

**Title:** Invisible power and visible everyday resistance in the violent Colombian Pacific

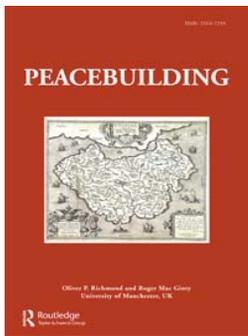
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# Invisible power and visible everyday resistance in the violent Colombian Pacific

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## ABSTRACT

This article presents an action research process which opened up dialogues about power, citizenship and agency among social activists and peacebuilding groups in the violent context of urban Buenaventura, Colombia. Adopting a situated, micro-level, engaged action research approach, the process reached beyond what western power theory calls ‘visible’ and ‘hidden’ power, to uncover rich accounts of how long-standing everyday violence, of direct, structural and symbolic kinds, shapes meanings and defines what is acceptable and possible. Insights on the myriad invisible ways in which violence inhibits, constrains or shapes perceptions and exercise of citizen agency – in short, violence-as-invisible-power – were matched by insights on the myriad ways in which social activists in the city respond to it. Such insights, brought to light by the locally embedded action research approach which specifically sought out local people’s perspectives and experience, reveal how violence-as-invisible-power re-shapes people’s subjectivity in ways that enable them collectively and individually to resist violence and build peace.

## ARTICLE HISTORY

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## 1. Introduction

The agency of ordinary citizens is a vital factor in driving and sustaining positive, peaceful change in violent settings. Yet the recent spread of uncritical assumptions about the power of citizen agency, promoted especially through the development aid discourse of ‘citizen engagement’, does a disservice to attempts to promote peaceful, constructive citizen agency in complex violent contexts, where facile assumptions do not hold.

This article is about a rooted, deeply contextual approach to exploring the scope and nature of citizen agency amid violence. In 2014 I worked with local co-researchers to explore understandings of power, violence and active citizenship through an action research process with social activists in Buenaventura, a port city on the south-western Pacific coast of Colombia.<sup>1</sup> In a context where manifestations of both power and violence are multiple, diverse, trenchant and inextricably linked to each other and to the formal nature as well as the lived experience of citizenship, we sought to understand how the activists exercised

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<sup>1</sup>I warmly and gratefully acknowledge my co-researchers Jesús Alfonso Flórez López, Adriel Ruiz Galbán, Nubia Salamanca, Betzayda Domínguez and Jethro Pettit.

agency amid violence, and whether concepts of power borrowed from power theory and from what we might call as shorthand ‘power praxis,’<sup>2</sup> shed any fresh light on this question.

The agency of residents of Buenaventura is heavily shaped by fifty years of the violent exercise of ‘visible’ and ‘hidden’ power by state authorities and non-state armed groups. What the action research brought to the surface were ‘invisible power’ (see Pettit 2013) and resistance as two key themes. The prevailing complex of direct, structural and symbolic violence operates not only as visible power (observable decision-making) and hidden power (setting the political agenda)<sup>3</sup> but - pervasively and insidiously - as ‘invisible power’, shaping norms, values, beliefs and behaviour among the majority population in myriad ways. Power theory and praxis offer a range of lenses on ‘invisible power’, drawing variously on Foucault, Gramsci’s thinking on hegemony, Hayward’s characterisation of power as ‘a network of social boundaries,’<sup>4</sup> and Bourdieu’s notions of ‘symbolic violence’ and ‘habitus’. Research participants’ experience of violence as a ‘network of social boundaries’ (Hayward) or a ‘habitus’ (Bourdieu), the ‘tacit collusion with socialized norms of power in order to survive and evade harm’<sup>5</sup> I call ‘violence-as-invisible-power’. While most inhabitants ‘confirm’ violence by complying with violence-as-invisible-power and conferring legitimacy on the violent actors, social activist participants in our research have developed positions of critical consciousness. From these positions, they withhold legitimacy from the violent actors and systematically ‘disconfirm structure,’<sup>6</sup> practising resistance in a range of ways.

Bucking a trend of decreasing levels of violence in the country overall in the past decade, Buenaventura experienced a peak in 2013–14. The mainly Afro-Colombian population was living in neighbourhoods where armed control was contested in frequent local battles between irregular paramilitaries, supposedly demobilised but reconfigured and associated with large-scale drug trafficking through the port and smaller-scale trafficking in the city. Forced disappearances, assassinations and macabre new modalities of violence were attracting the attention of national and international media, government and humanitarian agencies. The backdrop to this violent scenario was one of government pressure on the Afro-Colombian coastal community to accept relocation to an inland housing estate to make room for a major port re-development and modernisation programme, in a country where campaigns of violence have frequently been used to displace marginalised peoples from their territories.<sup>7</sup>

Drawing on power theory, resistance studies and the literature on structural, symbolic and cultural violence, the article untangles this complex of actions and reactions, structure and re-structuring. It uses the lenses of power analysis and structuration to reach fresh understandings of how citizens respond to violent conflict in these hard-to-research contexts where ‘violence-as-invisible-power’ is everywhere. Seen thus, the resistance enacted by the

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<sup>2</sup>By this I mean the practice of addressing unequal power relations through social and political activism, including forms of activism which co-construct alternative forms of knowledge and use them to challenge dominant forms and the power relations that they embody.

<sup>3</sup>L. VeneKlasen and V. Miller, *A New Weave of People, Power and Politics: the Action Guide for Advocacy and Citizen Participation* (Oklahoma: World Neighbors 2002): 47

<sup>4</sup>C. R. Hayward, ‘De-Facing Power’, *Polity* 31, no.1 (1998)

<sup>5</sup>J. Pettit, ‘Why Citizens don’t Engage – Power, Poverty and civic habitus’, *IDS Bulletin* 47, no.5 (2016): 89–102.

<sup>6</sup>M. Haugaard, ‘The Constitution of Power’, in *Power: A Reader*, ed. M. Haugaard (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 305–28.

<sup>7</sup>A full-length research report provides more detail on this context and background: see R. McGee and J. Florez López, ‘Power, Violence, Citizenship and Agency: A Colombian Case-Study’ (IDS Working Paper 474, IDS, Brighton, 2016).

action research participants, focused on ‘staying in the territory’ as a conscious response to long-standing, multiple, complex violences, is one of the ways in which violence-as-invisible-power has reshaped people’s subjectivity.

The article also demonstrates how an action research process using power analysis at the micro level brings to light vital aspects of invisible power in ways that other methodological and analytical approaches cannot. Proponents of ‘everyday’ or ‘local’ vantage points and perspectives ‘from below’ have pointed out that ‘[t]he apparent “banality” of the everyday challenges us to think creatively about perspectives and methodologies that can capture it’<sup>8</sup>; and that ‘the epistemologies and research antennae used by key actors in the liberal peace to see local situations’<sup>9</sup> are an obstacle to ‘the local turn in peacebuilding’. Reaching beyond description or speculation to embrace people’s own meanings and framings, paying minute attention to local understandings and subaltern perspectives, action research fits very well with in-depth exploration of ‘the day-to-day’ and ‘real life’ as part of a political process of questioning established power relations. Within it we used power analysis, an approach informed by critical theory, anthropology, political sociology and feminist theory, to direct attention to the ways internalised, socialised norms shape behaviour and to the interplay between agency and structure.<sup>10</sup> The process was participatory not only in involving local and outsider researchers with equal powers to define aspects such as case identification, methods, relationships with subjects, and approach to quality and validity; but also in deploying local frames of reference negotiated between all of us who researched together. Thus, the language ordinary people used to define and explain their reality has framed our analysis, representation and conclusions.

In Section 2 I provide context, setting out the conceptual terrain in a review of key aspects of power theory, and describing the historically violent socio-political context of Colombia and of Afro-Colombian Buenaventura. Section 3 gives an account of violence as power, in particular as invisible power, and its effects on citizen agency and social activism. After a brief and selective overview of concepts and theories of resistance in Section 4 I present people’s accounts of their acts and stances of resistance and bring these into dialogue with the theoretical material. Section 5 concludes.

## 2. The context: power and violence in the Colombian Pacific

Successive theoretical works on power since the 1950s, originating in north American political science, have resulted in a dominant conception of it as having three ‘faces’ or dimensions. These were theorised consecutively and cumulatively.

‘Visible power’<sup>11</sup> can be understood as ‘who participates, who gains and who loses, and who prevails in decision-making.’<sup>12</sup> It is the kind of power at play in observable, formal

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<sup>8</sup>R. MacGinty, ‘Everyday Peace: Bottom-Up and Local Agency in Conflict-Affected Societies’, *Security Dialogue* 45, no. 6 (2014): 548–64.

<sup>9</sup>R. MacGinty and O. Richmond, ‘The Local Turn in Peacebuilding: A Critical Agenda for Peace’, *Third World Quarterly* 34, no. 5 (2013): 763–83.

<sup>10</sup>J. Pettit and A. Mejía Acosta, ‘Power Above and Below the Water-Line: Bridging Political Economy and Power Analysis’, *IDS Bulletin* 45, no. 5 (2014): 9–22.

<sup>11</sup>R. Dahl, ‘Decision-Making in a Democracy: The Supreme Court as a National Policy-Maker’, *Journal of Public Law* 6 (1957): 279–95; R. Dahl, *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961).

<sup>12</sup>Polsoy, *Community Power and Political Theory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963): 55.

political decision-making: the formal rules, structures, authorities, institutions and procedures, and how those in positions of power use these to maintain control. As such, it involves both structure and agency: actors (in Dahl's research, political decision-makers in a pluralist system) invoking elements of structure (the rules, structures, authorities, institutions) to maintain and compete for power.<sup>13</sup> A 'second face' specified by Bachrach and Baratz<sup>14</sup> and later termed 'hidden power' by Lukes,<sup>15</sup> is the power some actors exercise to '[confine] the scope of decision-making to relatively "safe" issues'.<sup>16</sup>

Lukes<sup>17</sup> showed how both the first and second faces fail to account for instances in which relatively marginalised people are rendered unaware of their rights and interests to the point of themselves accepting the dominating norms, values and behaviours that marginalise them. He introduced a third dimension, referred to by many as 'invisible power',<sup>18</sup> in which 'A exercises power over [B]' not by coercing him/her to go against his/her own wishes but 'by influencing, shaping or determining his[her] very wants such that some conflicts never need to arise'.<sup>19</sup>

This coining of 'invisible power' has opened up a fresh series of political and sociological power debates since the 1970s, in which invisible power/third-dimensional power has been diversely interpreted.<sup>20</sup> Whereas 1960s and 70s theorists of 'power with a face' treated power as a manifestation of intentional coercive or dominating agency of one or some actors over others, others both older and newer have been more interested in power as invisible social and ideological conditioning, embedded in and reproduced by social structure, and even constitutive of social actors. Gramsci's Marxist-informed arguments about 'hegemony', 'false consciousness' and the 'manufacture of consent', together with his proposal of a 'counter-hegemonic struggle' to advance alternatives to dominant ideas, pre-figures some contemporary interpretations of invisible or third-dimensional power. Foucault rejects the idea of power as deliberate coercion exercised by actors, and instead holds that 'power is everywhere', embedded and transmitted in discourse, knowledge and 'regimes of truth',<sup>21</sup> something which constitutes social actors rather than being wielded by them. For Bourdieu, power is 'culturally and symbolically created, and continuously re-legitimised through an interplay of agency and structure' in the form of what he calls 'habitus': socialised dispositions that guide thinking and behaviour.<sup>22</sup> Hayward describes power as 'a network of social boundaries' 'that define all actors' fields of action and possibility'.<sup>23</sup>

In power scholarship and praxis to date, there has been more focus on the nature and effects of power than on its making. Notable exceptions to this are VeneKlasen and Miller,<sup>24</sup>

<sup>13</sup>J. Pettit, *Power Analysis: A Practical Guide* (Stockholm: Sida, 2013)

<sup>14</sup>P. Bachrach and M. Baratz, 'Two Faces of Power', *American Political Science Review* 56 (1962): 947–52.

<sup>15</sup>S. Lukes, *Power: A Radical View* (London: Macmillan, 1974) (reprinted 2005, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan).

<sup>16</sup>P. Bachrach and M. Baratz, 'Two Faces of Power', *American Political Science Review* 56 (1962): 947–52.

<sup>17</sup>Lukes, *Power: A Radical View* (London: Macmillan, 1974) (reprinted 2005, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan).

<sup>18</sup>VeneKlasen, L. and V. Miller. *A New Weave of People, Power and Politics: The Action Guide for Advocacy and Citizen Participation* (Oklahoma: World Neighbors, 2002); J. Gaventa, 'Finding the Spaces for Change: A Power Analysis', *IDS Bulletin* 37, no.6 (2006): 23–33.

<sup>19</sup>J. Pettit, 'Civic Habitus: Toward a Pedagogy for Citizen Engagement', in *Education, Learning and the Transformation of Development*, eds. A. Skinner, M. Baillie Smith, E. Brown, and T. Troll (London: Routledge, 2016 forthcoming).

<sup>20</sup>A particularly useful discussion (P. Digeser, 'The Fourth Face of Power', *The Journal of Politics* 54, no. 4 (1992): 977–1007).

<sup>21</sup>M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of a Prison* (London: Penguin, 1991); and P. Digeser, 'The Fourth Face of Power', *The Journal of Politics* 54, no. 4 (1992): 977–1007.

<sup>22</sup><http://www.powercube.net/other-forms-of-power/bourdieu-and-habitus/>.

<sup>23</sup>C. R. Hayward, 'De-Facing Power', *Polity* 31, no. 1 (1998).

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, 2002.

whose praxis focuses on equipping social and political activists to resist it and overcome it through empowerment processes; and Haugaard, whose scholarly work addresses the constitution and creation of power through the confirmation and reproduction of social order<sup>25</sup> (2002), a perspective I return to later.

Colombian scholarship includes much political science, historical and sociological literature theorising violence and chronicling the ubiquitous and sophisticated violent workings of visible power and hidden power<sup>26</sup> at all levels of society, economy and polity. Noteworthy are the output of the *violentólogos*,<sup>27</sup> work on the violent history and impacts of the drugs trade<sup>28</sup> and a relatively new, often interdisciplinary literature focusing specifically on active and peaceful citizenship, produced since the 1991 Constitution.<sup>29</sup> Much less covered in published scholarship are ground-level accounts of violent power and its workings as experienced by ordinary Colombians.

Colombia is a notoriously violent country. From 1964 a civil conflict raged between government forces, guerrillas and paramilitary groups, in recent decades blurring into 'narco-violence'. Violent civil conflict continued after a flawed process of paramilitary demobilisation (2005–12) and the initiation of the latest peace negotiations between government and the FARC guerrilla (2012–present), but now appears to be coming to a close.

Some attribute modern Colombia's violent history to the ravages of Spanish colonial domination since the sixteenth century. Others pinpoint more specifically the restricted citizenship afforded to the majority of Colombians since Independence in 1810. A new Constitution in 1991 sought to redress these antecedents, characterising the country as a 'Social State under the rule of law'<sup>30</sup> with an impressive bill of individual and collective rights and an array of spaces for democratic citizen participation in a newly decentralised governance system. But that was in 1991, and the period since, on aggregate, has been no less violent.

Throughout waves of internal displacement, massive human rights abuses and atrocities, ordinary Colombians have exercised 'survival agency' and 'coping agency' in multiple ways.<sup>31</sup> The forms of agency offered by the 1991 Constitution were qualitatively different from 'coping agency': they were spaces for people to exercise agency as citizens, in relation to each other and to government, and in the public arena, by participating in the political,

<sup>25</sup>M. Haugaard, 'The Constitution of Power', in *Power: A Reader*, ed. M. Haugaard (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 305–28.

<sup>26</sup>Albeit without using these Anglophone labels of visible, hidden, faces, etc. A singularly Latin American 'face' of power is the phenomenon of '*poder oculto*'; not to be confused with Anglophone 'hidden power': see Robles Montoya (2002).

<sup>27</sup>Colombia boasts a whole academic inter-disciplinary field referred to as '*violentología*' and populated by '*violentólogos*', born of a wide-ranging 1987 government-commissioned study on violence and democracy led by Gonzalo Sánchez, then at IEPRI (Instituto de Estudios Políticos y Relaciones Internacionales – Political Studies and International Relations Institute) at the National University. Comisión de Estudios sobre la Violencia *Colombia: Violencia y Democracia* (Bogotá: Centro Editorial Universidad Nacional, 1987).

<sup>28</sup>G. Duncan, *Los Señores de la Guerra: de paramilitares, mafiosos y autodefensas en Colombia* (Editorial Planeta, Bogotá, 2006); and N. Richani, 'The Political Economy of Violence: The War-System in Colombia', *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 39, no. 2 (1997): 37–81.

<sup>29</sup>García (2009); García Sánchez (1999); Hurtado Galeano and Naranjo Giraldo (2002); Kaplan (2013); Naranjo Giraldo (2004); Pécaut (1997, 1998); Tubb (2013); and Vivas Piñeros (2006).

<sup>30</sup>The flamboyant opening line of Colombia's 1991 Constitution fares less well in translation. The best translation I can come up with, assisted by interpreter and translator James Lupton, is: 'Article 1. Colombia is a social state under the rule of law, organised in the form of a unitary decentralised republic with autonomous territorial entities; it is democratic, participatory and pluralist, founded on respect for human dignity, on the labour and solidarity of the persons constituting it and on the primacy of the general interest' (own and James Lupton's translation, *Artículo 1, Constitución Política de Colombia*, <https://www.ramajudicial.gov.co/documents/10228/1547471/CONSTITUCION-Interiores.pdf> (accessed October 17, 2016).

<sup>31</sup>P. Justino, *The Impact of Armed Civil Conflict on Household Welfare and Policy Responses* (HiCN Working Paper 61, 2008).

social and economic and cultural life of this multi-ethnic, culturally diverse and historically violent nation. They reflected the origins of this Constitution in a process of peace-making, social and political reconciliation and reconstruction, after some of the nation's most violent years.

Adding to the repertoire of 'survival agency' or 'coping agency', then, Colombians have responded to violence in three main ways, not mutually exclusive. First, they have joined the violent conflict as armed actors.<sup>32</sup> Second, they have constructed, organised and sought to make real the opportunities and spaces for democratic citizenship offered by the 1991 Constitution to build a participatory model of governance, to replace or at least counterbalance the exclusionary elite bipartisan model in place since Independence. Third, within the multifarious 'warscapes'<sup>33</sup> or 'social terrain' of the conflict,<sup>34</sup> they have used their 'social navigation' skills (ibid.) to mitigate the effects of conflict on civilians, mediate between armed actors, and model new social norms of non-violence and rejection of violence. The second and third of these manifestations are forms of what Lister<sup>35</sup> calls 'citizen agency', and constitute the scope and focus of the action research process informing this article.

The Bill of Rights was the state's response to societal demands for citizen participation that had been articulated for decades. It opened up several spaces for the legal recognition of rights and the realisation of these through citizen agency: simple, accessible legal mechanisms for protecting 'fundamental rights'; recognition of citizens' right to peaceful protest; a suite of territorial, judicial, self-determination and self-governing rights for indigenous communities; recognition of Afro-Colombians as an ethnic group with special territorial and governance rights; and the enactment of certain individual and collective rights ratified by Colombia in international conventions and treaties.

In the wake of the Constitution social actors moved into the new spaces and took up new opportunities to model fresh approaches to non-violence. Over the early 2000s, 'resistance' initiatives mushroomed all over the country, together constituting a social movement of resistance, differences in detail notwithstanding. In contrast to other manifestations elsewhere,<sup>36</sup> *resistencia* in contemporary Colombia is often about '*manteniéndose en el territorio*' (resisting in one's own territory). This phrase is a vital clue to what Colombian victims of conflict are resisting and surviving: organised, violent campaigns to dislodge them from resource-rich or commercially strategic territory. In a context where the state has routinely wielded and sponsored violence to dispossess people, rejection of violence has spawned a range of forms of resistance or disengagement vis-à-vis various faces of the state and of

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<sup>32</sup>Beyond the approximately 446,000-strong Colombian armed and police forces, estimates of paramilitaries and guerrillas have each reached several tens of thousands. It is difficult to obtain realistic estimates but according to one reliable source, over the years of the paramilitary demobilisation process (2005–12), just over 35,000 paramilitaries formally demobilised (<http://www.indepaz.org.co/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Sobre-las-cifras-oficiales.pdf>, accessed March 2, 2016). A military source calculated that the number of active FARC guerrilla combatants fell from 20,700 to 6,700 between 2002 and 2012 (<http://www.noticiasrcn.com/nacional-pais/guerrilla-las-farc-contaria-15700-hombres>, accessed March 2, 2016).

<sup>33</sup>C. Nordstrom, *A Different Kind of War Story* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997).

<sup>34</sup>H. Vigh, *Navigating Terrains of War: Youth and Soldiering in Guinea-Bissau* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2006).

<sup>35</sup>R. Lister, *Citizenship. Feminist Perspectives* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

<sup>36</sup>or instance, peasant resistance (J. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak. Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, Yale: Yale University Press, 1985; *Everyday Forms of Resistance*, Copenhagen Papers 4.89: 33–62, 1989; *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, New Haven, 1990), anti-Soviet resistance (R. Petersen *Resistance and Rebellion: Lessons from Eastern Europe*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) and *campesino* resistance in El Salvador (E.J. Wood, *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

formal governance norms and institutions.<sup>37</sup> The forms that most challenge the legitimacy and power of the state – notably the ‘Peace Community’ model – have been bitterly criticised and even vilified especially by state actors.<sup>38</sup>

The great majority of participants in our Colombia case study, as of the population of the city of Buenaventura, are Afro-Colombian. While the 1991 Constitution brought Afro-Colombians and indigenous peoples formal equality within the ‘social state under the rule of law’, the historic roots and patterns of ethnic identity in the country make the Afro and indigenous experiences of citizenship very different from that of *mestizo* and white Colombians, marked by severe material deprivation and multifaceted marginalisation.

Buenaventura, a port city on the Pacific coast and Colombia’s only commercial access to the Pacific Ocean and Asia, was one of the most violent parts of the country at the time of this action research. In 2013, 13,000 inhabitants of the municipality were displaced, and the homicide rate was 48 per 100,000 – both figures which topped their respective leagues among Colombian municipalities. One hundred and fifty cases of missing persons reported from 2010 to 13 are presumed by official sources to constitute forced disappearances, more than twice the rate for any other Colombian municipality.<sup>39</sup> Plans for a massive upgrading and modernisation of the port (*Proyecto Buenaventura 2050*), were being championed prominently by the Office of the President of the Republic, other parts of national government, and the Colombian and international private sector.

The facts and figures cited above evoke at a general, objective level the complexity, dimensions and horrific nature of violence in Colombia and specifically in Buenaventura. It was from the perspective of ordinary Afro inhabitants of this warscape that we set out to explore power, violence, citizenship and agency and came to the insights on invisible power and resistance that are the focus of this article.

### 3. Violence as invisible power: agency constrained, agency re-shaped

The majority of residents of urban Buenaventura, action research participants said, avoid all community activity – except that mandated by the armed groups – as dangerous. They discipline their youth and in men’s case their wives by means of authoritarian violence wielded or threatened by extra-familial armed actors; and teach children to speak the language of armed aggression. Given the duration of the conflict, these responses to violence-as-invisible-power have been transmitted from generation to generation in modelled behaviours and forms of socialisation, maturing and deepening as they are handed down, as shown by these excerpts from the action research documentation:

Everyone’s lost control, and who has the power now? The guy you know, or the guy with the weapon? That’s the way people think, even children: in children’s minds the symbols of power

<sup>37</sup>E. Hernández Delgado, ‘Resistencias para la paz en Colombia: Experiencias Indígenas, afrodescendientes y campesinas’, *Revista Paz y Conflictos* 2 (2009): 117–35, [www.ugr.es/~revpaz/tesinas/rpc\\_n2\\_2009\\_dea2.pdf](http://www.ugr.es/~revpaz/tesinas/rpc_n2_2009_dea2.pdf) (accessed March 2, 2016); E. Hernández Delgado, *Intervenir antes que anochezca: mediaciones, intermediaciones y diplomacias no violentas de base social en el conflicto armado colombiano*, Universidad Autónoma de Bucaramanga/Unión Europea (2012); and O. Kaplan, ‘Protecting Civilians in Civil War: The Institution of the ATCC in Colombia’, *Journal of Peace Research* 50, no. 3 (2013): 351–67.

<sup>38</sup>V. J. Belalcázar, ‘Las Comunidades de Paz: Formas de acción colectiva en Resistencia civil al conflicto armado colombiano’, *Revista Entorno Geográfico* 7–8 (2011): 196–209.

<sup>39</sup>Human Rights Watch, *La crisis en Buenaventura: Desapariciones, desmembramientos y desplazamiento en el principal puerto de Colombia en el Pacífico* (2014). [www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/colombia0314spwebwcover.pdf](http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/colombia0314spwebwcover.pdf) (accessed June 20, 2016).

and authority are the paramilitaries, and it's always been that way. (Interview, President of Local Action Committee and activist of *Proceso de Comunidades Negras* [Black Communities Process])

We're seeing that all kinds of violence generate more violence. [...] Even the way people speak generates violence, the words they use, the everyday terms. That's exactly what children do, isn't it? They use what they hear. They use the term 'dismembering'<sup>40</sup>[*descuartizar*] in their games or when they speak to each other. That builds up a really difficult problem in society. (Focus group, human rights organisation)

Violence is part of everyday life. A local woman gets threatened, directly or indirectly; an armed actor threatens a pretty woman because she isn't going out with him, or demands protection money from her family. We women sometimes naturalise these violences. There are domestic slaves, sexual slaves, among the armed actors, most of them are there out of their own free will. About 35 per cent of the Buenaventura population is youth, they've never known any context except the conflict. The phrase 'If I don't like what you say I'll chop you up' is an everyday phrase to them. (Interview, community leader and gender equity advocate)

The excerpt below offers insights into the workings of violence as invisible power, and also into how it is transmitted inter-generationally in the form of violent cultural and social norms:

Child 1: What scares us? Hmm. I'm scared of walking through dangerous areas, scared they'll kill me, rape me, send someone after me to dismember me, that's what I'm scared of.

Interviewer: Do they do things like that to children?

Child 2: Ooh yes. In these neighbourhoods right here, and in others, most of all in the Bolívar neighbourhood, there's a gang. They do even more to you there, there's a butcher's shop<sup>41</sup> right there [...]

Interviewer: Who's in charge in Buenaventura?

Child 1: Judging by the rapes, and the physical abuse, the message is loud and clear that they [paramilitaries] are in charge.

Child 2: Well, if someone has a fight with someone and you go and report it to the police, the police can't do anything. You can't go and report it to the police. But if you go and report it to them [the paramilitaries], what they do is, they beat up the person, they kill them, they chop them up, that's what happens.

Interviewer: Does the community report things to them?

Child 2: Yes, people report things to them, like 'I had a fight with so-and-so, or 'so-and-so is threatening me, so that they [the paramilitaries] go and smash them up; 'I'll give you so much [a fee], what will you do to him for that?' Or if someone is owing you money you go to them and get them to call in the debt, and if the person doesn't pay they know what they've got coming to them. That's why there are so many disappeared people.

Interviewer: Do people report children to them, too?

<sup>40</sup>A reference to the paramilitary tactic of chopping up those they perceive as enemies or detractors with chainsaws, axes or machetes. 'Homicide through dismembering' is one of the categories of violence used in judicial proceedings and official statistical reporting on Buenaventura during the period of this research.

<sup>41</sup>This is a reference to a *casa de pique/picadero* or 'chopping house'. These are houses, located in densely populated areas, where the ex-paramilitary armed actors take lives victims to dismember them with chainsaws, machetes or axes. Body parts are usually disposed of in refuse sacks thrown into the sea or left around in public places. While this phenomenon did occur in other parts of Colombia in earlier years, the *casa de pique* came to epitomise the intensity and macabre nature of urban violence in Buenaventura in 2013–14.

Child 2: Yes, they go and ask them to punish children. If children steal, they go and tell them, so that they'll hit them.

Interviewer: Who goes and asks them [the paramilitaries]?

Child 2: People in the community, parents, that sort of thing.

(Focus group, children of the parish of San Pedro, Commune 3)

Action research participants reflected on how they themselves have navigated unseen battlefronts and territorial demarcations, sometimes making temporary tactical withdrawals from community activism for fear of violent reprisals. Unlike the non-activist majority population of Buenaventura, however, they have developed a level of critical consciousness of violence-as-invisible-power, and deliberately modified their relationship with it. Narrating instances when their own participation in community, social and political life had been curtailed or shaped by actual, threatened or imagined violence, they identified watershed moments when they began or intensified their engagement in the organisational process in which we encountered them. At these points, they 'took consciousness' (to translate directly from the Spanish *tomar conciencia*), and stepped away from norms, values and practices based on violence as a way of life; their responses to invisible power changed from attitudes of submission or complicity to stances of resistance:

Kids would pick up old lightbulbs, sticks, whatever, and turn them into a pistol or a hand grenade, and go 'Pow, pow, pow, got him ...!'; that's how things were [here] three months ago. That was what made us dare to say 'Enough! This has to stop!' Is it risky? Of course it's risky, but the community's understood that we have to take risks. (Interview, community leader, Nayero bridge Humanitarian Space)

These past few years, working in the rural areas of Buenaventura municipality, I've realised that it's different from [Buenaventura city]. There's a much stronger presence of armed actors there [guerrilla]. There are kids who are still with the guerrilla, but there are others who have changed, and left. That's true leadership. (Focus group, youth of parish and community organisations)

Armed and domestic violence against women are so prevalent in Buenaventura, and awareness of them so high, that they seem to be accentuated there by aspects of the warscape. Nevertheless, members of women's organisations spontaneously defined power not as direct physical coercion but in terms of the invisible social and cultural norms that shape the realms of the possible. Foucault's notion that 'power is everywhere' is brought to mind by one woman's phrase 'Power is invisible, but touchable' (focus group, women leaders). Accounts of the gender dimensions of power were rich and peppered with irony, showing that in their view, male domination was not socially legitimate, even though most women experience it as inevitable. The normative suppression and undermining of women's political and citizen agency and leadership is usual in Colombia and in Afro-Colombian culture. While these suppressive norms are usually enacted by husbands or male partners, research participants reflected that it is often rumours or gossip circulated by other women that prompt husbands to enforce them. Even while displaying their acquired awareness and critical faculties, the women recognised that their attempts to consciously, strategically reconfigure their responses to violence-as-invisible-power are sometimes overwhelmed by their own internalisation of norms that work against them. The following excerpt shows how fragile and vulnerable to sabotage solidarity between women can be:

We're so organised here in Buenaventura that I think if we really united, the Council would have only women councillors, the whole of the Town Hall would be run by women. But we're

oh so capable women in some things, and yet as soon as a rumour starts to circulate, even if everyone knows it's a lie, we believe everything we're told, and that's enough to tear it all down, all our collective process. We women need to pull together. That's what men are afraid of and why they block our path to power. But as soon as a compañera announces her candidacy for the municipal elections, men are ready to start up rumours [...]. Our problem is, we don't believe in ourselves. (Focus group, women leaders)

And so the gender status quo, underpinned by real or threatened violence, is internalised, maintained and reproduced by women themselves.

These instances could be considered failures by the women to confront invisible power. Alternatively, they could reflect tactical choices to operate within the norms of invisible power rather than challenge it, in specific circumstances.

In sum, we found that the invisible power of violence imposes psychological and ideological boundaries on citizen agency and participation. These go unnoticed by some people, but by others – including most of our research participants – they are noticed and confronted at some level. The latter sometimes respect and observe the ‘network of social boundaries’<sup>42</sup> in which violence immerses them, as an everyday survival mechanism.<sup>43</sup> But at the same time, they recognise the boundaries and name them, which is a precondition for acting on them; and sometimes they go on to act on them, in a wealth of ways. When they do so, they are no longer behaving only as agents of their own survival – working within their ‘habitus’<sup>44</sup> performing tactical ‘social navigation’<sup>45</sup> – but simultaneously navigating strategically as change agents. A co-researcher expressed this as adopting the ‘amphibian strategy’ – going underwater when necessary but always eventually coming up for air and looking around.<sup>46</sup> In naming and transgressing the boundaries of invisible power, people are actively refusing to be complicit with it or with its protagonists; they are eluding symbolic violence.

#### 4. The response: visible everyday resistance

Resistance emerged prominently and richly in people's self-identification as local citizens of Afro-Colombian origin and their descriptions of how they navigate power and violence. In this section I briefly review key aspects of the resistance literature before discussing the ways the theme arose in the action research and how this relates to established practices and concepts of resistance.

In Scott's path-breaking work ‘Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance’<sup>47</sup> he argued that by emphasising peasant revolutions, scholars had hitherto neglected other forms of political activity by marginalised people. In fact, Scott argues, there is a broad landscape of kinds of collective action which are unquestionably political.<sup>48</sup> The range of tactics he calls ‘everyday resistance’ all express a rejection of power-holders on the part of people who lack the means to oust them<sup>49</sup> – that is, they constitute resistance, in

<sup>42</sup>C. R. Hayward, ‘De-Facing Power’, *Polity* 31 (1998).

<sup>43</sup>It would be interesting to look at these paradoxes in terms of Gramsci's concept of common sense, or Patnaik's rendering of it as ‘contradictory common sense’. A. Patnaik, ‘Gramsci's Concept of Common Sense: Towards a Theory of Subaltern Consciousness in Hegemony Processes’, *Economic and Political Weekly* 23, no. 5 (1988): 2–10.

<sup>44</sup>P. Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of Taste* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984).

<sup>45</sup>H. Vigh, *Navigating Terrains of War: Youth and Soldiering in Guinea-Bissau* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2006).

<sup>46</sup>Chucho Flórez (pers. comm).

<sup>47</sup>J. C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak. Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1985).

<sup>48</sup>J. C. Scott, ‘Everyday Forms of Resistance’, *Copenhagen Papers* 4, no. 89 (1989): 33–62.

<sup>49</sup>M. Oosterom, ‘The Effects of Violent Conflict and Displacement on Citizen Engagement’ (PhD thesis, Brighton: Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, 2014).

an ontological and axiological sense. Scott<sup>50</sup> distinguishes ‘everyday resistance’ as being ‘disguised’ in form, comprising ‘foot-dragging, poaching, squatting, desertion, evasion’. Rather than overt rejections of the powers that be, these are ‘political masking’ – the deliberate rendering of forms of resistance in dangerous circumstances as garbled or ambiguous, so as to evade identification as resistance and consequent retaliation,<sup>51</sup> deployed by people who use their ‘tactical wisdom’ and ‘avoid calling attention to themselves’ (ibid., 35).

Expanding later on the concept of ‘everyday resistance’ Barter<sup>52</sup> argues that although it is often symbolic, it can undermine the legitimacy of armed groups by questioning, transforming, or ignoring them, and holds more potential for social change than the term ‘weapons of the weak’ connotes (ibid., 555). Vinthagen<sup>53</sup> points out that from Scott<sup>54</sup> onwards, attempts to create taxonomies or definitions of resistance have looked at it from various angles but, by focusing on who or what is being resisted, how resistance operates, and against which super-ordinate agent, have obscured the basic fact that resistance is about denying, challenging or undermining power relations, and is often about resisting a social *structure* rather than an actor or form of *agency*. This position resonates with some power scholars’ arguments that power needs to be ‘de-faced’ rather than treated exclusively as intentional agency<sup>55</sup> and that structural and post-structuralist perspectives are essential to fully apprehending power in all its complexity.<sup>56</sup>

In terms of the effects of resistance, Scott proposes that ‘[i]nasmuch as every act of compliance with a normative order discursively affirms that order, while every public act of repudiation [...] represents a threat to that norm, everyday resistance leaves dominant symbolic structures intact.’<sup>57</sup> He allows, however, that ‘the weak’ are ‘continually testing the line of what is permissible on-stage’. When something ventures across the line, ‘a new de facto line is created, governing what may be said or gestured’ (ibid., 59).

The social activists we worked with used the term ‘resistance’ for a wide range of actions and positions they are actively involved in. These range from the construction of physical or social spaces of contestation and protection such as the Humanitarian Space (an area demarcated by a – symbolic – fragile enclosure around a number of households, within which state and non-state armed actors are permanently or sporadically present and the residents seek to engage with them constructively and non-violently<sup>58</sup>); to organisational activities hosted by the Catholic parish of San Pedro; mass mobilisation for events such as a tens-of-thousands-strong anti-violence march; physical ‘resistance in the territory’ (*resistencia en el territorio*) of Afro citizens refusing to relocate inland despite ever-intensifying violent efforts to displace them to make way for the port modernisation project; cultural resistance of the Pacific coast’s Afro-Colombian movement; the deliberate construction of

<sup>50</sup>J. C. Scott, ‘Everyday Forms of Resistance’, *Copenhagen Papers* 4, no. 89 (1989): 33–62.

<sup>51</sup>J. C. Scott, ‘Everyday Forms of Resistance’, *Copenhagen Papers* 4, no. 89 (1989): 33–62.

<sup>52</sup>S. J. Barter, ‘Unarmed Forces: Civilian Strategies in Violent Conflicts’, *Peace and Change* 37, no. 4 (2012): 544–69.

<sup>53</sup>S. Vinthagen, ‘Understanding Resistance: Exploring Definitions, Perspectives, Forms and Implications’ (paper presented at Resistance Studies Network, Gothenburg University, December 6, 2007).

<sup>54</sup>J. C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak. Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1985).

<sup>55</sup>R. McGee, ‘Power and Empowerment Meet Resistance: A Critical, Action-Oriented Review of the Literature’, *IDS Bulletin* 47, no. 5 (2016); C. R. Hayward, ‘De-Facing Power’, *Polity* 31 (1998); and C. R. Hayward, *De-Facing Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

<sup>56</sup>P. Digeser, ‘The Fourth Face of Power’, *The Journal of Politics* 54, no. 4 (1992): 977–1007.

<sup>57</sup>J. C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak. Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1985).

<sup>58</sup>The *punte de los nayeros* Humanitarian Space in Buenaventura is described in greater detail below but also in R. McGee and J. Florez López, ‘Power, Violence, Citizenship and Agency: A Colombian Case-Study’ (IDS Working Paper 474, IDS, Brighton, 2016, where we expand on all the other actions and positions listed here too).

a non-violent counter-culture in their own processes and organisations; and the reporting and denouncing of illegal and abusive actions to both the Colombian authorities and international human rights authorities.

The deep ‘territorial rootedness’ [*arraigo territorial*] people talked of is rootedness in history, ethnicity, class and livelihood as well as geographic space. ‘Resisting in the territory’ is central to coastal Buenaventura Afro-Colombians’ explanations of what they are doing there. As Isin and Wood argue in relation to ethnic discrimination,

[t]here are important connections and intersections between race, ethnicity and class; in practice these identities inform and shape each other in an often inextricable matrix that may blur their borders [but t]he social movements that were the results of resistance to such discrimination are undeniably ‘real’ and political [...].<sup>59</sup>

Here, where a state-promoted campaign probably conniving with illegal armed actors is trying to relocate coastal fisher communities of Commune 3 to an inland housing estate, resistance is, before all else, about staying put.

The establishment of the Humanitarian Space on the landfill area now called the *puente de los nayeros*, with its recently dismantled ‘chopping house’ (*casa de pique*), armed teenagers flitting in and out and uniformed soldiers patrolling the corners, symbolises ‘resistance in the territory’ like nothing else. This is an act of resistance of violence and defiance of the highest order and highest risk, levelled at illegal and State armed actors as well as the local administration which has been trying for years to persuade these residents to re-locate. The Humanitarian Space strategy is complex, multi-stranded and multi-layered: it combines social mobilisation, political awareness raising, litigation, spiritual and cultural strands of activity, and extends upwards and outwards from this street to the national-level human rights advocacy circles in Bogotá, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in Costa Rica and the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva. A peculiarly Colombian response to a very Colombian problem, it is in some ways emblematic of the classic ‘everyday resistance’ as characterised by Scott,<sup>60</sup> and in other ways contradicts it, being far from ‘disguised’.

While resistance in Buenaventura is primarily about staying put, it is also about mobilising. The march of 19 February 2014, a mass anti-violence mobilisation that drew in as much as one-fifth of the city’s population, took place in the thick of armed extortion, violence, assassination and forced disappearances. It was a highly public challenge that spurned violence as a culture, defied its proponents and de-legitimised their ways of working. It included the theatrical touch of marching behind a coffin which was carried up nine storeys of the municipal headquarters and laid at the Mayor’s door.

A further illustration of resistance is harder to describe. Research participants simply withheld legitimacy from violent acts and actors. They denied them the responses of admiration, awe or fear on which these actors’ legitimacy, authority and power tend to rest. Although this rejection was expressed in small, often subtle ways, it too was not ‘disguised’ or ‘hidden’ but ‘public’, to use Scott’s terms: not lowering voices when referring to illegal armed actors; calling illegal armed groups by their names instead of using euphemisms or abstractions; ignoring social boundaries imposed by violent actors, or outwitting them; resisting the colonisation of everyday language with violent words or norms. In these ways,

<sup>59</sup>E. Isin and P. Wood, *Citizenship and Identity* (London: Sage, 1999), 50.

<sup>60</sup>J. C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak. Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1985).

people limited or negated the effects that ‘violence-as-invisible-power’ could have on their lives – paradoxical as this sounds when nearly all of them were grieving mothers, fathers, husbands, wives, brothers and sisters, bereaved by violence.

These actions and positions of resistance differ in form and resist a range of different things: the dominant development ideology including its emphasis on mainstream, ‘modern’, urban, livelihood strategies and their representatives the Colombian state and the port companies; violence and the drugs trade as a *modus vivendi*; prevailing violent cultural and social norms; human rights abuses, illegal acts and impunity by branches of the state and para-state. Yet as a bundle of everyday actions and positions, they have a strongly shared meaning of ‘resistance’ in the minds of everyone we talked to. A women’s group told us that in their understanding, ‘resistance’ is a broad ideological rejection of an exclusionary development model, as well as specific political and social rejection of the forms of power to which they are subjected (Focus group, women leaders). ‘Surviving in a context of such abandonment [by the state] has been an act of popular resistance’, we were told (Interview, community leader and gender equity advocate). This view, illustrating how survival agency bleeds into citizen agency, is resonant with the language of Colombian social militancy, the lexicon of the left and of marginalised ethnic groups, steeped in history. What connects all of the forms of resistance we heard about is that they bring acts or issues into the public realm. As such, they are collective expressions of citizen agency, according to Lister’s<sup>61</sup> definition, and fit within a cultural anthropology perspective on resistance.<sup>62</sup>

The contrasting examples of resistance mentioned here raise the question of how active or passive each is. Assuming a particular mental attitude or staying put and refusing to move may seem passive, particularly when contrasted with a highly visible and risky mass march, for example. In this context, however, people staying put or withholding legitimacy from the culture of violence constitutes very active resistance, against consistent and violent efforts to dislodge them physically, psychologically and socio-culturally. Whether a given case of resistance should be considered ‘active’ or ‘passive’ depends on the complex, shifting and volatile dynamics of the context, as pointed out in discourses of resistance within subaltern theory.<sup>63</sup>

In Buenaventura we found that most of the behaviours through which resistance is manifest are not acts of quiet, low-profile sabotage or irreverence familiar from the ‘everyday resistance’ literature, nor should they be reduced to their symbolic aspects, powerful though these are. Research participants do not try to hide the fact that their behaviour is resistance, because so much of it is about staying put, and as staying put cannot be hidden, part of the resistance strategy is to stay put visibly and loudly. It is about resisting being frightened away or scared into affirming the prevailing culture of violence. Running counter to Scott’s concept of ‘political masking’, resistance in Buenaventura is about political *unmasking*. By unmasking invisible power for what it is, these forms, far from leaving dominant symbolic structures intact, start to undermine them.

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<sup>61</sup>R. Lister, *Citizenship. Feminist Perspectives* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

<sup>62</sup>A. Johansson and S. Vinthagen, ‘Dimensions of Everyday Resistance: An Analytical Framework’, *Critical Sociology* (May, 2014); and S. Vinthagen, ‘Understanding Resistance: Exploring Definitions, Perspectives, Forms and Implications’ (paper presented at Resistance Studies Network, Gothenburg University, December 6, 2007).

<sup>63</sup>J. C. Scott, ‘Everyday Forms of Resistance’, *Copenhagen Papers* 4, no. 89 (1989): 33–62.

Scott's work on resistance is helpful in understanding these behaviours as kinds of citizen agency with particular meanings. But helpful too are the later developments of the concept which embrace its contextual, relational, intersectional nature and appreciate how it reflects the particular forms and manifestations of power to which it responds.<sup>64</sup> Setting up a Humanitarian Space in Commune 3 is resistance to the visible power of armed gang control; marching through the city with tens of thousands of others 'to bury violence to live in a territory with dignity' is resistance to the hidden power of the drugs trade, commercial encroachment and the state security forces' corruption and impunity; and refusing to live in awe of violence and the violent can be seen as resistance to pervasive 'violence-as-invisible-power'.

And every action of resistance invites a reaction: the militarisation of the city in April 2014, the intensification of attempts to buy off residents of Commune 3 and relocate them in an inland housing estate; the mysterious fire that consumed the wooden-built neighbourhood of Santa Fe when its residents were mobilising in visible resistance to commercial encroachment by the port companies. As initiatives of organisation, legitimisation, de-legitimation and resistance germinate under particular structural conditions and agential possibilities and each take their place in the richly textured, shifting weave of citizen agency, so the structures engage them and respond.

But theorists and engaged scholars of 'invisible power' or 'power de-faced' conceive of power not as a 'possessed capacity' but as *constitutive* or *productive* of social actors or social subjects.<sup>65</sup> This is so, both for the worse – as in the normalisation of men beating their wives in a context of intense direct violence and pervasive structural violence – and for the better – as when violence makes people dare to say "Enough! This has to stop!" (interview, community leader, Nayero bridge Humanitarian Space).

In the final conversation I held within this action research process, a veteran human rights defender said:

'People react to violence in a range of ways. In some cases, the social actor manages to recover. In others, violence suppresses agency. In other cases, new social actors spring up.

Violence has psychological effects on people's motivations and emotions. Some people decide not to continue with the organisational process they're involved in; the agency and the leadership get fragmented. Or, the agents and leaders themselves get annihilated. In cases where people get involved or stay involved with an organisational process which is about claiming their rights and identifying why the violence is happening and what effects it's having, that's an effort to construct dynamics and strategies in response to the violent actors and their aims. (Interview, human rights defender)

## 5. Conclusion

Two conclusions can be drawn, one methodological, the other substantive. While they constitute contributions to different kinds of knowledge, both have important implications for social action, development aid and peacebuilding efforts in such contexts.

<sup>64</sup>A. Johansson and S. Vinthagen. 'Dimensions of Everyday Resistance: An Analytical Framework', *Critical Sociology* (May, 2014); and C. Nordstrom (1995); cited in M. Oosterom, 'The Effects of Violent Conflict and Displacement on Citizen Engagement' (PhD thesis, Brighton: Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, 2014).

<sup>65</sup>P. Digerer, 'The Fourth Face of Power', *The Journal of Politics* 54, no. 4 (1992): 977–1007; and C. R. Hayward, *De-Facing Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

A first conclusion, then, regards the methodology, epistemology and positioning of this action research in Buenaventura. These proved singularly able to capture the banal, normalised, everyday and local, including social practices of marginalised actors in resistance in a dangerous research context. Arguably, they even contributed to grounding and refining that resistance, through a critical dialogical process. The resulting insights into invisible power in all its insidiousness have been possible largely because of the social constructivist epistemological starting point and the participatory action research methodology adopted. A typical political science enquiry into similar issues might have adopted a comparative case study approach: a set of multivariate qualitative case studies in Colombia and other countries from which credible, transferable, dependable and confirmable<sup>66</sup> conclusions could be drawn. Working within our social constructivist and participatory action research positions we sought not these qualitative research validity standards but those of participatory and action research: authenticity, resistance, incitement<sup>67</sup>; relational praxis, practical and reflexive outcomes, plurality of knowing, significance, and enduring consequence<sup>68</sup> and we looked for them in locally-specific, participant-specific, empathetic interactions with participants. The highly situated nature of action research is of course at odds with the notion of generalisability of research findings across different settings, but a generalisable methodological conclusion can surely be drawn from this and other comparative methodological assessments of power analysis<sup>69</sup> that for exploring and understanding practices of power and resistance, breadth of perspective has to be sacrificed for depth. Social science that deals only in breadth and generalisability, in methodological and epistemological terms, blinds itself to what goes on ‘below the waterline’ as far as power is concerned, to its loss.

As an empirical contribution, then, this action research case study adds to a small but variegated and rich body of evidence about the scope, substance and importance of citizens’ actions and behaviours in violence-affected settings, which mount a challenge to narrowly state-centric or macro-level visions and promise to enrich orthodox thinking and practice about peace-building.<sup>70</sup>

A second, substantive, conclusion is that the resistance enacted by the action research participants, focusing on ‘staying in the territory’ in the face of long-standing, multiple, complex violence, is a conscious response that becomes possible when violence-as-invisible-power reshapes people’s subjectivity. Thus our focus and analytical frame of violence-as-invisible power has been helpful for seeing and understanding not only the effects of power on people’s agency – both stifling and stimulating – but also their agency in response to power: their visible, everyday resistance, as the expression of their re-shaped social subjectivities. If, as argued by Haugaard<sup>71</sup> (2002), power is constituted and created through the confirmation and

<sup>66</sup>Y. S. Lincoln and E. G. Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1985).

<sup>67</sup>Y. S. Lincoln and E. G. Guba, ‘Chapter 6: Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions and Emerging Confluences’, in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2nd ed., eds. N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln (London: Sage, 2000).

<sup>68</sup>H. Bradbury and P. Reason, ‘Conclusion: Broadening the Bandwidth of Validity: Issues and Choice Points for Improving Quality in Action Research’, in *Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice*, 1st ed., eds. P. Reason and H. Bradbury (London: Sage, 2001), 447–55.

<sup>69</sup>J. Pettit and A. Mejia Acosta, ‘Power Above and Below the Water-Line: Bridging Political Economy and Power Analysis’, *IDS Bulletin* 45, no. 5 (2014): 9–22.

<sup>70</sup>R. MacGinty, ‘Everyday Peace: Bottom-Up and Local Agency in Conflict-Affected Societies’, *Security Dialogue* 45, no. 6 (2014): 548–64; R. MacGinty and O. Richmond, ‘The Local Turn in Peacebuilding: A Critical Agenda for Peace’, *Third World Quarterly* 34, no. 5 (2013): 763–83; and C. Moser and C. McIlwaine, ‘Participatory Urban Appraisal and Its Application for Research on Violence’, *Environment & Urbanization* 11, no. 2 (1999): 203–26; other contributions in the present Special Issue of Peacebuilding.

<sup>71</sup>M. Haugaard, ‘The Constitution of Power’, in *Power: A Reader*, ed. M. Haugaard (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 305–28.

reproduction of social order, then it can also be undermined, through the dis-confirmation and alternative re-configuration of the social order, by re-shaped social subjects.

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