force and at the same time takes care of relatives (Bauhardt and Harcourt, 2019, p. 5), but it differs in that in this case it is not mainly women who exercise it, but also includes men, and that it is linked to the redistribution of food produced by the family farm. Despite Guillermo not owning the farm, he grew up there as it previously belonged to his father. Although there is no bond of ownership in the capitalist sense, there is a desire to continue the relationship with that territory, as well as to continue the solidarity implicit in sharing remesa.

My father's story is similar. He takes all the products he obtains (the segundas) in the form of remesa from his workplace in an agro-industrial farm to his farm, a small lot located in the village of El Rosario, where he lives with his wife Martha, and his siblings-in-law Elsa, Jose, and

Teresa. There they have a warehouse where they store all the products of remesa. They also grow a great variety of products in small quantities there. My father oversees organizing the baskets and sacks with remesa that he will distribute among his family and his wife's family. He loads the car and goes to Manizales to distribute them. Additionally, if he knows he is going to see someone else, he organizes additional remesas to give to that person. He also shares with Martha's co-workers, who work in an educational foundation in the municipality of Chinchiná. There, my dad leaves tangerines for the students and remesa for the maintenance people. My dad also sends remesa by post to our house in Bogotá. My mom oversees distributing it to my aunts and the building workers where we live.

My father's car loaded with remesa (photo of my authorship):



As can be seen, this construction of the common distances itself from the postulates of the modern/colonial matrix that seeks the formation of individuals, as well as the commodification of everything, in this case, food and what is produced by the land. Taking remesa to someone else's house, under the capitalist gaze, means financial losses because 1. Work, time, and resources were invested in its production; 2. They are products that, being given as gifts, are not sold; 3. Separating, organizing, and transporting again imply investing work, time and resources in gasoline or transportation; 4. Time invested in the leisure and recreational spaces involved in remesa delivery could be used to work. Remesa thus implies the opposite of these capitalist premises of the modern/colonial matrix. It promotes the encounter in people's homes, a space that tends to be reserved only to welcome a few people.

I have already mentioned how remesa is shared, either because people pick it up at the home of the person who has remesa, or because that person organizes it and takes it to their house. In both situations, life is built around 'lo común' (Gutiérrez, 2020). Remesa turns out to be, in addition to a means of supplying food, a moment of meeting, an excuse for sharing, being together, and mutual care. Additionally, I showed the connections that the world of remesa can have with



other worlds, such as the agro-industrial world in which land is understood only as an exploitable good. These connections are characteristic of its rhizomatic structure, and of the interactions between worlds of which Lugones speaks (2022). I will now explain the role of people who inhabit the world of remesa.

### 3.1.3 Family, friends, recipients

When talking to people, they mentioned several times the importance of family in shaping and maintaining this practice. Not only family as the one with which close ties are created, but also as a fundamental part of the history and composition of the region. Manizales and its surroundings were founded in the mid-nineteenth century in a process of colonization by landless peasants who came down from southern Antioquia. This, added to the difficulties they faced due to the region's mountainous territories, led to large families being ideal for overcoming the challenges of working the land through communal care. Thus, those who were born in these lands began to create ties and work it from an early age. When the time came to move to the city or to their own house, outside the family home, remesa became the gift that was sent to this person from the family home where food was grown. My father uses the example of Martha's family to talk about the extended family and its role in working the land.

One counts, there are 100, 102. 102 just from their parents. And one looks back and families were huge. One easily had 9, 18, 20 uncles. So that is extra 20 families. You had more than 100 cousins [...] that unskilled labor in the past was the children of the 20 uncles and uncles and sons and everybody else (2023).

Some people I spoke with told me that their remesa is mainly destined for family. But having received this education where part of caring for family members is to guarantee their food in spaces far from the land, they extended the practice to friends and other acquaintances. That is a central point as to the ways in which the rhizome that makes up remesa world builds new connections. Some of these connections will be ephemeral, others will last. This depends on the type of ties and closeness between remesa giver and recipient. For example, if a friend or relative comes to visit from another city and takes remesa, that connection will be ephemeral, as they will only have access to remesa the number of times they go to Manizales or the surrounding area.

Carolina also takes it to Bogotá. When they come, she takes it to Bogotá [...] everyone who comes here leaves with remesa. Mrs. Sierra. Yesterday it was delivered once to Germán, Germán said "to take to my mother who loves these tangerines. Every time I bring her remesa, I bring the tangerines". So, it expands, it is multiplying (2023).

Carolina, Mrs. Sierra and Germán are not part of those who get remesa constantly. Moreover, for people with whom interaction is more frequent to be among those to whom remesa is constantly

provided. It should be considered that this practice may vary in terms of its temporality, since as it is a gift there is no established or regulated periodicity. Despite this, it is common that in those families where remesa is a stronger practice, deliveries are made once a week, every 15 days or monthly, like the ones my father, Mario Zuluaga or Guillermo Ceballos share with their families.

I have already talked about the importance of farm workers in harvesting the products that go both for sale and for remesa to the families that own the land. However, it is worth mentioning that family members also play a fundamental role in this process. Even though they do not live on the land where the products are grown, in many cases contribute to their collection. This happens mainly on small and medium-sized family farms, or recreational farms, where food production for the market is not the purpose. From there they obtain remesa and offer their time to harvest. It is important to emphasize that these actions are not an exchange of labor for remesa. There is more of a desire to collaborate, a taste for harvesting. In the end, remesa is shared even among those who did not harvest.

In this act of harvesting together there is an exchange of knowledge that expands among those who participate. Thus, people learn about cares of the plant, the right time to harvest, among others, while at the same time providing a meeting space for those who participate in the activity. In addition to this, it is interesting to see the other practices that take place simultaneously, such as cooking, sharing beers, informal conversations, collective care of children, among others. Likewise, friends or acquaintances are also invited to these collective spaces, although their involvement tends to be more peripheral. However, they are included in the additional activities and are given remesa.

A case that allows to illustrate this is Martha's family. The Ramirez are a large family, with 12 siblings with their descendants. Currently, they estimate that there are approximately 100 members, only counting those who descend from the siblings. There are always visitors in the house, either family members or friends. Weekends tend to be especially busy since that is when more family members can meet there. It is common for several of them to gather the products that are already ready, while others enjoy leisure time. When I go there, I spend time at my father's side while he plants, harvests, organizes, distributes, cooks, repairs, and so on. I help him and learn. During my stay for the field work, we dedicated our time to grow a small production of coffee. My father taught me how to select the beans and the process of pulping, washing, drying, roasting, grinding, packing, and distributing. This coffee is not yet part of remesa because its barely enough for home consumption, but everyone who goes to the house tastes the coffee that we produce there.

Photo of the coffee of my father's farm and his family (photo of my authorship):



Up to this point I have talked about places and moments where the social relations that make up remesa as a common are constructed, those places of encounter, of reproduction of life and care are those that construct 'lo común' (Gutiérrez, 2020) in everyday life. I have also talked about those who produce it, those who share it and those who receive it, and the additional work that this implies. Now I will talk about remesa linked to social assistance as another way in which the rhizome that constitutes this world expands.

### **3.2. Remesa, Charity, and Social Assistance**

In addition to the delivery of remesas to family friends and acquaintances, conversations with the people who contributed to this research revealed that part of the history of remesa in the region has been linked to social assistance. Several of those interviewed recall that years ago there were groups of people who would gather on weekends at the city entrances to ask those who came from the countryside, from their farms, to leave remesa to be distributed among institutions such as orphanages, retirement homes, hospitals, homes assisted by nuns, among others. Likewise, there are anecdotes of those who came up from the farms with cars loaded with remesa and they themselves were the ones who took it to these places of social assistance. My father even told me that in his school, which was run by Jesuits, they placed some boxes for the students to share remesa that arrived at their homes, and the Jesuits in turn took it to people who needed it. My father recalls:

I remember a very big mango harvest in 77. I remember it well because it was the year of the coffee bonanza, and we had a brand-new car. Every day my father would bring up boxes and boxes of mangoes from the farm in his new car. And then he would go [and distribute] to the hospital, to the shelter, to the orphanage, to the Red Cross, to the nuns of Betania. And there came a time when they would say 'the man with the orange truck? please tell him no more, we have nowhere to put more mangos. No more mangos, no. Please, don't bring any more, we have no way to receive this anymore' (González, Ramírez and Ramírez, 2023).

This anecdote, moreover, contradicts the discourse of food scarcity, which I will discuss later, since, as can be seen, there is abundant food production in the region. Additionally, I was also told that during the pandemic, remesa distributions, although more limited due to the restrictions, were decisive for feeding people who did not have resources or the possibility of obtaining food because of the situation they were living through. By then, several private and public institutions and farmers organized themselves to collect food at a specific point and from there redistribute it to those in need. Likewise, remesas were distributed from homes to those who solicited from the street. It became a common practice to ask for economic or food assistance by singing. I was told several times that those who sang in the street were given remesa during the period of the pandemic. My father explains that moment as follows:

It was during the pandemic that people's solidarity was most evident. Because at that time people took out remesa. But let's say we at the farm sent workers to pick up food to fill a truck and send it through the municipality's manager, who was the first lady, the mayor's wife. There [in the Chinchiná mayor's office] they had some places where you sent it and they oversaw distributing it to the community (González, Ramírez and Ramírez, 2023).

Here it is important to see, once again, the relevance of the farm workers to remesa. It was the farm owners who requested that part of the production be destined to remesa for those who did not have access to good meals, but it was the workers who, in the middle of the pandemic, oversaw collecting the products and transporting them to the municipality's mayor's office. Once remesa arrived at people's homes, it was also distributed to those who requested it, as was the case of those who went out into the streets to sing in exchange for food. As can be seen, remesa turns out to be a solidarity practice based on the desire to share and dependent on the work of those who collect the food. However, remesa has not only impacted human beings, but also includes in its rhizomatic structure the more-than-humans, as I will present in the next chapter.

### **3.3 Conclusions**

Throughout this chapter I focused on describing the various ways in which the world of remesa creates connections, considering the social relations that constitute this practice as a common. Likewise, I exposed the spaces and moments of the everydayness of this practice that led to the construction of life around 'lo común', putting in tension the modern/colonial guidelines that foster the construction of a selfish individual who thinks in cost-benefit permanently. In the face of this, we see the construction of community through care and reciprocity. Likewise, it is important to highlight that these practices of care in the world of remesa do not fall only on the shoulders of women, but that men also play a fundamental role.

Now, regarding the tensions observed, it can be seen how these social relations are not always horizontal but involve power relations mainly between the landowner and the worker, as well as between those who have access to the land from which remesa comes and those who do not. These power relations put reciprocity in tension, since those who do not have access to the land or do not have access to the products it provides cannot return in the same way to the person who provides remesa.

Similarly, it is evident that the origin of remesa is often linked to the work of landless peasants who live in their employer's house and cultivate the land. It is also important to note the gender differentiation that exists in these cases, where the workers' wives are also responsible for taking care of the house and in many cases for feeding not only their families, but also the other farm workers.

## 4. IMPLICATIONS, TENSIONS AND COMPLEXITIES OF THE WORLD OF REMESA

At the beginning of this research, I set out to investigate the possible tensions with respect to the capitalist understanding of land, as I proposed in the objectives. This will be the subject of this chapter, where the concepts of the anthropocentric construction of nature and care will be central. Also, I will expose how these come into tension with the modern/colonial postulates that see land as a commodity to be exploited for economic purposes. This chapter, as well as the previous one, will be traversed by an understanding of remesa as a common that allows for the construction of life around 'lo común'.

I will begin by providing a historical context on the impact of coffee on remesa and how they have been transformed. I will then explain how remesa contradicts the scarcity discourse, linked to an economic understanding of the land and what it produces. Then, I will discuss the importance that remesa has had in relation to the redistribution of food in Manizales and its surroundings. I will go on to expose the existence of an enjoyment linked to the land and the implications this has in terms of the understanding of the territory beyond capitalist logics. Subsequently, I will describe the existing solidarities with the more-than-humans. I will end with some conclusions of this chapter that will gather the main points as well as the tensions encountered during my fieldwork.

### 4.1 The Impact of Coffee

Through the conversations I was able to identify three relevant moments in the history of the region with respect to coffee and its impact in remesa. The first moment is the plantation of the coffee forest, with a predominance of Arabica coffee grown under the shade of other trees, planted together with many other plants. This guaranteed a wide variety of species, not only of plants but also of animals:

Initially they were Arabica trees, which were trees like a post, you could stand under a tree, and they looked like ranches. You had to put a ladder to get the coffee down [...] Almost everything was [planted] under shade, guamos, Carboneros, plantain (González, 2023).

The second moment is the beginning of coffee monocultures that gained strength in the 1970's. During this decade there was a coffee bonanza that led to more and more coffee plantation, which caused the destruction of other species. At the end of this decade and the beginning of the 80's, the coffee berry borer arrived, a fungus that destroyed the Arabica varieties.

After 76 came the coffee bonanza, the farms, the people were economically very well off. Then they began to renew the coffee plantations with Caturro. It was a low-growing variety, very productive [...] And the rust arrived in 83. Then until 83 the people went 'by

stroller<sup>6</sup> with the Caturro. In 1983 the rust arrived, and it was necessary to renew the coffee plantations again, because it is a very aggressive fungus that affects the stick, so production was lost. So, it was necessary to begin to change. CeniCafé withdrew the Colombia variety, so it was necessary to change all the coffee plantations back to the Colombia variety (González, 2023).

My father explained that after the Colombia variety, improved varieties have been implemented that adapt to the climatic conditions of each region and are increasingly resistant to rust. These varieties, which are quite productive, must be planted in full sun, which meant the establishment of coffee monoculture in the region, since the plants that used to grow next to the coffee had to be pulled down. At the beginning of the 1990s the coffee berry borer, another pest, arrived. This led many to becoming discouraged and beginning to diversify their crops again, which marks the third relevant moment. Additionally, Elsa, who has worked in coffee-related issues, explains that the focus now is to make it more technical and apply good practices so that coffee can be productive without having to be extensive. These good practices of which Elsa speaks are related to the way coffee is planted, the varieties used, the organization of the crops, the way in which they are renewed, among others. Having more productive coffee in certain zones allows other to be used for the cultivation of other crops for the market.

These three moments influenced the shared remesa. As they explained to me, even though the farms privileged coffee, there was always a space to plant products for home consumption and sharing. This means that, even though the region was destined to coffee monoculture for a time, remesa was not in danger, and in turn helped to maintain the diversity of crops and knowledges linked to these in the region, even if they had diminished. My father explains it this way:

My dad used to say that the farm is a coffee farm and what gives is coffee, and the farm lives off coffee. The rest of the stuff is to share. And he did not sell anything else. Plantains, oranges, lemons, bananas, fruits, mangoes, whatever. And he never, never looked for a market for that. Always the commerce, the support of the farm was based on coffee. They also made vegetable gardens to give away [...] I remember the vegetable gardens that my father had, they were not big vegetable gardens, it was a piece like this [a small piece of land], but he had five rows full of chard, broccoli, zucchini, cucumber. In the house we ate only fresh things, we didn't have to buy anything. Now, that was very expensive. That doesn't matter to you, [the important thing] was that you were eating from there [...] [If our farm were to produce surpluses] I would think first on the family. And if there is a surplus, sell it so that it leaves [profits] at least for fertilizers (González, 2023)

It can be seen then how remesa helped mitigate what could have been an ecocide, which in part it was, and an epistemicide due to the possible loss of knowledge about the cultivation of diverse varieties of foodstuffs. We can also see how the world of remesa is constantly in contact with capitalist logics, but at the same time with other ways of understanding territory and food

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<sup>6</sup> Very well

outside these logics, where crops for sharing and home consumption have played a central role. This is part of its plurality and the multiple connections that its rhizomatic structure allows.

In this section I focused on showing how coffee monoculture could have been a threat to remesa, but instead served to confront a possible ecocide and epistemicide linked to monoculture. Likewise, it can be seen how maintaining crops for self-consumption and sharing do not correspond to a capitalist notion of land but are closer to the construction of life around 'lo común' (Gutiérrez, 2020). In the following section I will show how remesa, moreover, are evidence against the discourse of scarcity typical of a capitalist economy.

## 4.2 Remesa: against scarcity

We are bombarded daily by news related to hunger worldwide. Even in Colombia, the risks of malnutrition, as well as the impossibility of consuming three meals a day are permanent in a significant portion of the population. However, talking to those who collaborated for this document, the problem is not directly linked to food production, but to the food distribution among the population, as well as to the waste linked to market standards at the time of receiving food for sale. "I have heard that up to 40% of the food that is produced, rots. Of everything we grow, 40% is lost." (Castañeda *et al.*, 2023). Several of the interviewees told me that to sell what is produced in the countryside near Manizales to large supermarkets in the region, it is important to fulfill standards not only of quality, but also of aesthetics. This means that if a peel has stains, the product does not meet the standard size or its color and shape do not correspond to what is expected, the product will most likely be discarded even though it is good and provides the same nutrients as one that does meet market standards.

As Esteva (2014, p. i149) explains, economic theories and economists whose matrix of thought is deeply linked to the 19<sup>th</sup> century European understanding of the market, marked by the values of progress, are based on the position, which became axiomatic, that there is a 'law of scarcity' which states that resources are limited and, therefore, there is a need for them to be regulated by the market. Esteva (2014, p. i155) also argues that the economic society in which we find ourselves, embedded in these values, constantly destroys the commons, the ways of living in community, turning them into resources, commodifying them and giving them an economic value. Against this backdrop, the existence of remesa, of the possibility of redistributing food that has lost its economic value (or never had any), refutes this law of scarcity.

Regarding waste, I was told that on large agro-industrial farms, even after separating what can be sold and allocating what does not meet the standards for distribution among the workers, a significant portion is lost. In the case of small properties where production is mainly destined for home consumption, this does not happen as often, since it is known that these products are of good quality even though they do not meet the standards. These products are also distributed in remesa, which allows reassurance among those who receive them about their good quality, despite their appearance.

Thus, it is interesting to see how remesa is a way to resist an aesthetic and economic construction of food, a sanitized vision in which all fruits and vegetables are the same size and the same color, and their value is linked to market dynamics. In the face of this, the real diversity of

what the countryside offers is imposed. Fruits of different sizes and colors, with spots on their peels, covered with soil, exposing their interaction with other beings that inhabit the territory. The market has been trying to convince us that it is normal and natural that all fruits and vegetables look the same, and that the only way to obtain them is through supermarkets. Given this, it is practices such as remesa that allow us to preserve a knowledge of the region's food that goes beyond these notions of standardization, of imposed homogenization, of commodification. Going a little deeper, we can see how the modern/colonial matrix starts from a desire for homogenization and standardization that we can see reflected in this type of situation. Homogenization is resisted with diversity and with the region's own knowledge. In the following section I will focus on the possibilities that remesa offers in terms of food redistribution in and around Manizales.

### **4.3 Remesa as food redistribution in the region**

As already mentioned, remesa includes not only those foods that meet the standards established by the market, but also part of those that do not. This means that an important part of what is produced does not go to waste. As remesa is a way of sharing food among family, friends, and acquaintances, we are talking about a redistribution of what is not sold, and of that which even from the beginning did not have an economic value since it was not planted for sale, but to share. This is essential to cover part of the food for those who receive it. As they explained to me in the conversations, this redistribution covers an important percentage of the weekly food intake. It is interesting to see how, when redistributed several times, remesa expands among those who are part of the rhizome.

It is a savings that one has in the family basket, and it is very large. I think you can save 30% of the market cost. That is worth a lot of money [to buy the products that come in remesa] (Ramírez, 2023).

Redistribution is fundamental from a social justice perspective to maintain food security for those households that receive remesa. Faced with the prospect of having to spend a lot of money on food, the gift of remesa provides relief from this concern. Even more so at times when inflation leads to an increase in the cost of products, as was the case during the pandemic and as we are currently experiencing. This practice also allows us to see how food does not have to be completely tied to the designs of the market. There is a governance of the people of the region that leads to a supply that goes against individualism and in which the territory surrounding Manizales plays a central role.

At this point, I would like to talk about access to remesa by farm workers. As I mentioned earlier, this access is traversed by unequal power relations. Whether workers can take remesa home depends on the authorization of the farm owners. Talking to some of them, I could perceive that there is a tension regarding the amount of remesa a worker can obtain, because if it is more than the owner authorizes, it is considered stealing. In the case of large agro-industrial farms, it is common for the 'segundas', which are usually a lot, to be distributed among the workers. However,



if a worker carries too much of a product from the latter, this can have negative consequences. As for family farms, agreements are usually reached with the workers. Jorge Mario explains to me that Omar and his family can consume whatever they want of what the farm produces if they do not sell it. It can be seen then how even in the world of remesa there are connections with capitalist logics that understand food as a product loaded with commercial value.

I have already spoken of remesa as evidence against the discourse of scarcity and of remesa as a possibility of food redistribution in this region. Now I will talk about the enjoyment linked to the land that I was told about during my stay in Manizales and how it brings with it other ways of understanding the land.

#### **4.4 The enjoyment connected to the land**

Among the people with whom I spoke, there is a deep affection for the countryside, even if they have spent most of their lives in the city. There is a desire to be able to have a space in the countryside to get away from the city, even temporarily. Such is the case of Cenelia and her husband who, as soon as they had the opportunity, bought a small lot in Kilómetro 41, built their house, and dedicated themselves to planting for their own consumption and to share with family and friends:

At first [the neighbors] helped him plant because he had no idea about land. We were totally city people. He had no idea. The first thing he planted was plantain and yucca. That grew very fast. But then because we were going so often, it was all for our own consumption. And what was left over, everyone took home. (2023)

This desire is also linked to the willingness to plant, even if only a little, for self-consumption and to share. Several of them find it beautiful to be able to eat what their land, their work and the work of their relatives have generated. Sergio, Jorge Mario's husband, told me about the beauty of seeing how a plant that one planted grew and one was able to feed from it. They also mentioned that, having the possibility of enjoying what they have produced on their land, they want to share it with others, to share the well-being and abundance they may have. When I asked my father what he liked the most about remesa he replied as follows:

That spirit of solidarity that exists around that, like all that... it's so gratifying when you get somewhere, someone you don't even know says... One day someone told me 'You don't know how many hungers you've calmed'. And I felt like... I felt good (González, Ramírez and Ramírez, 2023).

This enjoyment linked to the land is also related to a desire for independence and not having to constantly go to a supermarket or store to feed themselves and their families. In some cases, they spoke about their desire for food sovereignty, self-sufficiency, and the enjoyment of

what is produced with one's own work. This enjoyment, however, is subordinated to having income that is not normally linked to the land, for example, working in other areas, having other businesses, or being pensioners. For them sustaining a farm and the possibility of maintaining that sovereignty and independence generates high costs that, since they do not sell what they produce, requires a fixed income from other sources. It was even mentioned that this enjoyment linked to the land can be more costly in terms of maintenance than going to the supermarket and buying only what is going to be consumed.

Jorge Mario, from his side, emphasizes that, although it is much more expensive for him to maintain the farm than to buy from supermarkets, he finds it much more comforting to eat what is grown on his own land. He also mentioned to me his great passion for remesa, being able to share what he and Omar grow on his land with his family and friends. Although the farm is in the village of Guacas and he and his husband live in Bogota, they try to go there regularly to check the land and get away from the dynamics of the city. When they return to Bogotá, they leave loaded with remesa to share. Jorge told me that he preferred to go by bus to Bogotá, a journey that takes about 9 hours, to carry more remesa. However, when he goes by plane, he also carries.

Photo of remesa carried by plane to Bogotá by Jorge Mario, by Sergio García (published with their authorization):



My father, Martha, Elsa, Jose, and Teresa decided to buy their farm in El Rosario during the Covid-19 pandemic. They had already expressed their desire to buy a farm to enjoy the land once they were retired, but the pressure of the confinement to which they were subjected during the pandemic prompted them to move forward with the plan. Part of their dream is to achieve food security for the family, not only for themselves, but to share with others. My father expressed his frustration for not having achieved this yet, as he has not been able to dedicate himself full time to the farm:

I always dreamed that it would be more [food security] and I have not been able to, and I aspire, and I have already said it: I know that I have to wait until I can retire, that I can dedicate myself to this so that I can give myself the pleasure of not having to bring onions or tomatoes or anything else from there [the supermarket] (González, Ramírez and Ramírez, 2023).

Again, if we look at this through a modern/colonial and capitalist lens, it does not match what is expected because it does not generate profits and in many cases generates losses. Additionally, in these lands, whose purpose is self-consumption and remesa, there is a lot of community work with family, friends, and neighbors, so it also clashes with the notion of individualism, generating the spaces and practices that allow the construction of life around 'lo común' (Gutiérrez, 2020). Maintaining a farm would be very difficult for an individual, so it becomes a space for building ties with those who participate in community work. Small jobs such as picking oranges, or more elaborate ones such as helping with road maintenance, bring together those who are part of remesa world.

#### **4.5 Solidarity with more-than-humans**

In addition to including humans, remesa also generates impact on other species, such as plants and animals. As the small orchards have been maintained for home consumption and remesa, a diversity of plants that could have ceased to exist if the countryside of Manizales and its surroundings had turned completely to the monoculture of coffee. Despite the great success of coffee from this region of Colombia worldwide, people from the area are interested in continuing cultivating, even if to a lesser extent, other types of products. This type of products, in turn, allows for the coexistence of animals, plants, and humans in the region.

As I could see during my fieldwork, other animals such as birds, iguanas, opossums and guatines, among others, are also fed from the fields that are destined for self-consumption and for remesa. In my father's house, as well as in other farms, it is very common to find feeders and drinkers for animals, mainly for regional birds. On noticing that guatines have eaten part of the yucca crop, my father used to tell me that it was necessary to plant more yucca to share. Likewise, in some farms, such as Jorge Mario's, part of the land is set aside for planting and caring for the native forest and plants that were disappearing due to the monoculture coffee plantations, such as Chachafruto.

In the same way, fruits and vegetables that are shared in remesa, either because they are part of the agro-industrial farms' produce, or of what is produced in family farms, do not necessarily meet the aesthetic standards of the market, which implies that they can be in interaction with some insects without this implying that they should be discarded. This implies less use of pesticides in their production and maintenance. Here we can see how there are works of care and reciprocity with the more-than-human in the sense in which Harcourt (Bauhardt and Harcourt, 2019, p. 5; Gómez, Voss and Farrelly, 2023, p. 157) puts it, by advocating respect for the agency of the beings that inhabit the territory. Thus, we can see how there is a tension with respect to the

anthropocentric construction of nature in the human/nature dichotomy, which derives from the modern/colonial matrix.

Despite the above, it cannot be ignored that on farms it is still essential to control animals that are considered pests such as mice or some insects that can seriously affect plants, crops and even generate discomfort in the houses. Because of this, although there is some coexistence between animals, plants, and humans, we continue to control their environment from an anthropocentric stance in which our own benefit and wellbeing prevails. As that, we see that remesa is not in constant tension or in constant compliance of the modern/colonial matrix, but both.

In this section I showed how there is a care and reciprocity between humans and more-than-humans that clashes with the anthropocentric construction of nature, as well as with the capitalist construction of the territory and all that comprises it. Likewise, I showed that, despite the existence of this care and reciprocity, there is still a simultaneous management of nature that benefits the interests of humans over those of other beings. Thus, we see how there is a coexistence of modern/colonial logics with logics of care that put them in tension.

#### **4.6. Conclusions**

Throughout this chapter I focused on exposing the tensions I encountered during my fieldwork in relation to the understanding of territory from a capitalist perspective. I showed how, in addition to the dominant discourse of land as a commodity that can be exploited to obtain economic resources, there is a desire to generate a redistribution of what is produced, as well as to maintain food security not only personally, but also for family and relatives. Additionally, I showed how these other logics, which do not correspond to the capitalist notion of land, are linked to a care for the more-than-humans.

In terms of the tensions encountered, I could see how remesa puts in tension the discourse of scarcity that, as Esteva (2014) explains, is part of the current economic system, whose origin is linked to the modern/colonial matrix. Linked to this, I could see how remesa puts in tension the understanding of food only as marketable goods by generating a redistribution of food in Manizales and its surroundings that clashes with its understanding from capitalism. Likewise, I could see how the understanding of the territory as a space of interaction with the more-than-humans generates practices of care and reciprocity, as I have already mentioned. However, it cannot be ignored that these tensions occur while capitalist practices of exploitation of the land and subordination of the more-than-humans continue. There is a multiplicity of interconnected worlds in which people and other beings play different roles, depending on the context.

### **5. GENERAL CONCLUSIONS**

Throughout this document I wanted to answer the central question of how remesa is constructed. For this, I asked myself how I could research in a non-extractive way, aligning myself with the ethical principles of decoloniality. Thus, I focused on conducting a world-traveling, following the

postulates of Lugones (2022), which allowed me to get closer to those who inhabit the world of remesa through a loving eye, and transform myself through these interactions. Likewise, I followed Motta's (2016) approaches to storytelling from a decolonial perspective, in which the main search is for the voices that have been silenced to be heard, beyond the Western gaze with which they are usually viewed from traditional research.

Subsequently, I explored the tensions within this world of remesa in terms of the construction of individuals and the understanding of territory from a modern/colonial capitalist and individualistic perspective. These tensions, as well as a detailed description of the world of remesa, were presented in chapters 3 and 4, where I focused on the findings of my fieldwork. There I argue that remesa is constructed in a rhizomatic way, allowing connections with other worlds, ruptures, tensions, transitory connections, and contradictions. This characteristic is related to the plurality and the possibility of constant transformation of worlds, as explained by Lugones (2022). This means that even if the structure breaks down, this does not mean that the rhizome dies, because it can be rebuilt on another side, or even create new connections.

One of the main characteristics of remesa is its solidarity character. Likewise, this practice is constituted as a common that allows the reproduction of life around 'lo común' (Gutiérrez, 2020, p. 3). This common is produced and sustained thanks to the social relationships that are woven around it (Caffentzis and Federici, 2014, p. 101) which, although diverse, allow for the encounter and care among those who inhabit the world of remesa. These social relationships are maintained over time thanks to the reciprocity that exists between those who practice remesa (Mauss, 1990), which manifests itself in caring attitudes, conversations, material gifts, and food. However, this reciprocity is sometimes impregnated with unequal power relations that prevent it from occurring horizontally.

Although the world of remesa is strongly marked by solidarity among its inhabitants, as well as by notions of care both among humans and with the territory and the more-than-humans, there are also unequal power relations, mainly in relation to the people who work collecting the products that are shared through this practice. These relations are not only of class but also of gender, since among the families of the farm workers it is men who oversee working the land, while women dedicate themselves to the work of taking care of their house and, in many cases, the landowner's house. In the large coffee or agro-industrial farms, as mentioned above, women cook for the workers and in some cases get income from selling products such as cigarettes, sweets, or snacks inside the farms. These unequal relationships show how the reciprocity on which the social relations that construct remesa as a common can be traversed by capitalist logics that prevent workers and landowners from exercising it among peers. However, this does not mean that the rhizome of remesa world is entirely traversed by these unequal practices. Despite these, remesa also exists among workers, who obtain it from home gardens, their own land, their families, and relatives, and share it with their networks.

Now, what is the impact of remesa in this region and how does it confront the modern/colonial capitalist and individualist premises? I consider it relevant how this practice confronts the discourse of the 'law of scarcity', making it clear that more than a problem of food production, it is a problem about redistribution, since it is linked to market logics. Remesa is a common that, through the social relations that are woven around it, achieves redistribution of food outside the economic notions that stipulate that food is a commodity from which an economic

benefit must be obtained. This is strongly linked to the practice of growing other products, in addition to those that will be sold in the market. There is a coexistence of the understanding of land as a good that can be exploited to obtain money, and as that which provides food for the family and to share with friends and relatives, where food has no economic value at any time.

This practice also provides food security to the households with which it is shared. This happens thanks to the construction of life around 'lo común', commons such as remesa, community work, but also the paid work of those who collect on the farms, as well as the people, mainly women, who provide the care work necessary for the reproduction of life in the countryside. This food security occurs when food travels from one person to another, through those who join in the rhizome of remesa. Additionally, it is also linked to the enjoyment of the land, to the desire that exists among some inhabitants of this region to be able to have a territory to cultivate for self-sustainability and to share. This desire to cultivate to share shows how the existence of remesa confronts the modern/colonial matrix that seeks to capitalize land and food, and at the same time seeks the construction of individuals. The very existence of remesa evidences the search for the collective, life in community, it manifests itself as a resistance to the homogenization of thought. This, at the same time, coexists with the more traditional notion of development and progress linked to the exploitation of the land.

Consequently, it is important to see how sustaining crops for own consumption and to share through remesa has served to combat a possible ecocide, which in part did occur, linked to the coffee monocultures in this region. These orchards that are planted to feed themselves and their relatives maintain a diversity of products that could have disappeared if the entire territory had been turned to monoculture. Likewise, the knowledges associated with the planting, care, harvesting and distribution of these crops survived, maintaining a diversity of ways of understanding, and relating to the territory that could have disappeared with monocultures. I venture to propose that remesa, although affected by the capitalist vision of the land in this region, has not been in danger of disappearing, since there are logics associated with the construction of community life that have survived over time.

To conclude, I consider that this paper contributes by highlighting those other ways of thinking and existing, other knowledges and ways of relating to the more-than-humans that exist in Manizales and its surroundings, and that have been silenced by a dominant discourse linked to the developmentalist notions of capitalism. It can be seen how in this region there is a construction of life around 'lo común' that feeds on commons, such as the practice of remesa. Likewise, I consider important to continue deepening in topics associated with remesa, such as gender roles, other spaces in which it can exist, tensions between the owners of the land and those who work it, among others.

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## APPENDIX: Table with background data of the participants

In this table I show a brief background of the people with whom I spoke during my fieldwork, and who accompanied me in the construction of this document. Although I do not mention all of them in the text, their stories were decisive for the elaboration of the narrative.

Name	Date of the interview	Place of the interview	Occupation	Background
Cenelia Osorio	09-08-2023	Manizales	Manicurist	Cenelia and her husband bought a resting farm on Kilómetro 41, 45 minutes from Manizales as soon as he retired. They had never lived in the countryside. They learned to farm with their neighbors' help. Cenelia takes remesa of what the farm produces for her family and some clients.
Diana Parra	10-08-2023	Manizales	Cleaner	Diana was born and raised in Neira, a town half an hour from Manizales. She worked as a coffee picker. She also fed workers when her ex-husband was a coffee picker. To earn income she sold snacks, drinks and desserts prepared by her. She currently works as a cleaner in a building in Manizales.
Elsa Ramírez	29-08-2023	El Rosario	Agronomist. Retired	Elsa was born in Copel, Boyacá, but her family migrated to Manizales when she was a baby. She has 12 siblings. Her parents had businesses in the Manizales marketplace (La Galería) where, in addition to trading fresh food, they received sacks of remesa from their customers. Elsa has a PhD in Social Sciences, Childhood and Youth. She is an agronomist and worked for 30 years in the coordination of the Escuela Nueva educational model led by the National Federation of Coffee Growers in alliance with the State. She is currently retired and lives with two brothers and

				two brothers-in-law on a farm in the village of El Rosario where they have a food security and sovereignty project for her family and friends.
Gloria Salazar	10-08-2023	Manizales	Insurance advisor	Gloria was born in Chinchiná, a town 35 minutes from Manizales. Her family was from the countryside, but moved to Manizales when she was a child. There her parents opened a butchery and continued with the administration of their farm in Chinchiná, where they raised pigs, cows and grew coffee. Currently, she works as insurance advisor.
Idaly Ramírez	12-08-2023	Manizales	Merchant in the market square (La Galería)	Idaly and her family come from a town called Copel in the department of Boyacá. Since the family's arrival in Manizales, they have worked at the Galería. Idaly's store now sells not only food, but also animal feed, toiletries, and household items. Her store is a meeting place where some customers, in addition to going shopping, go to spend the day because they have managed to establish friendships that go beyond the economic aspect.
Jorge Eduardo González	29-08-2023	El Rosario	Agronomist. Agro-industrial farm manager.	Jorge Eduardo, my father, was born and raised in Manizales, but was always in contact with the countryside because his father had farms in Caldas and later in Antioquia. He studied agronomy and has worked in coffee related issues. He currently works as administrator of an agroindustrial farm in Chinchiná. He lives in the village of El Rosario with his wife Martha, two siblings-in-law and the wife of a brother-in-law. There they have a food sovereignty and food security project for their family.

Jorge Mario Ceballos	18-08-2023	Guacas	Lawyer	Jorge Mario was born in Manizales, lived his first years in the village of El Tablazo, 10 minutes from Manizales and later moved to Manizales. His family has always had a relationship with the countryside, and he currently owns 20% of one of the family farms, located in the Guacas area. From there they sell coffee, and the rest of the products are for sharing. Also, part of the farm is destined to native forest conservation and recovery of the Chachafruto, a species that was on the verge of disappearing in the region. He is a lawyer and currently lives in Bogotá with his husband Sergio García, but they regularly go to the farm.
José William Morales	14-08-2023	Neira	Farm worker	José William was born in Manizales but has worked in the countryside most of his life. For 16 years he has been working on Mario Zuluaga's farm, located in Neira, half an hour from Manizales, where he lives in the house next to the main house. He takes care of the chickens that are sold for fattening and cultivates the products that are distributed in remesa.
Juan Pablo Castañeda	18-08-2023	Guacas	Lawyer	Juan Pablo's contact with the countryside is linked to his friends whose families live there or come from there, and his love for nature, where he spends much of his free time. He is part of the world of remesa, as friends and family share with him what is grown on their farms. Juan Pablo is a lawyer but spends his time traveling through villages and towns on foot or by bicycle, and taking pictures.
Juan Pablo Vásquez	18-08-2023	Guacas	Musician and Teacher	Juan Pablo is a musician and lives in the village of Guacas with his wife. They both work as teachers

				in public schools in Manizales. They receive remesa from Jorge Mario's farm, his cousin, and from their neighbors in the village, with whom they sometimes barter.
Liliana Montoya	12-08-2023	Manizales	Worker in a wood processing plant	Liliana works in a sawmill in Villa María, a town near Manizales. Her husband is a muleteer and oversees moving the wood on his mules. Liliana goes every 8 to 15 days to the Galería in Manizales to buy feed for her husband's 14 mules, as well as groceries for the household. Liliana has also been a muleteer with her husband in the past. She has 4 children from a previous relationship, all of whom are of legal age. Liliana enjoys going to the Galería because there she meets her friends at Idaly Ramírez's store. In this store she not only buys groceries, but spends the day talking, cooking and even attending the cash register when Idaly is busy.
Mariela Valencia	10-08-2023	Manizales	Trader	Mariela is a rural woman who lived on a farm in Chinchiná with her husband. They moved to Manizales because they decided to open a butchery there. They kept their contact with the countryside as they raised pigs, cows and grew coffee on the farm.
Mario Zuluaga	14-08-2023	Neira	Chicken trader. Farmer.	Mario grew up on farms because his parents were farmers. He has always worked with farm products, but for about 30 years he has been selling fattening chickens. On his farm in Neira he has several sheds where the chickens arrive when they are just days old and are then sold for feed. He also has several crops there that are used only for remesa. José William works on

				Mario's farm with everything related to the chickens and crops.
Martha Ramírez	29-08-2023	El Rosario	Business Administrator	Martha is a business administrator and currently works in the financial area of the Manuel Mejía Foundation, which offers education on topics related to agriculture, and is directly linked to the National Federation of Coffee Growers. Martha's family, who is the sister of Elsa and Idaly, comes from Copel, Boyacá and have worked in La Galería since their arrival in Manizales. She currently lives with her husband (my father), her sister Elsa, her brother Jose and Jose's wife Teresa on a farm in the village of El Rosario where they have a food security and sovereignty project.
Mauricio Asmar	10-08-2023	Manizales	Insurance advisor	Mauricio was the son of a doctor and a housewife who had a farm and coffee plantation near Santagueda. There they also grew some produce to share. He managed the farm for a while.
Sergio García	18-08-2023	Guacas	Chemical Engineer	Sergio was born and raised in Bogotá. His contact with the countryside was minimal until he married Jorge Mario and started going to the farm in Guacas. There he became increasingly interested in remesa, food security and knowing the origin of what he consumes. He goes with some regularity from Bogotá to Guacas to spend time in the countryside together with Jorge Mario.