Traditional Ecological Knowledge in the Governance of the Colombian Amazon in a Post-Peace Accord Scenario

A Social Ecological Study with Cacua People

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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Sustainable Futures

by

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to

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CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

I, Paloma Vejarano Alvarez declare that this thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Institute for Sustainable Futures at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise reference or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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For peace in Colombia

"Let there be justice for all. Let there be peace for all. Let there be work, bread, water and salt for all. Let each know that for each the body, the mind and the soul have been freed to fulfill themselves."

-Nelson Mandela-

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CDA	*Corporación para el Desarrollo Sostenible del Norte y el Oriente Amazónico* (Corporation for the Sustainable Development of the Northern and Eastern Amazon)
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of wild fauna and flora
CONPES	*Concejo Nacional de Política Económica y Social* (National Council of Economic and Social Policy)
DANE	*Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadísticas*
ELN	*Ejercito De Liberación* Nacional (National Liberation Army)
ES	Ecosystem Services
FARC - EP	*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército Popular* (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia - Popular Army)
IAvH	*Instituto Alexander von Humboldt* (Alexander von Humboldt Institute)
IDEAM	*Instituto de Hidrología, Meteorología y Estudios Ambientales* (Institute of Hydrology, Meteorology and Environmental Studies)
IIAP	*Instituto de Investigaciones Ambientales del Pacífico* (Pacific Institute of Environmental Research)
IK	Indigenous Knowledge
IP	Indigenous Peoples
INVEMAR	*Instituto de Investigaciones Marinas y Costeras* (Institute of Marine and Coastal Research)
IP	Indigenous Peoples
IPBES	Intergovernmental Panel of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
IT	Indigenous Territory
ITD	Interdisciplinarity
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MEA	Millennium Ecosystem Assessment
PA	Peace Accord
PNGIBSE	*Política Nacional de Biodiversidad y Sus Servicios Ecosistémicos* (National Policy of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services)
SES	Socio-Ecological Systems
SIATAC	*Sistema de Información Ambiental Territorial de la Amazonia Colombiana*
SIL	Summer Institute of Linguistics
SINA	*Sistema Nacional Ambiental* (National Environmental System)
SINCHI	*Instituto Amazónico de Investigaciones Científicas*
TEK	Traditional Ecological Knowledge
UNDP	United Nations Development Program

ABSTRACT

The Colombian Amazon, recognized for its great biological and cultural diversity, has historically faced major pressures from human activities, resulting in biodiversity losses and cultural changes of its Indigenous Peoples.

After over 50 years of armed conflict, the 2016 Peace Accord between the Colombian government, and the FARC-EP opened a window for designing and implementing inclusive models of governance in the country. The Accord also heightened the significance of a range of dynamic, interacting elements that could produce a different picture than previously envisioned, especially for Indigenous Peoples in the Amazon region. In the frame of sustainability and conservation, traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) – that is, the system of beliefs and practices indigenous people hold about their relationships with their surroundings – has received the attention of scholars over recent decades. However, TEK's potential contribution to the governance of post-conflict areas such as the Colombian Amazon remains less explored. This research aims to understand new roles of TEK in the provision of ecosystem services (ES) and its significance for the Indigenous Peoples in the Colombian Amazon in navigating shifts of social-ecological systems in a post-conflict scenario,

Drawing from social-ecological systems theory and using a qualitative approach and a case study with the Cacua people, I investigated 1) the implications of the peace accord for the region, its Indigenous Peoples, and their knowledge, 2) the potential contribution of TEK to the regional governance of the Colombian Amazon in a post-peace accord scenario, and 3) possible transformations in the current governance system needed to safeguard TEK and the provision of ecosystem services.

In this research I found that TEK has a distinctive and powerful cross-scale role in the governance and governability of the socio ecological system it is part of, from supporting local subsistence to a tool in international negotiations around climate change and biodiversity loss. However, prevailing attitudes towards TEK provide evidence of the embedded cultural disdain Indigenous Peoples and their knowledge continue to face. This disdain restrains their agency and access to national

development, despite international initiatives such as IPBES[1], which promotes and supports the contribution of indigenous peoples and their knowledge to the integral management of national territories and their biodiversity. Such initiatives are a starting point towards the inclusion and agency of IPs in decision and policy making, and influence national governments like Colombia, in the design of its own biodiversity management policy and co-production of knowledge.

For Colombia to navigate a just transition towards sustainable, long-lasting peace, multi-diverse knowledge systems and contexts need to be explicitly considered by the state and mainstreamed into institutional practices, ensuring a desirable future for indigenous people and their globally significant territory.

[1] IPBES: Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services