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La Doble Condición: Physical Impairment and Internal Displacement in Colombia

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LA DOBLE CONDICIÓN:

INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT AND PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENT IN COLOMBIA

by

Max M. Counter

B.A., Colgate University, 2010

A thesis submitted to the
Faculty of the Graduate School of the
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of the requirement for the degree of
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This thesis entitled:

“La Doble Condición: Physical Impairment and Internal Displacement in Colombia”

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The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we
Find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards
Of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.

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ABSTRACT

Counter, Max M. (M.A., Geography)

La Doble Condición: Internal Displacement and Physical Impairment in Colombia

Thesis directed by Assistant Professor Joe Bryan and Associate Professor Jennifer Fluri

This thesis evaluates Colombian landmine victims' intersecting experiences of physical impairment and internal displacement. As victims of political violence, landmine victims are entitled to reparations under the 2011 "Victims and Land Restitution Law" (the Victims' Law). The constant struggles associated with claiming these reparations, however, constitute re-victimizing experiences for landmine victims that in turn produce an indeterminate citizenship. The difficulty in claiming reparations forms a key piece of the constellation of factors that ground landmine victims' experiences of disability. Disability for landmine victims has a distinct spatiality that cannot be fully understood apart from their experiences of internal displacement. Their understandings of disability are informed by memories of past rural livelihoods that become closed off in the forced transition to urban contexts. Disability is eminently political, arising from political violence and sustained through social processes of neglect.

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INTRODUCTION

There is no shortage of scholarship on violence in Colombia. As a point of departure, I must recognize a certain sense of guilt in choosing to focus on violence and in so doing contributing to Colombia's well-cemented reputation as a site of violence. French political theorist Daniel Pécaut notes that Colombia experienced extended decades of peace in the first half of the twentieth century. He is equally keen, however, to point out that these periods of peace are often overlooked: "Colombia has no unifying myth. Colombia invented its only myth: that its entire history has been violence" (Pécaut 1996). That being said, Colombia is in a pivotal historical moment in which a potential peace may emerge. I believe it is essential to understand how victims of Colombia's armed conflict are living that moment.

Since 2012, the Colombian state and the FARC rebel group (Colombia's largest) have been in continuous peace talks in Havana, Cuba. These are not the first peace talks between the government and the FARC, but thus far they have ushered in several milestones, including: an integral rural reform agreement (*reforma rural integral*) setting up a "land bank" to distribute titled-land to impoverished rural families and communities (Restrepo & Morales 2014); a demining agreement in which the state and FARC representatives will cooperate to identify and clear areas where the rebel group has placed landmines; and an historic cease-fire between these two parties that has been in effect since December 2014.

Prior to the 2012 peace talks, the Colombian state took another hopeful step towards peace with the passage of the 2011 "Victims' and Land Restitution Law" (the Victims' Law). The broad intent of this law is to offer reparations to over seven million civilian victims of Colombia's enduring armed conflict. With the passage of the Victims' Law, Colombian

president Juan Manuel Santos (2010-Present) broke ranks with previous president Álvaro Uribe Vélez (2002-2010). Santos chose to recognize Colombia's conflict as an internal armed dispute subject to international law as opposed to an "anti-terrorism" campaign (Amnesty International 2012; Cortés 2013). In so doing, millions of Colombians became eligible for official recognition as victims of armed-conflict.

There is no simple history to Colombia's contemporary conflict, but some of its deepest roots stem from conflicts transpiring between the mid-1940s to mid-1960s (Palacios 2006). This historical epoch is known simply as *La Violencia* (the Violence). During this time, fighting between peasants aligned with either the traditional Conservative or Liberal parties raged throughout the countryside. From this conflict arose Communist-inspired guerilla groups that began military operations against a state they felt served the rapacious ends of capital expansion at the expense of the rural poor. Two of the guerilla groups that formed during this period, the FARC (1964) and ELN (1966), are still active today. In the 1970s, large landowners (with tacit state approval) formed paramilitary organizations to combat the guerillas. These paramilitary groups would later provide security for Colombian drug cartels, and eventually became a fully autonomous paramilitary force known as *Las Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC). In the early 2000s, the Colombian state began large-scale military operations to severely weaken the guerillas. These operations, funded through US counter-narcotics support (and ostensibly carried out with paramilitary support) ushered in an intense wave of violence across Colombia. Although the intensity of violence has abated since the early 2000s, it is nonetheless ever-present in many regions including the Pacific coast, southwestern highlands, and eastern plains.

The 2011 Victims' Law is the Colombian state's single largest effort to provide reparations to those who have suffered over the course of this conflict. These victims include landmine survivors living on a small ranch called *El Arcota*, outside the town of Macondo, Santander. I first spent time with landmine victims at *El Arcota* in 2011 as a volunteer with the Colombian Campaign Against Landmines, a domestic NGO that founded and operates *El Arcota*. I returned to this site to conduct fieldwork in the summer of 2014, drawn in large part by a desire to more fully understand the violence that my acquaintances living at *El Arcota* had experienced. In many ways, the residents of *El Arcota* reflect a microcosm of Colombia's conflict. Poor, rural farmers who are neither directly allied with the state, guerillas, or paramilitaries suffer unspeakable violence that forces them to flee their homes. Such is *la doble condición* (the double condition) many landmine victims experience: severe physical injury coupled with forced internal displacement.

One of the most telling aspects about landmine victims' experiences is that becoming a victim involves more than simply suffering horrific violence. Under the Victims' Law, one only becomes an officially codified "victim" entitled to reparations after petitioning to be recognized by the national Victims' Bureau (*Unidad de Asistencia y Reparación Integral a Víctimas*). And while the landmine victims interviewed for this research had received such recognition, they were forced to consistently exercise their legal right to put forth *tutelas* against the state. Guaranteed by Colombia's 1991 Constitution, *tutelas* serve as official denouncements against the state when citizens feel their rights are threatened directly by public authorities or by public authorities' inability to uphold mandated rights (Decreto 2591 de 1991). Thus being a victim involves constant political petitioning in order to be made legible as someone deserving rights, followed by subsequent efforts to demand that those rights be respected.

The articles presented here seek to understand these experiences of victimhood from two interrelated perspectives. The first article concerns how the Victims' Law makes landmine victims' injured bodies legible as sites of biopolitical governance. I argue that despite having been officially recognized as victims, landmine survivors suffer additional victimization at the hands of municipal and state authorities in their arduous attempts to realize the reparations to which they are entitled. In so doing, landmine victims are remade as indeterminate political subjects who are officially recognized as conflict victims but unable to fully claim the rights this status entails.

The second article more fully concerns landmine victims' experiences of disability. Disability, as a form of "socio-spatial" discrimination (Imrie 1996) cannot be fully reduced to landmine victims' injured biology. Nor can their experiences of disability be divorced from their status as internally displaced persons and rights-bearing subjects under the Victims' Law. Drawing on Lefebvre's notion of the social production of space, I seek to show how these varying elements produce a spatial totality that landmine victims experience as disabling.

The two major foci of the present research (biopolitics per Foucault and disability/space per Lefebvre) provide complimentary perspectives on landmine victims' experiences. Both are situated in the political contexts in which landmine victims find themselves. They are victims of political violence that has left them with severe injuries for which they are legally guaranteed extensive reparations. The first article more directly takes on the types of political subjectivity landmine victims' express vis-à-vis the Victims' Law. In this instance, their injured bodies serve as an important facet of their political citizenship (Petryna 2004). The second article, while still grounded in landmine victims' expressions of political citizenship, focuses on the corporeality of

disability and how having a physically impaired body intertwines with forms of socially-induced discrimination. Read together, these articles attend to the salient political and corporeal dynamics of living with a landmine injury in the context of Colombia's enduring armed conflict.

The efficacy of the Victims' Law and the Havana Peace negotiations are matters of intense public debate in Colombia. At the same time, recent high-profile international focus on Colombia points to overall decreasing levels of violence on the one hand (Valencia, 2014) and increased violations of international humanitarian law on the other (Harnisch, 2015). Amidst these debates and contradictions it is important to not lose focus on how victims of Colombia's conflict live out their day- to-day lives. This focus is vital because whether or not peace is achieved, countless Colombians will still bear the physical, psychological, and emotional burdens of conflict. Perhaps there is no other significance to the present research than to provide nuanced understandings of those burdens, and victims' attempts to overcome them.

In order to respect informants' privacy, I have used pseudonyms consisting of a first name and last initial. I have altered place names to further respect privacy.

CHAPTER 1: BECOMING A VICTIM: RECOGNITION AND CONTESTATION UNDER COLOMBIA'S "VICTIMS' LAW"

INTRODUCTION

Based on fieldwork with landmine victims in Santander, Colombia, this research draws on notions of "precarious life" (Butler 2006, 2009) to examine the biopolitical governance of conflict victims and the structural violence biopolitical programs potentially reproduce (Koch 2006; Ticktin 2006, 2011; Gupta 2012). Through an analysis of Colombia's 2011 "Victims' Law" and the rights to reparations it guarantees to conflict victims¹, I examine how the Colombian state's efforts to foster its own life through the biopolitical care of conflict victims paradoxically imperils not only victims' biophysical health but further erodes their perception of state institutions and officials.

Even though landmine victims' injured biology is a formal object of state care and concern under the Victims' Law, I argue against conceiving of their lives in bare, biological terms (Agamben 1998). As will be more fully shown, the Victims' Law recognizes landmine victims' injuries within a specific socio-historical context. Due to this contextualization, their injuries at once transcend mere biology and thus cannot be understood simply in terms of "bare life". This shift away from bare life is necessary in order to highlight the Victims' Law's consequences on both biophysical health and the political subjectivity it compels. Given

¹ The Victims' and Land Restitution Law provides two broad categories of reparations: symbolic and material reparations to individuals, as well as land restitution to displaced individuals and communities. Land restitution is arguably the larger aspect of the Victims' Law. The present research, however, focuses primarily on material reparations to individuals.

landmine victims' arduous experiences in claiming reparations guaranteed by the Victims' Law, this research asks 1) how does "victimhood" serve a category by which life is made legible for biopolitical programs? and 2) how do the breakdowns of such biopolitical programs constitute re-victimizing experiences? Answering these questions sheds critical insight onto how measures intended to regulate economies of violence may in turn reproduce new forms of violence that entrench experiences of marginalization and further ground indeterminate forms of citizenship.

The landmine victims' interviewed for this research often referred to a singular "state" (*estado*) or "government" (*gobierno*) when referring to state agencies and officials they perceived as obstructing the delivery of their reparations. In using landmine victims' quotations, I have attempted to preserve their sense of a reified, singular state. However, I must mention that I do not conceive of the "state" in such terms throughout this analysis. Rather, I take the "state" to refer to an assemblage of institutions that lacks a completely unified coherence (Gupta 2012). In the case at hand, the "state" comprises multiple institutions and actors, including national-government bodies based in Bogotá, provincial state entities in Bucaramanga, and finally municipal bodies in Macondo. Across these varying nodes of the "state", officials work to both implement and impede the effective implementation of the Victims' Law. Accordingly, the Victims' Law, as a biopolitical program, is subject to the imperfect assemblage of institutions and actors charged with its implementation (Coleman & Grove 2009, 492).

To begin this analysis, I first situate the 2011 Victims' Law within the context of Colombia's enduring armed conflict, paying attention to the state-building functions it is meant to perform. Drawing on Foucauldian biopolitics, I follow with a discussion of life's ontologically "precarious" (Butler 2006, 2009) as opposed to "bare" or biological (Agamben

1998) nature, and how precariousness informs whose life is eligible for biopolitical attention and whose is not. I situate this analysis within a biopolitical framework in order to account for how the health and well-being of Colombia's victimized population becomes an explicit target of state care and intervention under the Victims' Law. Drawing on fieldwork conducted at *El Arcota* landmine support facility in Macondo, Santander, I next detail landmine victims' "re-victimizing" (*revictimizante*) experiences in claiming reparations provisioned by the Victims' Law, elucidating how such experiences add to the precarity of their situation and elicit a political subjectivity based upon mistrust of the state. Despite landmine victims' political efforts to seek redress, their status as victims anchors an indeterminate subjectivity that calls into question the Victims' Law's ability to mend relationships between victims and the state.

COLOMBIA'S VICTIMS' LAW

In 2011, the Colombian National Congress passed the "Victims' and Land Restitution Law" (the Victims' Law) in order to provide symbolic and material reparations to civilian victims of Colombia's enduring armed conflict. Now in its fifth decade, this conflict has involved protracted violence between state forces, revolutionary guerrilla groups, and right-wing paramilitary armies. With US counter-narcotics funding, the Colombian state carried out devastating campaigns against the FARC and ELN guerrilla groups beginning in the early 2000s. These military operations were often conducted with clandestine support from Colombia's largest paramilitary organization, the AUC (Ballvé 2012).

The state, guerillas, and paramilitaries have all been accused of a litany of human rights abuses, including massive forced displacement, kidnapping, torture, and landmine use (Radcliffe 2007; Asher 2009; Ballvé 2012). The AUC formally disbanded in 2005, and in 2012 the

Colombian state and FARC began peace negotiations in Havana, Cuba. Despite these efforts, the conflict continues and its legacies are still felt by large swaths of Colombia's civilian population. Due to this enduring conflict, over six million Colombians have been forcefully displaced, 900,000 murdered, 37,000 kidnapped, and over 11,000 injured or killed by landmines (Unidad de Víctimas: Red Nacional de Información 2015).

It is precisely these “victimizing acts” (*hechos victimizantes*) that the Victims' Law intends to address through providing symbolic and material reparations. As will be discussed more fully, these “victimizing acts” are subject to reparations only if they were committed on or after January 1st, 1985 by an officially recognized armed actor within the context of Colombia's internal conflict. After formally registering with the national Victims' Bureau (*Unidad de Reparaciones Integrales a Víctimas*), victims are eligible for an array of reparation measures including land restitution, health care support, education and job training opportunities, as well as substantial cash indemnities.

Through the Victims' Law, the state hopes to “settle a moral debt” (*saldar una deuda moral*) with conflict victims, who comprise an estimated 14% of Colombia's total population (Santos, Vargas, Restrepo, & Molano 2011; Semana 2014). With the Victims' Law, the state also intends to (re)establish its legitimacy and efficacy both in the eyes of its own population as well as those of the international community (Restrepo & Morales 2014). That is, the Colombian state has attempted to “make itself live” via the Victims' Law by bolstering its international legitimacy as a protector of human rights, and through attempting to (re)establish relationships with citizens who have historically been peripheral to state concern (Restrepo & Morales 2014). In this manner, the national government's expression of care for vulnerable life helps constitute

its disposition as a liberal state (Reid-Henry 2014), who is not only able to exercise a politically liberal will-to-care over its population, but one whose ostensible concern for human rights makes it an attractive destination for international investment (Cunningham-Cook 2015).

Indeed the Victims' Law has played an important role in improving Colombia's international image, having been heralded, albeit cautiously, by the United Nations as a vital step in addressing the violent legacies of Colombia's armed conflict (Anselma 2011). On a 2014 trip throughout Europe to raise development interest in Colombia (in which German development bank KfW pledged \$100 million to post-conflict reconstruction), President Santos touted the Victims' Law and on-going peace negotiations with the FARC rebels, noting that:

Colombia is a different country today than in the 1980s: the drug cultures were all-powerful, they colluded with the paramilitaries which were also all-powerful, we were on the verge of being declared a failed state, and our security forces were very weak. In today's Colombia this would not happen (Mulholland 2014).

As Santos implies, it is precisely in "today's Colombia" that development interests can rest assured of not only operating in a secure country, but dealing with a government that cares deeply for welfare of its people. By taking seriously a moral imperative to recognize and retribute victims of Colombia's conflict, the state seeks to begin ushering in a phase of transitional justice by which the shift from a conflict to a post-conflict state will be brought about (Restrepo & Morales 2014). Such a push comes from a state that still wrestles with the legacy of being labeled everything from a "failing" to "weak" to "narco" state constantly teetering on "the edge of chaos" (Tate 2007, 224). Thus the Victims' Law emerges in a historical context in which the Santos administration is seeking to foster its own life by dedicating significant resources to fostering the life of citizens who have borne the horrific consequences of war.

A BIOPOLITICS OF VICTIMHOOD

The concern for conflict victims expressed through the Victims' Law can be readily understood as a tactic of governmentality, and more specifically as a form of biopolitics. Biopolitics describes the manner in which populations' biophysical health and well-being become explicit objects of governance. As Foucault explains, this notion of biopower arises when "the basic biological features of the human species [become] the object of a political strategy" (Foucault 2007, 1). This concern with biological features entails a dual-management oriented towards both the surveillance and training of individual bodies (anatamo-politics) and the larger, "biopolitical" goal of "making populations live in productive ways" (Coleman & Grove 2009, 493). However, biopolitical programs hinge on considerations of what constitutes "life" and subsequently which populations' lives are deemed valid targets of intervention.

Giorgio Agamben's distinction between *bare life* (*zoe*) and *biographical life* (*bios*) offers one interpretive framework for understanding the "life" biopolitical programs take as their object. Using Agamben's distinction, one can understand the life biopolitical programs grasp as a bare, biological entity whose physiological processes are to be maintained by outside intervention (Agamben 1998). Agamben's distinction between *zoe* and *bios* ultimately allows for conceptualizations of life as ontologically biological. That is, what fundamentally constitutes "life" can be attributed to mere biological existence. Sovereign power finds its expression as the ability to create a "state of exception" into which *bios* may be stripped of its political salience, and thus rendered bare, biological life, or *zoe*.

Agamben's framework has been used to understand the biopolitical governance of life in these "states of exception." Duffield (2010) traces the creation of a "global life-chance divide"

by which development initiatives seek to reinforce a strategic security division between insured and non-insured life (the latter perpetually placed in a state of exception through which they come to be understood as essentially bare-life) (Duffield 2010). In a similar fashion, Pandolfi notes the emergence of “human security” as discursive strategy arising in the military-humanitarianism nexus that justifies the transformation of those living in “states of exception” into depoliticized bodies in need of transformation via outside aid (Pandolfi 2010, 167). In the “states of exception” opened by war, Redfield further highlights the “minimal biopolitics” exercised by humanitarian organizations in their attempts to respond to the medical needs of bodies “in crisis” (Redfield 2005, 2013). While varied in their geographic applications, these analyses point to the emergence of bare, biological life within “states of exception” and the varying strategies for governing this life.

“Bare life”, however, goes beyond questions of mere biology. Judith Butler critiques the possibility of life as fundamentally biological, and maintains that “life” can only be understood as a product of specific social and historical contexts (Butler 2006, 2009). In contrast to Agamben, she argues that life is fundamentally “precarious” as opposed to biological. As ontologically precarious, “life” relies “fundamentally on social and political conditions, and not only on a postulated internal drive to live” (Butler 2009, 21). That what is considered “life” is intrinsically contingent upon socially mitigated frames (i.e. it is “precarious”) helps explain “precarity”, or the politically induced condition in which some populations’ lives have greater exposure to injury, suffering, and death (Butler 2009, 25).

Life may certainly be made to appear “bare”, as if it were nothing more than mere biology. Yet those discursively rendered as “bare life” may certainly understand their lives in

socially and historically situated terms that transcend “bare life” (Malkki 1996; Ticktin 2011). “Bare life” is a socially mitigated process; life can only be apprehended as “bare” through social frames that allow its portrayal as such. That what can be considered “life” (whether it be bare or not) is ultimately contingent upon these frames is what gives life its ontologically precarious character (Butler 2006, 2009). Nonetheless, life understood as “bare” may also be subject to greater precarity, or situations in which it is exposed to greater instances of injury, suffering and death. Exposure to precarity is itself a socially mitigated process, again pointing to the fact that even lives understood as simply “bare” are subject to processes that infuse such life with a social character. Efforts to counteract precarity similarly are contingent upon the mobilization of social forces to respond to life recognized as suffering.

Accordingly, biopolitical attempts to curb precarity, such as Colombia’s Victims’ Law, cannot be understood as responding to bare, biological life, but rather to populations whose life is deemed socially and politically salient, or “morally legitimate” and thus worthy of care (Ticktin 2011). Bare life is always a reflection of the political processes that produce it, and life discursively constructed as “bare” never loses this political dimension. As Ticktin further maintains, even those whose bodies have been ostensibly rendered “bare” in certain contexts nonetheless maintain political options, albeit those options may be undesirable (such as choosing to infect oneself with AIDS in order to receive political asylum) (Ticktin 2006, 35).

Thus who will be “made to live” and who “let to die” is not merely a project of saving biological life, but a moral and political process of defining whose lives are worthy of recognition and care, and whose are not (Pratt 2005; Fassin 2009; Ticktin 2011). The criteria concerning which lives do and do not deserve reparations are made explicit in the Victims’ Law.

Under this law, twelve recognized *hechos victimizantes* or “victimizing acts”² are recognized as specific threats to life. These victimizing acts, however, must have been committed by officially recognized actors (including the national army, the FARC or ELN guerrilla groups, or the now defunct AUC paramilitary organization) on or after January 1st, 1985, in order to be eligible for material reparations.³ Those recognized by the law are portrayed as having a “double vulnerability” (*doble vulnerabilidad*) through both a violation of their rights as citizens as well as a “lack of favorable socio-economic conditions” (Santos, Vargas, Restrepo, & Molano 2011). It is thus socially and historically specific “vulnerable” life, and not apolitical, suffering and bare life, that the Victims’ Law takes as its explicit object of intervention. Through reparations intended to promote the health and well-being of such vulnerable lives, the Victims’ Law, at least in its ideal instantiations, seeks to mitigate the precarity to which such lives have been exposed through armed conflict and its consequences.

The internally displaced landmine victims residing at *El Arcota* fit the Victims’ Law’s recognition criteria as “vulnerable” life due to their injuries’ direct relation to Colombia’s armed conflict. As an officially recognized victim category under the Victims’ Law, landmine survivors and their severely injured bodies have been made targets of state care and concern. Through the Victims’ Law they are entitled to an array of state-financed reparations, such as emergency and long-term humanitarian assistance, sustained medical attention (including the

² These acts are: forced abandonment of land, “terrorist acts”, death threats, sexual assault, forced disappearance, displacement, homicide, landmine accidents, loss of goods, kidnapping, torture, and recruitment of child soldiers

³ As Moreno (2014) explains, the 1985 cut-off date is to “cover “emblematic cases” such as the holocaust of the Palace of Justice (November 1985), the crimes of three presidential candidates, the extermination the Patriotic Union, and the first victims of the Paramilitary offensive” (Moreno. 2014, 157)

provisioning of prosthetic devices and physical therapy), education and job training opportunities, and cash indemnities.

Parameters on which types of violence constitute “victimizing acts” are key to determining whose life is and is not “vulnerable” and thus deserving of reparations. In narrowing this “field of recognizability” (Butler 2009, 5), certain lives are erased from consideration. That is, they are not socially recognized as deserving state care and protection. Indeed, the Victims’ Law’s discounting of those who were victimized before 1985 or those who at one time pertained to an illegal armed group substantially deviates from the Geneva Conventions’ norms on who may be recognized as eligible for protection in situations of armed conflict (Silva 2012). Erasing these lives from consideration certainly doesn’t help alleviate the root sources of violence (Ticktin 2011).

That being said, the present analysis concerns the violence experienced by those recognized *within* the Victims’ Law. Landmine victims residing at *El Arcota* support facility are officially defined as “vulnerable” life by the Victims’ Law due to their status as physically impaired and internally displaced persons. How such “vulnerability” comes to be managed is a key determinant of their experience as victims. Having been recognized as “vulnerable” life, landmine victims’ precarity serves as a precondition for state reparations. It is through these lenses of vulnerability and precarity, then, that landmine victims’ impaired bodies are made visible to state institutions. The following sections will show, however, that this is ultimately a mitigated visibility given that landmine victims’ recognition by state officials does not entail full recognition of the reparations to which they are legally entitled under the Victims’ Law.

FIELDSITE: EL ARCOTA

El Arcota is located in a peri-urban area between Bucaramanga, Santander and its small suburb Macondo. Technically zoned as falling within Macondo's urban confines, the municipal government of Macondo is the main entity responsible for coordinating and providing reparations for *El Arcota's* residents. At the same time, the state government seated in Bucaramanga (Santander's capital) is also legally obligated to provide support. These obligations stem from *El Tacabal's* designation as a "Victims' Defense Organization" (*organización defensora de víctimas*). Founded in 2008 by Alejandro S., the Santander director of the NGO "CCCM", *El Arcota* offers shelter, food, psychological support, and juridical assistance to displaced landmine victims and their families. Alejandro began *El Arcota* in 2008 by purchasing the small plot of land next to a river in between Bucaramanga and Macondo, and restored its small concrete ranch house in order to offer a fully functioning kitchen, expansive patio and three bedrooms capable of housing approximately ten people.

Alejandro's individual efforts, however, only encompass a fraction of the factors that gave rise to *El Arcota's* existence. It is a site whose existence is predicated upon Colombia's astronomical levels of both landmine accidents and internal displacement, which have stemmed from over five decades of continuous conflict. This is a conflict that has been sustained by international flows of capital; profits from the international narcotics trade, coupled with international military financing to combat the drug economy, have all helped fuel this conflict. As will be further elaborated, landmines have played a key role in this economy of violence. *El Arcota's* placement in the peri-urban space between Bucaramanga and Macondo is partially based upon the metropolitan area's relatively shielded history from the violence that has raged throughout northeastern Colombia. At the same time, the medical infrastructure in Bucaramanga,

coupled with strong NGO presence (from groups such as the Colombian Red Cross, and Handicap International) provides additional rationale for *El Arcota*'s placement in this area.

In its six-year existence approximately 150 landmine victims and their families have lived at *El Arcota*, usually for a period of about six months. At any given time roughly ten people are living at *El Arcota*'s facilities. While at *El Arcota*, landmine survivors and their family members are provided with essentials such as food and housing. *El Arcota* also has dozens of chickens, a few goats and cows, as well as a small garden plot on which landmine victims can grow various crops in order to contribute to the sustainability of the farm. Alejandro explains that growing crops and tending to livestock at *El Arcota* is meant to provide landmine survivors with an "occupational therapy" similar to the types of agricultural labor they practiced before their accident.

Even though their injured biology is the main target of intended state intervention and care through the Victims' Law, landmine victims cannot be fully understood as *homines sacri* possessing only bare life (Agamben 1998;). Much less can *El Arcota* be merely understood as a camp where ostensibly bare life is stored while waiting for death (Biehl 2001). Landmine victims' transcendence of "bare life" stems from the biographical-historical significance (*bios*) infused within landmine injuries themselves. Indeed, determining the historical cause of an injury is an integral first step before someone may be recognized by the national Victims' Bureau and thus eligible for reparations. As Martín O., a program director for the national governments' national landmine agency explained to me:

If there's a victim that arrives at the Victims' Bureau without an arm, declaring 'I was a victim of a landmine accident 10 years ago', the Bureau in the first place has to exercise good faith. That is, they have to believe him or her. But they have 60 days to investigate the

case to see if it is true or not. Because the disability could have been caused by a landmine or it could be a different type of injury caused by a different situation. A traffic accident, for example. Therefore there must be an investigation to see if the injury was caused by a landmine or not. Not all who declare to be victims can be included if they are actually not.

As Martín demonstrates, the Victims' Law makes stark biopolitical determinations about which injuries constitute a victimizing act worthy of recompense and which do not. Landmine victims' bodies, constructed as testaments to the atrocities inflicted on innocent civilians, reflect what Connell (2011) describes as "social embodiment", or "the reflexive process that embroils bodies in social dynamics and social dynamics in bodies" (Connell 2011, 1370). The "social embodiment" of landmine victims' bodies is evidenced by the annual April 4th "lend your leg" (*remángate*) national holiday, in which many Colombian's roll up a pant leg to express solidarity with landmine victims. This public holiday, preceding the April 9th "National Victims' Day" demonstrates the degree to which landmine victims' bodies symbolize the devastation of Colombia's conflict. At the same time, through these holidays their bodies are incorporated as political emblems to demonstrate the states' willingness to attend to the moral imperative to assist victims.

While not associated with state entities, *El Arcota* reflects this moral imperative to care for conflict survivors in its concerted effort to ensure assistance to landmine victims. Bucaramanga's University Hospital of Santander has some of the best medical infrastructure in the country and medical staff specializing in treating landmine injuries. Accordingly, *El Arcota's* strategic location allows landmine victims access to these medical resources. Prior to *El Arcota*, displaced landmine victims often lived in temporary group homes throughout Santander which Alejandro contends also clandestinely housed former guerilla and paramilitary combatants, thus imperiling the well-being of civilian landmine victims forced to share the same space. Alejandro

founded *El Arcota* precisely to give displaced landmine victims a more secure place to live. Drawing on French anthropologist Marc Augé's dichotomy between places/non-places, he explained to me:

The Colombian armed conflict has created “non-places”, experiences of alienation and fragmentation, of loss of identity, disintegration, and the degradation of social fabric. In juxtaposition to the loss of identity of the non-places caused by the Colombian armed conflict, the landmine victims at *El Arcota* recollect and reinvent their identities that became fragmented at the moment of their accident.

This “recollection” and “reinvention” of identity hinges, according to Alejandro, on repairing *el tejido social*, or “social fabric” that armed conflict tears apart.

Beyond receiving food and housing assistance, residents of *El Arcota* receive administrative support from CCCM staff related to claiming restitution rights owed to them by Colombian state under the Victims' Law. Sara S., co-director of *El Arcota* explains, “We offer support, assistance, and an orientation towards the rights they have as landmine victims.” As will be shown later, such support often comes through juridical assistance in formally denouncing perceived governmental inability to provide legally mandated restitution measures. It is precisely in these instances of advocating on behalf of landmine victims' legal rights to reparations that *El Arcota* goes beyond a mere camp simply attending to landmine victims' injured bodies. Indeed, key to repairing the “torn social fabric” Alejandro alluded to above is ensuring that landmine victims are recognized not just as injured bodies, but as rights-bearing subjects entitled to reparations and recognition in light of violent political conflict. Ultimately, Alejandro's efforts in maintaining *El Arcota* seek to ground landmine victims' lives within frames of recognizability that not only posit them as “life”, but as life worthy of attention and biopolitical care. That is, the

precarity of their lives is to be mitigated, albeit oftentimes despite local officials' inability or refusal to fully recognize victims' reparation claims.

Situating Landmine-induced Displacement

While multiple forms of violence have been deployed over the course of Colombia's conflict, landmine usage has been a horrific and constant feature. The state, guerilla, and paramilitary groups have all used landmines throughout the conflict, and these weapons have injured or killed roughly 11,700 Colombians over the last twenty-five years (Unidad de Víctimas: Red Nacional de Información, 2014). Landmine accidents have been recorded in thirty-one of Colombia's thirty-two states, with the first recorded instances dating back to the early 1970s in Santander (HispanTV 2014).

Landmine accidents disproportionately affect rural farmers who encounter these weapons in the course of tending to land. Farmers hired by the state to manually eradicate coca fields also constitute a sizeable portion of landmine victims. Álvaro Jiménez Millán, national director for the Colombian Campaign Against Landmines explains:

Landmine victims are the poorest Colombians, the ones that live in the agricultural frontier. They live in the most economically depressed zones, the ones most distant from hospital centers. They are people who live in rural areas under miserable conditions in which there isn't access to electricity or drinkable water (HispanTV 2014).

Mr. Millán goes on to conclude, "The use of landmines really is an aggression against the poorest and weakest Colombians." For most landmine victims, severe physical injuries forces them to flee their homes, producing what is often called the "double condition" (*la doble condición*) of physical impairment and internal displacement. That is, victimization plays out on

two scales: severe injury at the corporeal scale and forced migration at the national or international scale.

The injuries associated with landmines are no doubt severe. Lower leg amputations are common, although the loss of arms, hands, and eyes as a result of picking up un-exploded devices is also prevalent. While the Colombian state officially discontinued its use of landmines in 1999 after signing the 1997 Ottawa Mine Ban Treaty, guerilla and paramilitary groups continue to use these weapons. Eighty new landmine accidents were reported in 2014 alone (Unidad de Víctimas: Red Nacional de Información, 2014). Given that myriad armed-actors have been present in the northeastern region of Colombia in which *El Arcota* is situated, landmine victims rarely, if ever, know exactly whose landmine they stepped on. Roberto R., a 50 year old farmer who came to live at *El Arcota* after losing his lower left leg in a landmine accident in Cantagallo, Bolívar explained about his accident:

Everyone in the countryside is bad, the [government soldiers] and the paramilitary soldiers as well. If they had asked me in the hospital who was it that placed the landmine, I would have to say the government soldiers, although I don't know for sure. It's just that they were the closest.

Other residents of *El Arcota* expressed Roberto's same confusion. While most attributed the landmines to right-wing paramilitary forces that have been especially active in the region, the nature of landmines is such that it is nearly impossible to determine which armed group placed a landmine at any given site.

Due to their relatively safe history, Bucaramanga and Macondo have traditionally served as a prime "receptor" site for displaced people throughout northeastern Colombia, especially for landmine victims who relocate to the metropolitan area to flee violence and seek

medical treatment. Massive rural to urban displacement has been a key feature of Colombia's conflict (Zeiderman 2012, 2013), and landmine accidents function as discrete *limit events* that not only mark an extreme rupture in victims' lives (Riaño-Alcalá 2008), but also compel a *reactive displacement* due to an immediate, acute, and overwhelming presence of violence that leaves little to no time to weigh the potential benefits or harms of displacement (Engel & Ibáñez 2007). Macondo is currently the largest displaced landmine victim receptor site in northeastern Colombia, housing displaced landmine victims not only from Santander but also the surrounding states of Norte de Santander, Bolívar, and Arauca as well. Without exception, all residents of *El Arcota* were small-scale farmers whose landmine accidents had forced them to flee their rural, remote homes in search of sustained medical care to treat their injuries.

BECOMING A VICTIM

In order to become legally recognized beneficiaries of the Victims' Law, victims have to make a formal petition to the national Victims' Bureau, which conducts interviews and investigations to determine if a person's claims of victimization happened within the context of armed conflict. As a "demand driven program" (Ibáñez & Velásquez 2009), the Victims' Law requires the vast majority of potential beneficiaries to actively seek out political recognition of their victimhood status through initiating such petitions to the Victims' Bureau themselves. All landmine victims' at *El Arcota* had completed the official procedures to be included in the national Victims' Bureau and were thus entitled to the Victims' Law's reparation measures. Over the course of my interviews, however, several landmine victims discussed other survivors they

knew who, out of fear, mistrust, or lack of knowledge decided not to actively seek out inclusion within the Victims' Law.⁴

Despite their inclusion in the Victims' Bureau, landmine victims at *El Arcota* were forced to actively and continually re-engage with municipal and state offices in order to claim their reparation rights. It is in this constant necessity to petition and denounce the state that the Victims' Law's fissures appear. These fissures were particularly visible with respect to the myriad *tutelas* landmine victims had pending against state and local officials. *Tutelas*, enshrined in Colombia's 1991 Constitution, are formal denouncements citizens may put forth when they feel government officials are violating or failing to uphold citizens' rights. (Decreto 2591 de 1991). And it is precisely in these fissures that landmine victims experience a sense of re-victimization stemming from the Victims' Law's biopolitical breakdowns.

RE-VICTIMIZATION

Despite the Santos Administration's efforts to bolster its legitimacy via the Victims' Law, the humiliating difficulties and interminable delays in claiming full reparations under the Victims' Law have resulted in an acute sense of re-victimization for countless Colombians. As a biopolitical "make live" program intended to ameliorate the consequences of violence, the haphazard unfolding of the Victims' Law reproduces a violence that imperils victims' biophysical health insofar as housing, medical and other forms of assistance are delayed. Gupta (2012) highlights the breakdowns of biopolitical programs, arguing that the chaotic and often

⁴ Some victims, such as displaced afro-Colombian and Indigenous groups, may be offered inclusion *por oferta*. This means the state may offer them "victim" status without them having made an official petition. At the time of writing, DAICMA was working to draft similar legislation that would allow the same options for landmine victims.

arbitrary functioning of bureaucratic systems tasked with carrying out biopolitical programs—despite the care and good intentions of the actors involved—constitutes a structural violence insofar as such lapses deny life-saving assistance to vulnerable populations. For many Colombians seeking reparations under the Victims' Law, that violence not only affects their biophysical health, but also further erodes their perceptions of the state. In this sense, the structural violence reproduced by the Victims' Law refracts back upon the state, as the delays and in-efficiencies in implementing the Victims' Law's provisions call into question the state's legitimacy and ability to uphold its legislative mandates.

Drawing on Foucault's notion of government, Coleman and Grove (2009) highlight "state" power as "an assemblage of institutions, procedures, knowledges, etc., with little overall unity" (Coleman & Grove, 2009, 492). As a reflection of state power and a tactic of governmentality, the Victims' Law is thus subject to the varying capacities of the "assemblage of institutions" tasked with implementing its measures. The fragile connections between this "assemblage of institutions" are key to understanding the less than perfect implementation of the Victims' Law. This "assemblage" grew rapidly in Colombia during the 1990s due to a dramatic increase in state-operated human rights bureaus. Anthropologist Winifred Tate notes that the bureaucratic structure of the Colombian state's human rights' programs is both perpetually underfunded and beleaguered by consistent re-parceling and overlap. These facets ultimately produce an "endless loop" resulting in "the failure to provide reparations for the victims" (Tate 2007, 216).

The Victims' Law has contributed to this increase in bureaucratic structures. Beyond establishing two new national governmental organizations for landmine victims (the Victims'

Bureau's agency for Victims With Disability and the Directory for Integral Action Against Mines), the Victims' Law also requires myriad private and state health and social organizations to coordinate efforts in provisioning assistance to victims. It is often the disconnects between these various bodies that result in the structural violence against victims who are either denied restitution rights or forced to endure grinding delays in realizing such rights.

As I spoke with Tiana K., (who works with a national-government victims with disability agency) she explained that her office faced many difficulties in actively trying to identify landmine victims throughout Colombia. Additional difficulties surfaced in coordinating efforts with the national government's landmine assistance bureau, which itself is responsible for coordinating national responses to landmine incidents. Martín O., described this bureau's function as a godfather (*padrino*) responsible for coordinating various health and social entities' obligations under the Victims' Law, further noted the constant frustrations. He recounted stories of landmine victims he visited who decided to use their ill-fitting prosthetic devices as flower pots after giving up in the fight to receive a properly fitting device from their local health agency. He explained that many municipal health offices are unaware that they are obligated to provide such resources, or that they actively refuse to do so.

Apart from these national entities, municipal governments also struggle to meet their burdens regarding the Victims' Law. I accompanied Alejandro in meetings with municipal officials in both San Vallejo and Carmen de Chile (two small, isolated towns in western Santander that registered their first landmine victims in the early 1970s), and heard consistent refrain concerning national and state entities' failure to provide the necessary financial resources to municipal agencies who bear the brunt of the burden in attending to victims. Indeed, concerns

over the financial feasibility of the Victims' Law played a key reason for the bill's initial defeat in 2008 before its eventual passage in 2011 (Céspedes-Báez 2012). Legal commentators on the Victims' Law further note that "The decentralization of victims' social services is...likely to prove problematic because local governmental bodies have been particularly slow to respond to victims' needs" (Summers 2013, 234). Finally, the difficulty in implementing such legislation is further compounded by the fact that the Colombian state has a relatively weak institutional presence throughout much of the country, which helps generate and sustain a deep mistrust of state institutions (García-Godos & Andreas 2010, 513).

This sense of disillusionment with the government's ability to provide reparations under the Victims' Law has been widespread throughout Colombia (Stammel 2012), and in May 2014 resulted in a month-long occupation of Bogotá's *Plaza de Bolívar* by victims incensed over the government's perceived unwillingness to live up to its promises (El País, 2014). Jaime B., a landmine victim who founded Colombia's National Landmine Survivors' Network was instrumental in organizing the protests. In a TV interview in his Bogotá offices after the protestors were forced out of *La Plaza de Bolívar*, he explained:

It's been more than ten years since the signing of the agreement [the 1997 Ottawa Mine Ban Treaty] and landmine survivors are still fucked. The government has invested so much money in this problem, and landmine survivors are still fucked, aren't we? (HispanTV 2014)

Jaime's interview shows the extent to which landmine victims struggle to have their rights recognized by state officials, despite numerous agreements and laws recognizing them as rights-bearing subjects. Over the course of my fieldwork at *El Arcota*, landmine victims continually reiterated these deep-seated expressions of frustration. At the time of this research, all current residents of *El Arcota* had put forth several *tutelas*, or formal denouncements against

the local and state government. In any instance in which a Colombian citizen feels the government is failing to protect or provision legally mandated rights, her or she is entitled to put forth a *tutela*, which serves as an official denouncement of the state's abnegation of responsibilities as well as a demand of redress. Most landmine victims at *El Arcota* had anywhere from between five and ten pending *tutelas* against either the local government of Macondo or the state government of Santander. The majority of these *tutelas* concerned the Victims' Law, arguing that local or state authorities had failed to provide any number of restitution rights (such as new prosthetic devices, housing assistance, job training, and even basic school supplies) that the Victims' Law explicitly provisions.

In 2014, all current residents of *El Arcota* as well as Alejandro put forth a collective *tutela* against the state government of Santander who, per a Victims' Law judicial ruling, was obligated to support *El Arcota's* main operating costs (most notably the provisioning of food and shelter) given this site's capacity as a an "organization of victims' defense" (*organización de defensa de víctimas*). Receiving such assistance took on additional importance after the passage of the Victims' Law because the majority of international support for *El Arcota* (coming from organizations such as the Barcelona-based *Movimiento per la Pau*), discontinued given that the Colombian state would now be responsible for provisioning financial support (Hernández 2015, 30). As I conducted my fieldwork, *El Arcota's* economic situation was so tenuous that Alejandro feared he would have to shut it down in the near future. The collective *tutela* (still pending at the time of writing) against the municipal and state government was Alejandro's last hope for getting state financial support. Gil's sense of mistrust towards the state was only exacerbated by this situation, as he said to me one morning: "from our astonished viewpoint, this

is the indignant situation the government entities have brought upon the victims and victims' defense organizations.”

It is in the context of this “indignant situation” that not only Alejandro, but the landmine victims I interviewed at *El Arcota* and the larger Bucaramanga metropolitan area, see themselves as they seek to claim reparation rights guaranteed by the Victims' Law. To be sure, the national government officials with whom I spoke also expressed a sense of indignation, most notably at the difficulty in identifying victims and the perennial lack of funds needed to implement restitution programs. Indeed, concerns about the financial feasibility of the Victims' Law have been ever present both before and after its passage (Moreno 2014, 162) . And while international organizations (including the UN and EU), non-governmental organizations, and even many landmine victims praise the Victims' Law's objectives, it is the difficulty in implementing the law's restitution measures that has become, for many, its defining feature. Such delays had very real implications for not only for landmine survivors' corporeal recovery but also for their perception of the state.

The minimal biological imperatives of landmine victims' injuries had been addressed by the time they arrived at *El Arcota*. However, as Alejandro explained, treating such injuries isn't simply a matter of “giving them a prosthetic device and calling it good.” Prosthetic devices are subject to wear and tear that has significant effects on landmine victims' bodies. Roberto, who had lost his left leg below the knee, bore extreme discomfort with his prosthetic device due to the wearing away of its silicon liner. When the local government refused to provide a new one, he put forth a formal *tutela* or denouncement; after one year, a judge ruled in favor of Roberto and forced the government of Macondo to provide a new liner. Despite this small victory, Roberto

was incensed after travelling ten hours by bus to Bogotá to be fit for a new prosthesis, only to be told the Victims' Law allows for replacements once every five years. Waving a stack of his medical and insurance documents in the air, he exclaimed that the Victims' Law is riddled with *travas*, or obstacles such as these in order prevent victims from actualizing their rights. As Roberto puts it, "This isn't an attention route. It's a route to the abyss!"

In much the same way, Juan S., felt he had also been re-victimized by the state. At just fifteen years old, Juan lost his right eye and three fingers from his left hand after accidentally picking up a landmine in a pile of trash on his family's farm in Hacarí, Norte de Santander some 293 kilometers north of *El Arcota*. Currently eighteen years old, he had been living at *El Arcota* off and on for the last three years. As we sat down together, Juan introduced himself and then immediately began telling me about how and where his accident occurred: "I went to the hospital in Bucaramanga, where they performed an eye surgery and removed three fingers from my left hand. I thought I was going to die, that I wasn't going to see my family again. "

Overall, Juan had adjusted relatively well to his time at *El Arcota*. He managed to get a day job at a diesel shop, where for roughly five dollars a day he worked as an engine apprentice. At nights he took classes at the local middle school, and hoped to enroll in vocational mechanical classes after his graduation. Juan was the only current resident of *El Arcota* who had found full time employment, in spite of the fact that the Victims' Law specifies job placement assistance as a right for landmine victims. In fact, it is precisely in attempting to realize this right that Juan was first forced to bear the brunt of the Victims' Law's slippages in implementation. The local government of Macondo had indeed offered him a job as an assistant on a construction site, yet it

was a job Juan was unable to accept. This instance was particularly upsetting to Alejandro, who explained:

Juan expressed that he was uninterested in the job [due to] the lack of tension in his eye and his inability to grab with his left hand...the government made him sign a document saying that he, as a victim, was rejecting the job. Judge for yourself the arbitrary injustice the government is committing.

Like Roberto and Juan, the other residents of *El Arcota* had their litany of grievances. These often played out in seemingly mundane interactions, forming part of landmine victims' daily existence. Even small omissions, such as the local government not providing school supplies so that Roberto and Juan could attend class put a significant financial strain on *El Arcota's* operations as Alejandro was often forced into his own pocket to provide for these amenities. These small, daily omissions typically ended up extracting quite a heavy toll. One morning I watched Francisco P., who had lost his eyes and forearms when he picked up an unexploded mine, deftly handle a cell phone despite the fact he didn't have hands. On the other end of the line was a government official from the local health office, confirming Francisco's upcoming medical appointment. She explained, however, that the office wouldn't be covering his transportation costs (what would amount to a roughly 10,000 peso or five-dollar cab fare).

Francisco correctly explained the government was responsible for such costs, and became progressively more frustrated as he argued back and forth with the woman on the other end of the line. Even five dollars was a substantial burden, one whose cost could impede Francisco from accessing his medical appointment. More apparent than anything, however, was the visible frustration and humiliation he felt as he was forced to lecture a government official about her responsibilities to victims. After handing the phone to Alejandro so he could take care of the rest of the conversation, Francisco was shaken enough that he no longer wished to continue our

interview. He simply commented, “As you can see, the government promises us rights, but it is the first one to violate them.” Instances like these, not to mention the ten pending *tutelas* he had against the local government, sustained Francisco’s distrust of the state. And as these *tutelas* petitioning for housing and medical assistance continue to drag on, Francisco’s physical health all the while continued to degrade.

All told the local government did indeed provide some support to the residents of *El Arcota*, including eventually covering Francisco’s monthly housing costs (this support coming only after a *tutela* that took over eighteen months to wind its way through the court system). However, in an email Alejandro sent me recapping 2014 at *El Arcota*, he comments, “We can only say that the mayor’s office has not adequately addressed survivors’ needs.” Thus despite the ambitions of the Victims’ Law to not only foster victims’ life and establish the state as an entity concerned with their well-being, it in many ways seems to have had the opposite effect. At *El Arcota*, landmine victims’ corporeal recovery is consistently imperiled due to the difficulty of accessing reparations, as their already low perception of the state becomes further eroded. This situation forces Alejandro to rely on support from non-governmental agencies (such as the Colombian Red Cross and Handicap International), as well as an informal network of friends and family in order to keep *El Arcota* operational. As he puts it, the government is leaning on him (*el gobierno recuesta en nosotros*) to offer support services that it is legally obligated to provide.

RESPONSE

Despite these difficulties, landmine victims were not passive in their situation vis-à-vis the Victims’ Law and were engaged in constant efforts to (re)assert their status as citizens

entitled to state protection. As mentioned, residents of *El Arcota* had actively put forth several *tutelas* denouncing the government for failure to live up to its obligations under the Victims Law. They were also engaged in symbolic protest, refusing in 2013 and 2014 to participate in the government's April 4th "lend your leg" holiday recognizing landmine victims. Such sentiment is perfectly crystalized in a photo circulated by the Colombian Campaign Against Landmines of Isidoro (a resident at *El Arcota*) holding a sign reading, "We civilian landmine victims will not participate in public celebrations this April 4th because the government simply rolls its sleeves up and makes promises it doesn't keep."

Landmine victims throughout Santander were also involved in public forums concerning the Victims' Law's implementation. While visiting the small town El Carmen de Chile, Alejandro and I participated in a regional meeting of leaders from landmine survivor networks from across Santander. Jaime B., the founder of the National Landmine Survivors' Network (and a key participant in the May 2014 take over of the Bogotá's *Plaza de Bolívar*) organized the summit as a way to politically empowering landmine victims to take part in local "participation tables" (*mesas de participación*), regarding the Victims' Law. However, as Jaime explained to me, most landmine victims lack the political aptitude to organize and participate in these forums. After the first session of the meeting, in which he displayed a Power Point explaining the various facets of the Victims' Law's *mesas de participación*, Jaime told me,

It's that we have a disability beyond our [physical disability]. This workshop is to leave tools. A lot of times the *mesas* aren't useful because people don't know what they are doing. We don't understand the true significance of the *mesas*.

Accordingly, he was meeting with landmine victims in Santander to explain how the *mesas* function and the importance of victims' organizations' participation. Marino M., who in a

very public ceremony on April 4th 2012 (Colombia's national day of recognition for landmine victims) was promised a new prosthetic device by Santander's governor that he has still yet to receive, constantly chimed in to reiterate Jaime's points. As the leader of Santander's Regional Landmine Survivor's network, Marino had been consistently involved in political activism on landmine issues, most recently in helping his hometown of El Carmen to procure United Nations assistance to begin demining projects in the surrounding farms. Extolling the other victims present at the meeting, he explained: "If we are participating [in the *mesas*] its so that we can avoid being manipulated. It's to give strength to our words. This is our voice!"

The general sentiment expressed by both Jaime and Marino was that the state wouldn't provision victims' restitution rights of its own accord, and that it was up to the victims to compel the state to honor its obligations. In both of their views, the state was not to be commended for passing the Victims' Law, but rather held accountable for its perceived unwillingness and inability to adequately facilitate restitution measures. As I spoke with other victims at the meeting in El Carmen over the next few days, I heard consistent refrain to the state's negligence. Such "omissions" took various forms including: having to wait over a year to get official victim status (as opposed to the sixty working days established by the Victims' Law), continued difficulty in receiving funds for housing to cover the displacement produced by landmines, as well as difficulty accessing the cash indemnity the law provides. Accordingly, per Jaime and Marino, the importance of participating in the *mesas* was to correct and discipline a wayward state.

CONCLUSION: INDETERMINATE CITIZENSHIP

Putting forth *tutelas* and participating in the *mesas* represents landmine victims' assertion of their political subjectivity as rights-bearing subjects in front of a state they often perceive as indifferent to their situation. Yet despite these constant efforts, there were also consistent reminders of their limited efficacy. The Colombia state intends to clear the entire national territory of mines within ten years (Anselma 2015) When I brought this statement up with Alejandro, he acknowledged the deadline, but in the end could just say, "I can only wonder how long it will take for them to take care of all the victims." It is this interminable sense of waiting that accompanies landmine victims' efforts to claim their reparations. Indeed, the indefinite wait to fully claim reparations seems to become part of the very fabric of their citizenship. Even though *tutelas* are stipulated to be resolved within ten days, most landmine victims at *El Arcota* had waited over a year for resolution on their varying *tutelas*. Many more *tutelas* were still pending, forcing the residents of *El Arcota* to spend their days simply waiting.

What is to be made of this indefinite state? Analyzing the indefinite detention of prisoners at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, Judith Butler cites the "anachronistic resurgence" of sovereign power within the field of governmentality. It is through this resurgence that the state "*produces*, through the act of withdrawal, a law that is no law, a court that is no court, and a process that is no process" (Butler 2006, 62). The sovereign suspension of law, court, and process validates the indefinite detention of prisoners at Guantanamo Bay within a field of governmentality, and this suspension serves a tactic to manage populations deemed to be both "dangerous" and "less than human" (Butler, 2006, 98). Far from enacting a sovereign suspension of law in order to justify the indefinite detention of "the humanly unrecognizable", the Colombia state's use of the Victims' Law as a tactic of governmentality created an "indefinite" situation for

landmine victims who must wait for indeterminate amounts of time in order to receive the reparations to which they are entitled. It is through their political attempts to claim such reparations, and the seemingly interminable delays that follow, that landmine victims are reproduced as indeterminate subjects.

Whereas the prisoners in Guantanamo Bay are confined to an indeterminate state between humans and something less-than-human, Colombia's landmine victims occupy an indeterminate state between *recognized* rights-bearing subjects and *realized* rights-bearing subjects. That is, after formally registering with the Victims' Bureau, victims are officially codified as being entitled to reparations. However, the endless succession of *tutelas* that they are forced to put forth not only shows how they must continually assert their status as victims, but that they are never fully recognized as victims. Their rights, as one landmine victim put it, are essentially *letra muerta*, or dead words. They exist on paper, but never fully emerge as tangible rights.

Through "settling a moral debt", the Victims' Law ultimately intends re-establish trust (*permite el restablecimiento de la confianza*) between the state and those victimized in conflict (Santos, Vargas, Restrepo, & Molano 2011). In many instances, however, the Victims' Law appears to produce indeterminate subjects who are recognized, but not fully repaired, as victims. This indeterminate state, in which victims are only able to realize a patchwork of the rights to which they are entitled, reinforces a structural violence in their expressions of citizenship. To be sure, they are able to realize some reparations (such as obtaining a state-financed prosthetic device), but are never fully able to demand the entire array of reparations to which they are entitled. The prospect of receiving their full array of rights, as evidenced by landmine victims' choice to consistently put forth *tutelas*, points to the fact that they continue to remain engaged

with state officials who never fully recognize victims' rights. It is precisely in these engagements that landmine victims are forced to bear the structural violence of a system that calls them forth as rights bearing subjects, yet never fully recognizes them as such (Gupta 2012).

It is important to mention that victims at *El Arcota*, while frustrated with the difficulty in claiming reparations, did not fault the Victims' Law itself, but rather the actors and institutions charged with carrying it out. In many ways, the Victims' Law is to be commended. It reflects a massive effort on the part of the Colombian state to recognize and attempt to offer some semblance of adequate restitution to the millions of Colombians who have suffered so heavily due to armed conflict. There is no doubt that the Victims' Law expresses a strong normative desire for justice. Although the state does not officially recognize responsibility for committing "victimizing acts", it nonetheless acknowledges its responsibility to make amends for the suffering so many Colombians have experienced. That being said, many of those victims find themselves as interminably ambiguous subjects. It is not my claim that the production of this indefinite state is the Victims' Law's intention. However, for residents of *El Arcota* this indeterminacy is an undeniable reality, and one that plays a defining role in their day-to-day lives.

In 2015 the Colombian state and FARC agreed to a historic de-mining program in which FARC members would help state officials find and clear the guerilla group's known landmine sites (Brodzinsky 2015). These efforts not only positively reflect on the on-going Havana peace negotiations between the Colombian state and the FARC, but also point to the potential de-mining of all of Colombia within the foreseeable future. However, for Alejandro and the landmine victims he supports at *El Arcota*, the question is not when Colombia will be free of

landmines but when landmine victims will be freed from the burden of continually struggling for what has already been promised to them.

CHAPTER 2: DIALECTICS OF DISABILITY: PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENT AND INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT IN COLOMBIA

INTRODUCTION: SITUATING DISABILITY

Geographic analyses of disability have been marked by transitions from medical, to social, to embodied theoretical framings. During disability geography's "social turn" in the mid-1990's, medical models of disability (which posit 'disability' as an individualized, pathological facet of functional limitation) were heavily critiqued. Per the social model, disability is understood as a form discrimination against people with impaired bodies and minds insofar as "ableist" ideals create myriad architectural and attitudinal barriers for those whose bodies or minds deviate from hegemonic, ableist norms (Oliver 1990). Within geographies of disability, the social model largely concerns understanding disability as a form of "socio-spatial injustice" (Imrie 1996) in which spaces are organized to keep disabled people "in their place" and "written" to convey to disabled people that they are "out of place" (Kitchin 1998, 344).

The social turn highlights spatial manifestations of discrimination against people with impairments. The social turn has also impelled the political project of "challenging ableist geographies" (Chouinard 1997) by critically analyzing disabling uses and understandings of space. These critiques are central to the socio-political project of promoting "enabling geographies", or places more amenable to the civic, social, and economic inclusion of persons with impairments (Gleeson 2000; Valentine 2003; Chouinard, Hall, & Wilton 2010).

Critiques of the social model posit that it in defining disability exclusively in terms of social oppression there has been too large of a shift towards "seeing disability as nothing whatsoever to do with individual bodies or brains" (Shakespeare 2006, 31). Accordingly, many

currents within contemporary disability geography scholarship concern embodied conceptions of disability and impairment aimed at understanding how the interplay between physical corporeality and social context gives rise to spatially specific disabling experiences of exclusion or constraint (Chouinard, Hall, & Wilton 2010).

The present research, premised on Colombian landmine victims' intersecting experiences of physical impairment and rural-to-urban internal displacement, considers how their embodied experiences of severe physical injury are conditioned by legal, social, and physical facets that ground and perpetuate experiences of disability. Drawing on Henri Lefebvre's positioning of the physical body as a key element in the production of space, this research examines how *space* as a set of social relations—rather than discrete “spaces of” labor, housing, recreation, etc. — produces disability. As Lefebvre maintains, bodies are essential to the production of space (Lefebvre 1991, 61). This theoretical disposition takes into consideration the relationship between embodiment and the social-production of space, and thus synthesizes social models of disability with calls to pay greater attention to embodied, physical corporeality. Influenced by concern with the socio-spatial production of disability I ask, 1) what is *disabling space*? and 2) How is *disabling space* produced in the forced rural-to-urban migration experienced by internally displaced landmine victims?

Answering the above mentioned questions requires approaching “space” not as a static, Cartesian container, but as a series of relationships between both material and immaterial elements. In this sense space is not a bounded entity or volume, but is rather lived as *experiences* of constantly evolving sets of relationships between physical bodies, built environments, abstract representations and psychic perceptions. Exploring disability through Lefebvre's “three-

dimensional dialectic” of *spatial practice--representations of space--spaces of representation* offers insights into the socio-spatial production of disabling space (Lefebvre 1991; Schmid 2008). I then turn to the notion of a *negative dialectic* (Adorno 1972; Gordillo 2002) to highlight how landmine victims’ experiences of disability, especially as they pertain to labor, finds spatial expression in the contradictory relationship between rural and urban milieu in the context of internal displacement. Such an analysis is essential to understanding the myriad settings that give rise to the production of landmine victims’ experiences of disability in their capacities as both physically impaired and internally displaced persons.

Internal displacement in Colombia, involving both individuals’ and communities’ forced migration due to acute levels of conflict, typically involves rural to urban movement (Zeiderman 2012, 2013). Landmine victims often become internally displaced in their search for medical treatment and need to escape further violence. In so doing, they must navigate experiences of severe physical injury in the context of forced rural to urban migration. As such, their experience of disability is grounded in the interface between rural and urban contexts. Rural geographies of disability largely draw on medicalized, as opposed to social and embodied, notions of disability. This positing of disability as a primarily medical issue suggests a need for more theoretically nuanced understandings of rural disability (Philo, Parr, and Burns 2003; Bryant and Pini 2010). Examining disability in the context of rural to urban forced displacement not only offers insight into the production of disabling space, but considers how landmine victims’ pre-accident lives in rural areas influence their experiences and understandings of disability in the urban settings to which they have fled and relocated.

In order to understand how disability is socio-spatially produced in the context of rural to urban internal displacement, the relationship between several factors must be considered, including disability legislation, abstract urban planning schema, built environments, social perceptions, and embodied experiences. Each one of these facets is particular to a specific time and place. Situating Colombian landmine victims' experiences of disability requires placing Colombia within an "uneven global capitalist order" (Chouinard 2012, 2014) as well as an examination of the legislation that defines landmine victims as "disabled", and thus makes them knowable as "disabled" people in the eyes of the state. This recognition of being a "disabled" victim, as will be further elaborated, is a key component in determining the provisioning of state-financed reparations. Within the context of internal displacement, landmine victims' mobile capabilities, political organization efforts, and interactions with built and social environments are key to assessing how they experience, navigate, and challenge disabling productions of space. As the subsequent analyses will show, Colombia's 2011 Victims' Law not only plays an integral role in defining and attempting to retribute disabled conflict victims, but also in producing experiences of disability.

THE PRODUCTION OF IMPAIRED BODIES

Most contemporary scholarship concerning geographies of disability has been confined to the "Global North." It has thus failed to recognize "Southern perspectives" on disability and has largely ignored the role of neocolonial relations in the production of impairment and disability in the "Global South" (Meekosha 2008; Chouinard 2012, 2014). As Helen Meekosha maintains, "Disability in the Global South is firmly linked to western/northern imperialism, centuries of colonisation and globalization" and that non-recognition of this fact constitutes a "grand erasure" within disability studies (Meekosha, 2008, 3). To be sure, the physical impairment wrought by

landmines in Colombia is intricately tied to the international relations Meekosha highlights. The contours of Colombia's enduring five-decade civil conflict have some of their deepest roots in the country's highly unequal distribution of land and the entrenched exclusion of political parties outside the traditional Liberal and Conservative parties (Palacios 2006). However, the full nature of this conflict cannot be understood outside of an international context.

This protracted conflict has entailed violent confrontations between Marxist-inspired guerrilla groups vying for a more equal distribution of land and right-wing paramilitary armies initially established to protect large-scale landowners. Meanwhile, the Colombian state (despite having been accused of both tacitly and in some cases directly supporting paramilitary armies) has been engaged in wide ranging military operations against both guerilla and paramilitary groups (Ballvé 2012). In the wake of failed peace negotiations with FARC guerillas in the early 2000s, violence throughout the Colombian countryside between guerilla, paramilitary and state forces reached endemic levels. The international cocaine trade, which currently sees billions of dollars of revenue stemming from markets in the United States and Europe exacerbated the conflict as guerilla and paramilitary organizations' use of cocaine to finance their operations impelled violent conflict over the control of productive lands and trade routes. Additionally, the United States' Plan Colombia aid package in 2000 gave the Colombian military greater leverage in carrying out military operations throughout the country (Radcliffe 2007, 387). This trend is set to continue, as the Obama administration requested an additional \$117 million to support military and counter-narcotics operations in Colombia throughout 2016 (Anselma, 2015).

The consequences of this enduring conflict for Colombia's civilian populations are no doubt severe as over six million people have been internally displaced. Additionally, over 11,000

people have suffered landmine accidents in the past twenty-five years. (Unidad de Víctimas: Red Nacional de Información, 2015). The Colombian state agreed to stop the usage of landmines in 1999 as a signatory party to the 1997 Ottawa Campaign to ban landmines. However, the continued use of these weapons by non-state actors (such as guerilla and paramilitary groups) means that dozens of landmine victims are recorded annually in Colombia. These weapons serve an array of strategic purposes including protecting coca fields and transportation routes—not to mention hindering the movement of US-financed Colombian forces. These uses of landmines detail how global flows of capital in both supporting and combating drug markets are integral in producing the physical injuries that landmine victims suffer as a consequence of encountering these devices.

As will be shown, landmine victims' experiences of disability often arise in their interactions with the built environment. Simply focusing on interactions between impaired bodies and built environments, however, would render disability apolitical. In the first instance, landmine accidents must be understood as an expression of political violence. Landmine victims' impaired bodies give testament to such political violence. At the same time, urban morphology designs are predicated upon political decisions about what to build, where to build, and how (or even if) questions of access for impaired persons should be considered. Added to this situation as landmine victims' rights as disabled persons, and the accompanying struggle to realize the rights to which they are entitled. Thus while discrete experiences of disability may give rise in seemingly mundane interactions with built environments, deep political currents both give rise to and sustain such experiences. Disability is eminently political.

The northeastern state of Santander (in which *El Arcota* is located) recorded Colombia's first landmine victims in the 1970s stemming from landmines presumably planted by the ELN guerilla group. Today, Santander's capital, Bucaramanga (along with its small suburb of Macondo) is the main "receptor" city for landmine victims from throughout the Northeastern states of Bolívar, Norte de Santander, and Arauca. The current residents of *El Arcota*'s facilities in Macondo had come to this area after fleeing their small *veredas* (what can loosely be translated as a municipally recognized collection of small, interconnected farms) located throughout Santander, Bolívar, Norte de Santander, and Arauca.

Many described their situation as *la doble condición* or the "double condition" of internal displacement and physical impairment. Both Colombian Campaign Against Landmine staff and landmine victims themselves used the term *la doble condición* to specifically describe the consequences of landmine accidents. The phrase ultimately refers to the fact that survivors had been victimized on two fronts: suffering severe injury and being forced to leave their homes. The specific nature of their injuries varied extensively, ranging from amputated lower extremities such as legs and feet to the loss of eyesight and forearms after having picked up an unexploded device. Intersecting experiences of physical impairment and internal displacement point to landmine victims' "uneven mobility capital" (Sheller 2011; Kaufmann et al. 2004). That is, they have been highly mobile at the national scale in the context of displacement, but have altered or diminished mobile capacities at the scale of the body due to physical impairment. The (im)mobilities associated with internal displacement and physical impairment influence landmine victims' experiences of disability from several vantage points including: what (if any) jobs and educational opportunities they are able to pursue, what places

they can access and under what terms, and how secure they feel in their ability to create and maintain social networks. Underlying all of these aspects is the fact that displacement and physical impairment are the primary facets of a politically defined “victimhood” status that makes landmine survivors intelligible as governable subjects under the auspices of Colombia’s 2011 Victims’ Law. Accordingly, landmine survivors’ experiences of disability cannot be understood apart from their legally codified status as “victims with disability.”

LEGISLATING DISABILITY

Even though disability studies has been critiqued for an almost exclusive reliance on social theory produced within the “Northern” metropole (Connell 2007, Meekosha 2008), Colombian disability legislation applies many of the insights of the “social model” of disability. The 2011 Victims’ Law is the dominant legislation governing landmine-induced disability, although Colombia’s national congress also passed Law 1618 in 2013, which aims to codify rights for Colombians who have become disabled outside the context of armed conflict. Both pieces of legislation specifically construct disability as a matter of social discrimination as opposed to physiological trauma.

Colombia’s 2011 Victims’ Law, designed to provide integral reparations to civilians affected by armed conflict, recognizes twelve distinct categories of “victim” including “internally displaced person”, “torture victim”, and “landmine victim”. Within this typology, victims may be further recognized as “victims with disability” who either 1) experienced physical or mental disability before becoming a victim, 2) experienced physical or mental disability as a result of a victimizing act, or 3) became physically or mentally disabled after experiencing a victimizing act. More generally, Colombia’s Bureau of Attention and Integral

Reparation to Victims (one of the main national government agencies tasked with ensuring victims rights under the Victims' Law), defines "victims with disability" as those who:

[B]eyond having experienced a victimizing act, present a functional diversity (whether physical, sensorial, intellectual, mental, or multiple) and who, in interacting with society, confront barriers that impede the full exercise of their rights. ("Víctimas del Conflicto Armado Con Discapacidad" 6, 2014).

The Bureau goes on to state: "disability is a result of discrimination and exclusion by a society that does not understand human diversity, and consequently, has failed to effectively include people with disabilities" ("Víctimas del Conflicto Armado Con Discapacidad" 6, 2014).

In keeping with the general principles of social models of disability, the Victims' Law maintains that disability is a socially induced form of discrimination against those with "functional diversity" (*diversidad funcional*). "Functional diversity" recognizes that people with impairments still have functional capacities, although these expressions of capability may deviate from those grounded in able-bodied norms. Disability is not posited as arising from a victim's impaired body, but rather from exclusion by a society unable or unwilling to accommodate bodies that vary from able-bodied norms. The Victims' Law is also careful to use the terminology "victim with disability" as opposed to "disabled victim" to convey that disability "comes from without" (i.e. is produced by external social factors) and is not an intrinsic facet of an individual's identity (Unidad para la Atención y Reparación Integral a las Víctimas 2014, 11). Throughout the course of my fieldwork, the landmine victims with whom I spoke almost exclusively referred to themselves as "victims" (*víctimas*) as opposed to "survivors" (*sobrevivientes*). They rarely, if ever, referred to themselves as "victims with disability." As Alejandro, the founder of *El Arcota* explained to me, he used the term *víctima* precisely because

it is a juridical term signifying landmine victims' status as rights-bearing citizens under the Victims' Law.

In addition to the Victims' Law, the Colombian state recently adopted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities through Law 1618 of 2013. Article 1 of Law 1618 states:

The object of the present law is to guarantee and assure people with disabilities' effective exercise of their rights through inclusion measures, affirmative action, reasonable adjustments and the elimination of all forms of discrimination stemming from one's disability (Congreso de Colombia, Ley Estatutaria no.1618, 2013).

This legislation goes on to define "people with disabilities" as those with:

physical, mental, intellectual, or sensorial impairments who, through interacting with diverse barriers (including attitudinal), find their ability to equally participate in society impeded" (Congreso de Colombia, Ley Estatutaria no.1618 Art. 2, 2013).

This legislation reflects social models prevalent within the United Nations' international disability framework. That is, disability is not portrayed as facet of one's biology, but rather as a form of socially produced discrimination grounded in specific barriers that prevent people with impairments (physical, mental, or otherwise) from fully participating in societal affairs.

I often found the official disability frameworks detailed by both the Victims' Bureau and the Ley 1618 reiterated by professionals associated with disability issues. Referencing the wording of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Marta S., a law professor specializing in disability rights at the University of Saint Thomas in Bucaramanga explained to me that the phrase "person with disability" is ultimately meant to depersonalize disability. This depersonalization disconnects disability from one's body and places the blame for disabling experiences squarely on the shoulders of a non-accommodating society. She

mentioned that upon beginning her pro-bono work with the Santander Network of Persons with Disabilities (a regional non-governmental organization dedicated to disability issues) she was sternly, albeit kindly, corrected by a group of wheelchair-bound women for using the phrase “disabled person” as opposed to “person with disability.” These women, in tending towards the latter term, were attempting to dissociate “disability” as an intrinsic facet of their bodies. Rather, they were pointing disability as a social condition they were forced to live “with”.

As she was telling me this story, we pulled up in her car to the university entrance. She pointed to the barricaded checkpoint entrance and in an exasperated tone commented, “Look. How is a person with a wheelchair supposed to get through this gate? They can’t. Where is the braille lettering for blind people? Nowhere. This is an *injustice*.” She was again echoing sentiments underlying social models of disability. The “injustice” Marta highlighted in this situation stems from the fortified architectural features of the university that hinder or prevent people with physical or sensorial impairments from independently accessing the campus.

DISABLING SPACE

As Marta expressed her frustration at the un-accommodating university entrance, she keenly observed that the inaccessible features of the university went beyond questions of mere physical construction. The gated and policed entrance of the university, specifically designed to prevent un-invited individuals’ access to campus, symbolized the university as a demarcated, set-apart zone in which certain bodies were allowed and others not. While physically impaired bodies in and of themselves may not have been the “unwelcome bodies” in the planners’ and architects’ minds during the gate’s construction, they nonetheless were forced to bear the exclusionary effects of such designs. For people with impaired bodies, these designs may have

truly disempowering consequences. As Pierre Bourdieu comments, “Architectonic spaces whose silent dictates are directly addressed to the body are undoubtedly among the most important components of the symbolism of power” (quoted in Prigge 2008, 46). When one’s body does not conform to the “silent dictates” presupposed by architectural forms, that architecture serves to reinforce the powerlessness, and hence abjection, of impaired bodies (Anderson 2005).

While Colombia’s 2013 Law 1618 dictates that facets of urban morphology must be retrofitted to provide better access and accommodation for its physically impaired populations, such implementations are far from being fully realized and thus render many places as what Rob Kitchin (1998) refers to as “no-go” areas in which “implicit or thoughtless designs include the use of steps with no ramp; cash machines being placed too high [and] places linked by inaccessible public transport” (346). Such “no-go” areas are premised on how subjects, through their corporeality, experience and understand themselves as excluded from or constrained within varying places.

Henri Lefebvre is keen to point out the central role of the body in mediating these spatial experiences. He comments that “a practical and fleshy body conceived of as a totality complete with spatial qualities (symmetries, asymmetries) and energetic properties (discharges, economics, waste)” is a key material element in the production of space (Lefebvre 1991, 61; Simonsen 2005, 4). Such is the *spatial body*, or “a body so conceived, as produced and as the production of space” (Lefebvre 1991, 195). The body is not only conditioned by space, but plays an active role in the creation of space. For example, corporeal interactions with built environments (*spatial practice*) inform how space is abstractly conceived (*representations of space*) and psychically experienced (*spaces of representations*). At a certain level, these

conceptions and lived experiences become integral in the design of future built environments, which in turn influence corporeal spatial practice. Per this rendering, the body serves as a central mediating node in Lefebvre's spatial triad of *spatial practice--representations of space--spaces of representation*.

The place of the (dis)abled body in mediating the relationship between *spatial practice*, *representations of space*, and *spaces of representation* is key to understanding the production of space. Briefly, Henri Lefebvre outlines each element of this spatial triad as follows: *Spatial practice* relates to the physical (material) forms of built environments and individuals' routines and mobility opportunities conditioned within them. *Representations of space* encompass abstract, dominant representational codes (for example, the conceptual products of urban planners and architects), while *spaces of representation* encapsulate symbolic elements that ground a psychic state analogous to the "users' [lived] "experience of space" (Lefebvre 1991, 38-39; Harvey 2006, 280). These three elements have their three "phenomenological reference points" of the *perceived*, *conceived*, and *lived* that ultimately determine how space is experienced: through everyday social (spatial) practice, space is corporeally *perceived* through the senses; space is mentally and abstractly *conceived* with reference to dominant spatial codes often produced by planners, architects, geographers and other "spatial experts"; and finally space is *lived*, or experienced symbolically, corporeally, and psychically.

Per Lefebvre's three-dimensional triad, there are no ontologically separate "spaces" (Kipfer, Goonedwardena, Schmid, Milgrom 2008), but only *space* arising from the constant interplay of *spatial practice*, *representations of space*, and *spaces of representation* and their phenomenological correlates of space as *perceived*, *conceived*, and *lived*. As Schmid concludes,

the interplay of these phenomenological elements means that space is always—and at once beyond—a concrete materiality; it is an “experience” mitigated by the thoughts (conceptions) that produce spatial materiality and the corporeal encounter with such materiality that imbues it with a “lived-experienced element, the feelings that are invested in this materiality” (Schmid 2008, 41). Space does not exist outside of individuals and their social relations, but is rather the psychically experienced product of spatial subjects in whom *spatial practice* and *representations of space* confront each other in a three-part dialectic that sustains *spaces of representation* (Lefebvre 1991, 230). How, then, may space as *perceived* and *conceived* give dialectical grounding to space that is *lived* as disabling?

People have disabling experiences in discrete locations, and there is no doubt that the particular nature of those experiences varies from place to place. That being said, the aim of this work is not to highlight individual places that landmine victims experience as disabling. Rather, it is to understand how space as a social product grounds experiences of disability. In *The Production of Space* Henri Lefebvre argues against a Cartesian-container model of space by which we “fetishize space in a way reminiscent of the old fetishism of commodities” (Lefebvre 1991, 90). Marx proposed “de-fetishizing” commodities as entities in and of themselves in order to understand them as expressions of social relations. In much the same way, Lefebvre maintains that space cannot be understood as a discrete, bounded entity. He contends that “*(Social) space is a (social) product.*” (Lefebvre 1991, 26), meaning that *space* is continually (re)produced through the dialectical relationship of social processes. The three facets of this “three-dimensional” dialectic Lefebvre identifies (*spatial practice--representations of space--spaces of representation*) are not individual spaces; such spaces do not exist for Lefebvre. Rather, their

continual interaction gives rise to space that is phenomenologically lived. *Space* is the totality of these lived experiences, and is irreducible to any single experience.

As noted above, the *spatial body* by which “space is perceived, lived, and produced” (Lefebvre 1991, 162) is central to the production of space as a phenomenological totality. *Spatial practice*, defined as the competencies and routines of movement conditioned and dictated by (for example) the morphology of the built environment, presupposes the use of the body and its attendant facets such as hands and sensory organs (Lefebvre 1991, 40; Simonsen 2005, 7). Thus the physical integrity of one’s body heavily conditions expressions of spatial practice. This is in no small part related to the fact that abstract *representations of space*, such as the blueprints that give rise to urban morphology, presuppose a body that will access and utilize such places once they are given concrete expressions in built environments’ morphology. Finally, the relationship between how space is *conceived* via *representations of space* and how it is *perceived* via *spatial practice* gives rise to embodied, *lived, spaces of representation*. Per Lefebvre, space is not lived in a detached, immaterial manner but is rather experienced in and through bodies. Commenting on the centrality of the body to Lefebvre’s spatial triad, Simonsen (2005) concludes that lived experiences of space entail a “practical bodily involvement...in which the body constitutes a practico-sensory realm that is performed in the spatio-temporal rhythms of everyday life” (Simonsen 2005, 9-11).

The body, as the “practico-sensory realm” in which the three-dimensional dialectical relationship between spatial practice and conceptions of space meet and give rise to lived experiences of space, is thus a key element in spatial production. Bodies with physical impairments, in their expression of spatial practice and in relation to ableist representations of

space, underlie practico-sensory realms in which space is often lived in a constraining and exclusionary, and ultimately disabling, manner. The peculiarities of how such disabling space is produced will no doubt be highly variable across different settings. For internally displaced landmine victims' residing at the *El Arcota* support facilities, the physical peculiarities of their landmine-induced impairments conditioned experiences of disabling space. Ultimately, disabling space points to the social relationships producing space in a manner that grounds people with impairments' experiences of exclusion and constraint.

THE VICTIMS' LAW AND DISABLING SPACE

The following examples, drawn from field work at *El Arcota*, pay specific attention to landmine victims' status as rights-bearing subjects with respect to Colombia's Victims' Law, highlighting specific instances of landmine victims' spatial practice in its tense interplay with ableist representations of space and how such interplay gives rise to disabling space. All landmine victims interviewed for this project had been officially recognized by the national Victims' Bureau (*Unidad para la Atención y Reparación Integral a las Víctimas*), and were thus eligible for reparations under the Victims' Law. As shown below, claiming such reparations is another key facet of the production of disabling space.

Despite having lost his left leg below the knee in a landmine accident in Cantogallo, Bolívar, (some 190 kilometers northwest of Macondo) Arturo R. was able to walk four miles round trip each day between *El Arcota* and the local middle school in Macondo where he attended night classes. After two years, his prosthetic device had begun to show significant wear. Although he was engaged in a continual struggle with the local government to receive a new prosthetic device (which, per the Victims' Law, must be provided free of charge to landmine

victims) he was still able to make his daily walking commute relatively pain free. I accompanied Arturo one afternoon into Macondo's central square. In the municipal government's efforts to maintain the historical legacy of the colonial town, the square is surrounded by beautifully preserved buildings originally built from mineral wealth generated by Spanish colonists in the early 17th century. Arturo often had to visit the governmental administrative buildings in Macondo's central square to check on the status of the myriad *tutelas*, or formal denouncements of non-compliance, he had pending against the local government for its continued neglect in recognizing his reparation rights.

In keeping with the dictates of colonial architectural preservation, the roads leading into the town square transitioned from smooth pavement into gray and brown cobblestones. As we crossed the threshold from asphalt to cobblestones, Arturo commented on how walking on the bumpy, uneven stones not only made it more difficult for him to balance, but also produced a painful sensation where his knee connected to his prosthetic device. This pain was caused by the twisting his prosthetic device underwent as he sought to carefully place his feet over and between the cobblestone patchwork. In this instance, Arturo *perceived* space as he physically accessed the administrative center of the town for purposes of petitioning for his restitution rights. His perception was conditioned by how municipal urban planners *conceived* of the urban center as an historical reflection of urban morphology that needed to be maintained for aesthetic purposes to generate tourist capital. The pain he was necessarily forced to endure as he traveled to Macondo's colonial center (which is not serviced by buses nor prohibitively expensive taxis) (re)creates this place as an "ableist geography". This disabling experience surfaces in the interface between how Arturo corporally *perceives* Macondo and how town planners abstractly *conceive* of Macondo. In turn, Arturo's *lived* experience of space is largely defined by an

embodied sense of pain that he is forced to endure in performing the administrative tasks associated with claiming his restitution rights as a victim of Colombia's conflict.

Diego A., a former resident of *El Arcota* who lost his forearms and eyesight after picking up an unexploded landmine on his ranch outside of Hacarí, Norte de Santander, also navigated disabling productions of space in his attempts to realize restitution rights guaranteed to him by the Victims' Law. As a victim, he is entitled to monthly cash indemnities, which are directly deposited into his bank account. Diego selected Banco Agrario, one of Colombia's major banks and the main bank serving agrarian communities as his financial institution given the fact that it is the only bank present in his hometown of Hacarí, Norte de Santander. Diego was denied during his attempt to open his bank account in a Banco Agrario office in Bucaramanga in the weeks before he planned to return to Hacarí. This denial was due to his inability to provide fingerprint verification of his identity given that he was missing both of his hands. Despite the fact that he had all the necessary documents, his physical inability to provide a fingerprint left him with the humiliating option of either taking off his shoe in public to sign with his big toe or simply not opening an account. He chose the latter. Alejandro S., the founder of *El Arcota*, accompanied Diego on this humiliating excursion and later explained to me:

Not only is this an uncomfortable situation for everyone, but it also attacks the dignity of a victim without hands who simply wants to travel without being perceived and singled out in society. But that's not all. Every time that he would need to withdraw from his bank account he'd have to make a four hour trip from his ranch into Hacarí. He won't be able to withdraw at the only bank in town (Banco Agrario) and he will have to travel even further to Ocaña [another municipality in Santander] bearing even more transportation costs.

Diego's physical injury thus had a major bearing on how he *perceives*, or corporally experiences, the travel networks between his home and relatively distant banks given that the closest bank in

proximity refused him an account based on his injury. Certain non-abled bodies (namely those without hands) were left out of consideration during the design of the apparatus that make banks function as places of financial transactions. Their bodies did not figure into planners' abstractly *conceived* of space. It is not only the bank, however, that Diego experiences as disabling space—this sense of disablement further permeates into other facets of his life given that non-accommodation of his physical injury means he will be continually subjected to longer, more expensive travel routines in order to collect the monetary indemnity he is guaranteed as a victim of Colombia's conflict. The non-accommodating morphology of Banco Agrario and long travel networks are thus key material elements in Diego's *lived* experience of space as disabling.

While the physical nature of Arturo and Diego's landmine injuries are divergent, both have confronted disabling experiences of exclusion and constraint in their daily lives stemming from interactions with social and physical environments that are non-accommodating of their bodies' deviations from able-bodied norms. Even though the Victims' Law entails specific provisions to compensate victims with disability, the barriers landmine victims face on a near daily basis in claiming their restitution rights grounds this law as another facet in their experience of disability. For many landmine victims, including Arturo and Diego, their physical injuries give rise to *lived* disabling space in the disconnect between how they *perceive* space and how those who produce built environments *conceive* of space.

Experiences of disabling space, however, cannot be fully considered without taking into consideration the internal displacement many landmine victims face and the forced rural-to-urban migration such displacement entails. Disabling space in this context is conditioned by the relationship between landmine victims' previous experiences as rural laborers and their current

lives as urban residents. These facets ground landmine victims' understandings of both ability and disability in the context of internal displacement.

INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT AND DISABLING SPACE

Drawing on Lefebvre's spatial triad, the previous analyses highlight the confluence of elements that produce space that landmine victims experience as disabling. Space for Lefebvre is a unitary phenomenon, despite the fact that landmine victims *live* it differently in discrete places such as town squares, banks, etc. The fact that their physical impairment gives rise to internal displacement also means that landmine victims experience space across the rural and urban nodes that bound the trajectory of their forced migration. Over the course of my fieldwork with landmine victims living at *El Arcota*, I came to understand that their notions of *ability* and *disability*—especially as they pertain to labor—entail a spatial significance mapped onto their pre-accident lives as rural *campesinos* and their post-accident status as urban-based victims.

This sense of disability hinges in large part upon the difficulty in finding work and the often inhospitable character of urban relocation sites. As Ariel López, a rehabilitation specialist at Medellín's St. Vincent de Paul hospital explains:

The sense of up-rootedness and the nostalgia of not being able to return to their home is an incredible drama [for landmine victims], given that they find themselves with a disability that leaves them without work, in a city where they don't know anyone, having to watch their family go without necessities (El País 2015).

Dr. López makes clear that the forced urban relocation associated with internal displacement, coupled with severely curtailed labor opportunities, is a key challenge for landmine victims. Accordingly, urban resettlement and diminished opportunities for work are

fundamental facets in landmine victims' experiences of disability. These factors, as I show below, have a distinct spatiality.

The tension arising between landmine victims' perceptions of ability and disability forms what Lefebvre refers to as *contradictions of space*. He comments:

Sociopolitical contradictions are realized spatially. The contradictions of space thus make the contradictions of social relations possible. In other words, spatial contradictions "express" conflicts between sociopolitical interests and forces; it is only in space that such conflicts come effectively into play, and in so doing they become contradictions *of space* (1991, 365).

Examining the sociopolitical contradictions of the transition to capitalism experienced by the indigenous Toba of the Argentinian Chaco, Gaston Gordillo notes how memories of wealth and poverty amongst the Toba became spatialized between newly emergent sugar plantations (as sites of wealth production and wage labor) and the Toba's ancestral home in Chaco (as a site of material lack yet autonomy from capitalist labor relations). He argues that such memories point to a *negative dialectic* that underlies "the spatial inscription of wealth and poverty in their *connection and negation*: that is, in terms of what one is *not vis-à-vis* the other" (Gordillo 2002, 4).

For many of the landmine victims living at *El Arcota*, the sociopolitical situation giving rise to their status as physically impaired, displaced individuals found expression as a *negative dialectic* representative of contradictions between ability/disability and rural/urban. Being "disabled", per a negative dialectic rendering, can only be fully understood in contradistinction to being "abled". How landmine victims at *El Arcota* understood themselves as disabled within the urban context of Macondo cannot be fully understood without paying attention to their notions of previously being "abled" within the rural sites where they experienced their accidents.

As Riaño-Alcalá reminds us, internally displaced Colombians are forced to remake self-understandings in light of being forced from their homes. Drawing on memories from the past is integral in this processes recreating a sense of self after having been displaced (Riaño-Alcalá 2008). In particular, memories of rural labor inform landmine victims' experiences of disability as they make the slow and arduous transition into urban labor contexts. These memories contrasting "pre-" and "post-" accident capabilities further point to a temporal aspect informing understandings of ability and disability.

Due to their injuries, very few landmine victims were able to perform the rural labor that defined their pre-accident lives. Most landmine victims at *El Arcota* previously worked as farmers, yet this livelihood was essentially foreclosed after their accident due to the severity of their injuries. After their accident and subsequent displacement, landmine victims' options for work in Macondo were at times further limited by their injuries, although a lack of formal education was another determining factor. Macondo essentially offered few options for work. Whereas the landmine victims at *El Arcota* were able to perform rural labor before their accident, they rarely found labor outlets in urban Macondo post-accident. This inability to find work after their accident was a key factor in landmine victims' understanding of themselves as disabled. Despite the fact that the Victims' Law specifically guarantees assistance with designing and implementing "productive labor projects", (re)insertion into labor markets is a defining post-accident challenge for landmine victims.

While the circumstances leading up to landmine victims' accidents were all certainly unique, they all shared the common feature of occurring in *el campo* or the rural areas where residents of *El Arcota* lived before having to flee as a result of their accident. Without exception,

all residents of *El Arcota* had previously worked and lived in agricultural contexts, with some landmine victims owning small farms while others worked as wage-laborers for larger farm owners. All were self-described rural people (*campesinos*) who mostly lived in *veredas*, loosely connected ranches typically located outside of small towns. Some victims had been born on the very ranches where they experienced their accidents. Others had migrated throughout northeastern Colombia, working as wage laborers on different farms until they happened to encounter a landmine.

As the mother of young son who, at seven years old suffered severe damage to his right leg after a landmine accident, Lucia along with her husband and two other children came to live at *El Arcota* while her son received continual treatment at the University of Santander's hospital in Bucaramanga. Due to her son's accident, they fled their farm outside of Tame, Arauca (some 340 kilometers southwest of Macondo) where she and her husband maintained a small farm. While at *El Arcota*, her husband had managed to find a job as a construction worker twenty minutes away in Bucaramanga, although his bus fare to get to and from work meant that there were no additional funds for Lucia's children to take the bus to school. I asked Lucia how Macondo compared to Tame, knowing that I would never get to visit the rural expanses of Arauca due to their designation as "red zones" (*zona roja*) marked by high guerrilla presence. She explained to me that the city was quite a shock for her and her family: "The city is another jungle, but instead of seeing cows all around you see cars. And it's the cars you have to watch out for, not the snakes. Instead of planting seeds that grow up tall to be a plantain tree, you work so that buildings grow taller."

While not a direct victim of a landmine, Lucia expressed a collective sense of disability her family experienced as a result of her son's accident. She commented on the back-breaking nature of her husband's construction job, and the isolation and constraint she felt while living at *El Arcota*. Whereas her knowledge of growing and raising crops in Tame had allowed her to contribute to the family's livelihood, she and her children were now entirely dependent on *El Arcota's* resources and her husband's construction job. The disabling experiences of constraint engendered by her son's injury found expression in Lucia's perceived inability to use her skill set within Macondo's urban confines.

Arturo also situated a sense of disability with respect to his previous agricultural labor. Unlike Lucia, who told me her family would never return to Arauca due to fear of reprisal violence from the FARC, Arturo did wish to return to Cantagallo, Bolívar where he suffered his accident. Cantagallo's proximity to the Magdalena River meant that most agricultural land was swampy and Arturo explained that his prosthetic device was useless in such terrain. Arturo dreamed of eventually enrolling in automotive classes to become a diesel mechanic, but finishing his required middle school education was proving arduous for the fifty year old. Although he was somewhat hopeful he would be able to complete middle school and then move onto high school before being eligible for automotive training, he consistently reiterated to me how difficult he expected the venture to be. In the meantime, Arturo was unable to find work and spent the majority of his time at *El Arcota* doing basic chores waiting to go to class in the evenings. In Cantagallo, Arturo worked from sun up to sun down on a several hundred-acre ranch. Yet these labor opportunities were unavailable to him after his transition to urban Macondo, engendering in him a sense of uselessness with respect to his labor capacities.

Even landmine victims who did find novel expressions of their labor after moving to *El Arcota* post-accident faced considerable disabling barriers. Jorge P., who had lost his eyesight and forearms after opening a gate on his farm that had been rigged with an explosive device, had been featured in a range of the Colombian Campaign Against Landmine's promotional material for artisanal bracelets that he, despite not having hands, was able to make with speed and dexterity. While he had begun selling the bracelets throughout Macondo's local schools, the municipal government eventually prevented him from doing so for reasons he chose not to explain. He expressed a deep sense of frustration at not being able to exercise what he described as his one way of generating income. Cut off from the means of rural sustenance he exercised on his family's farm outside Barrancabermeja (some 138 kilometers west of Macondo), Jorge attributed his disabled capacities for labor not to his injured body but to a municipal government he perceived as antithetical to his rights as a victim. In a follow up email that *El Arcota's* director sent me after I left the site, he explained that Jorge had formally denounced the local government for its actions in violating his right as a victim to engage in a "productive project." Thus Jorge would soon again be able to start selling his bracelets after a judge validated his denouncement.

With their own unique variations, the above histories expose how landmine victims' own notions of ability and disability are understood across a spatio-temporal spectrum; "ability" was largely associated with the capacity to perform rural labor before their accidents, while "disability" was most acutely experienced in stifled attempts to find labor outlets in urban Macondo after their accidents. That is, landmine victims' understandings of disability can only be understood in the contradictory spatial relationship between rural/urban situated within a pre-accident/post-accident time frame. Their accounts certainly aren't exhaustive of all landmine victims' experiences—indeed some landmine victims are able to return to the rural site of their

accidents and continue in the agricultural labor to which they previously dedicated themselves. Others had found urban labor outlets as chefs or motorcycle delivery-men. Nonetheless, their experiences of disability cannot be understood as statically situated. These experiences unfold across the rural and urban embodied experiences that bound internal displacement.

CONCLUSION: DEFINING DISABILITY

Paying attention to the spatial contours of disability as they unfold across rural-urban divides is a key facet of illustrating how many landmine victims themselves understand disability. Macondo was often spoken of as a place of exclusion and constraint, not only with respect to labor but also as the site in which the government's perceived neglect of their situation was made manifest. The conversations I had with landmine victims concerning their understandings of disability did not necessarily reflect the "social model" codified within Colombia's disability legislation, much less *disabling space* constitutive of Lefebvre's spatial triad.

Rarely, if ever, did victims speak about their physical injury in and of itself. That is, the context that gave rise to such injury as well as the constant struggle of living with such an injury all formed vital facets of victims' definition of disability. Another key element of this constellation was the sense of frustration and despair encountered via the Victims' Law. Whenever he sat down, Arturo customarily took off his prosthetic device and set it next to his chair. Over the course of one of our interviews, I felt that the rapport he and I had established over the weeks allowed me to ask a blunt question that had been continually on my mind: "What, for you, is disability?" Arturo smiled and pointed at his prosthetic device and said, "She is my disability" (*Ella es mi discapacidad*). He then proceeded to explain how "she" was breaking

down and how the government of Macondo was obstinately continuing to deny him a new one. Physical injury and governmental neglect are both key elements constituting Arturo's experience of disability.

Disabling space as a theoretical approximation to understanding disability based on Henri Lefebvre's three-dimensional triad certainly does not constitute a "Southern perspective on disability" (Meekosha 2008). It nonetheless makes room for considering the facets landmine victims identified as conditioning their experiences of exclusion and constraint (ranging from non-amenable urban morphology to governmental neglect/inability in providing legally mandated restitution measures). Additionally, the *negative dialectic* Gordillo takes up to understand Lefebvre's "contradictions of space" is sensitive to the fact that landmine victims' experiences of disability do not just take place in specific sites but are understood by landmine survivors themselves within a temporal framework that links multiple sites across rural and urban fissures in the context of internal displacement. Researchers of disability, especially in the "Global South" must be cognizant of multiple dispositions to understanding disability. Importantly, there is no homogenous "Southern" perspective on disability. That Colombia is often understood to be peripheral or semi-peripheral to the global metropole of disability studies also does not mean that key facets of "northern" disability theory are irrelevant. Disability legislation in Colombia clearly references the "social turn" of European and North American disability studies, as this legislation clearly defines disability as a socially produced form of discrimination rather than a purely medical condition.

It cannot be assumed, however, that landmine victims will espouse understandings of disability similar to those proffered in the legislation that intends to govern them as "disabled"

subjects. Accordingly, this research has aimed not only to provide theoretical nuance that allows understandings of the body in the production of (disabling) space, but to also attend to the factors landmine victims themselves identify as disabling obstacles. Perhaps ironically, the Victims' Law—as legislation meant to attend to landmine victims' disabled bodies—is a leading source of disabling experiences given the difficulties landmine victims' have in realizing the restitution rights it guarantees. To be sure, this must be contextualized with other factors such as non-accommodating urban infrastructure and the relatively few financial resources landmine victims command. These factors are further exacerbated by Colombia's history of conflict that gave rise to the accidents landmine victims experienced in the first place. Additionally, it is a conflict that prevents even further resources from being dedicated to their care and recovery.

As a theoretical framework for understanding the myriad elements that comprise landmine victims' experiences of disability, the notion of *disabling space* can perhaps play a role in the political project identified earlier of “challenging ableist geographies.” For Lefebvre, space isn't merely the static backdrop in which (political) action happens. Action and space are inseparable. To change society is, fundamentally, to change space, and vice-versa. What changes are necessary so that landmine victims no longer *live* space in disabling ways? A completely accessible built environment and governmental institutions that provide all the necessary support landmine victims need (as the Victims' Law proposes to do) seem like key material changes.

But what of the larger exclusions landmine victims face in having been dispossessed of both their (abled) bodies as well as their rural homes? The answer proffered by the Victims' Law is to provide material humanitarian and rehabilitative support, as well as the potential option of

land restitution. These measures seek to strengthen ties between victims and the state. To be sure, there are many state officials who are dedicated to effectively implementing governmental programs on behalf of landmine victims. Despite their good intentions, however, their efforts are often subject to a morass of bureaucratic breakdowns (Gupta 2012). On the other hand, many state actors have played a key role in perpetuating Colombia's conflict at the same time that other state actors help obstruct victims' access to reparations. Will continued engagement with the state prove continually disabling?

Lefebvre is keen to point out the possibility of reworking oppressive social relations. He refers to these efforts as *autogestion*: "Each time a social group...refuses to accept passively its conditions of existence, of life, or of survival, each time such a group forces itself not only to understand but to master its own conditions of existence, autogestion is occurring" (Lefebvre 2009, 135). The most fundamental challenge to the "ableist geography" of landmine victims' experience, I argue, is not through changes to urban morphology or even unencumbered access to state-provided reparations. A more radical challenge hinges on reworking the conditions that give rise to victimization in the first place. Landmine accidents cannot be fully understood apart from the property relations and international capital flows that give rise to the conflicts in which they are used. As long as the forms of structural violence that ground these relations remain, so too will disability (Gupta 2012; Chouinard 2012, 2014).

To be sure, there have been incredible efforts of apparent *autogestion* within Colombia that challenge these forms of structural violence. A notable example is the "peace community" of San José de Apartadó, Antioquia. After being forcefully displaced from the areas in and around San José by confrontations between state, guerilla, and paramilitary forces, members of this

community returned and actively asserted their non-participation in the conflict using varying techniques such as establishing alternative land registries and community institutions and cooperating with accompaniers from Peace Brigades International. Through this form of “alter-geopolitics” members of the San Jose peace community sought to actively create a peace that they viewed the state as unwilling to provide through declaring themselves non-participants in violence and setting up administrative structures that would give them a degree of autonomy from state apparatus (Koopman 2011).

These efforts are based on a level of community cohesion and resources that residents at *El Arcota*, however, do not have. Certainly *El Arcota* aims to assist landmine victims with the challenges they face post-accident, and it offers a strong, albeit small and temporary, place from which they can assert an active peace. That being said, landmine victims’ experiences of disability will exist as long as they must bear relationships with state institutions that are often unwilling or unable to provide integral support.

The extent to which their political organization efforts are able to change this situation will reflect the extent to which landmine victims may live space as something other than disabling. An “alter-geopolitics” (Koopman 2011) or “autogestion” (Lefebvre 2009) in which landmine victims and their allies can create an active peace amenable to their own flourishing independently of the state are perhaps the most fundamental manners for promoting enabling geographies. Places like *El Arcota* approximate these possibilities. However, the opportunities for landmine victims to completely extricate themselves from their tense relations with state organizations are certainly limited. Their opportunities to fundamentally challenge *disabling space* appear equally constrained.

In attempting to account for the social production of space, Henri Lefebvre was undoubtedly concerned with understanding how space is lived. This theoretical orientation has an incredible amount to offer in order to understand conflict and prospects for peace in Colombia. This is precisely because attending to space allows a particular sensitivity regarding how people live and experience war and efforts to end it. The potential production of peace in Colombia will be gauged by victims' opportunities to live space in manners they find enabling. Alejandro and *El Arcota's* work to repair Colombia's "torn social fabric", albeit limited and constrained, is nonetheless important in (re)producing space in such a way.

CONCLUSION

Severe corporeal injury is the most apparent effect of landmine accidents. And no doubt landmine victims' injuries significantly define their lives post-accident. These articles have endeavored, however, to de-center physical injury as the primary means of understanding landmine victims' lives. Their status as both officially recognized conflict victims as well as disabled persons is irreducible to the specificities of their injured biology. Becoming a victim only begins with physical injury. From there, processes of official recognition and political contestation are necessary in order to assert one's status as a "victimized" rights-bearing political subject. At the same time, these processes give rise to re-victimizing experiences. Furthermore, the disability landmine victims' confront transcends the particularity of their physical injuries. Unaccommodating built environments, governmental neglect, and structural inequalities are also fundamental elements of disability.

At a moment when the Colombian state is taking important steps towards ending conflict, countless victims still live the myriad consequences of that conflict everyday. As my fieldwork at *El Arcota* demonstrates, landmine victims and those who advocate on their behalf operate with constrained resources and political options. Far from finding greater reason to trust in municipal, state, and national public authorities, the individuals I interviewed over the course of my research had rather found new sources of distrust and disdain. Their means of support were typically drawn from entities outside the state including NGOs, family networks, and other forms of informal community assistance. Despite its scant resources, *El Arcota* nonetheless provides essential care and support for some of this conflict's most vulnerable victims. Like the peace community of San José de Apartadó, *El Arcota* signals the important work that organizations

outside of—and often in spite of—the state play in creating peace. If national legislative efforts such as the Victims’ Law are to have any success, it will undoubtedly be with the assistance of the people who make entities like *El Arcota* possible.

Landmines and physical disability only form a fraction of the mosaic of violence associated with Colombia’s armed conflict. The Victims’ Law sets forth provisions to attend to injured bodies, whether they have suffered due to landmines, torture, sexual violence, or kidnapping. The larger aim of the Victims’ Law, however, focuses on an even more expansive project: land restitution. The highly unequal distribution of land is a fundamental element of Colombia’s conflict and massive displacement of people and communities from their land is perhaps this conflict’s most defining feature. Once officially recognized by the Victims’ Bureau as “internally displaced”, displaced victims are eligible to participate in specialized judicial proceedings to reclaim land they were violently forced to leave or sell under duress. Through these measures, the Victims’ Law aims to restitute over six million hectares of forcibly abandoned land (Restrepo & Morales, 2014).

The present research signals both empirical and theoretical aspects to ground future research on land restitution in Colombia. Like landmine victims, land claimants experience exceptional difficulties in realizing the reparations to which they are entitled. Nonetheless, these reparations (whether they be a prosthetic device or a land parcel) are meant to (re)establish confidence between victims and the state, and by extension (re)affirm state legitimacy. The present research illustrates the state’s fundamental role in the production of *disabling space*. Land restitution also undoubtedly has spatial implications, most notably as a process of creating “state space” through the governments’ efforts to more fully incorporate dispossessed land into

the “national territory” (Lefebvre 2009; Brenner and Elden 2009; Ballvé 2012). That landmines are a key impediment to ensuring the safety of restituted land speaks to just one of the complications this state-building project will face.

Although these research foci directly concern violence in Colombia, they equally privilege how Colombians in varied circumstances work to contest such violence. Colombians’ engagement with government-directed initiatives such as the Victims’ Law are key to understanding how Colombia’s potential transition to peace will play out in the daily lives of conflict victims. Paying attention to these engagements is particularly important in order to highlight the violence that is reproduced in victims’ everyday lives due to their tense relations with public authorities. Parallel to these engagements with the state, however, many Colombian conflict victims are actively working to create peace and security on their own terms. If Colombia’s conflict will ever reach a semblance of resolution, it will be due in large parts to these latter efforts.

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