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INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S ACTIVISM IN GUATEMALA AGAINST 'MONSANTO LAW'

Faculty of Social Sciences
Master's Thesis
January 2021

ABSTRACT

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Master's Degree Programme in Gender Studies
January 2021

This thesis examines indigenous women's activism against the so-dubbed 'Monsanto law', in Guatemala, in 2014. It aims at informing about the gendered aspects of activism that have been eluded in other research. Scientific inquiry was utilised to analyse this social phenomenon via its associated discourses in the media, more specifically from news articles written about it. The data consists of articles published online by independent and mainstream media outlets. It comprehends articles written in English and Spanish; from circa 50 initial articles collected, seven were analysed. Critical Discourse Analysis was the method utilised to analyse the discourses present in the data.

The subject was chosen due to the fact that it is about Global South indigenous women's activism, and it is a struggle against a law that was an outcome of a free-trade agreement, CAFTA-DR. Being passed, the law would dictate the Guatemalan agricultural sector dependency on big American agrochemical and genetic engineering corporations, thus collocating at stake the indigenous and peasants' lives, land ownership and food sovereignty. Moreover, this is a case in which the activism achieved its intents, enhancing my motivation toward its analysis. The purpose of the study was to determine how did indigenous women's activism against the 'Law for the Protection of New Plant Varieties' manifest itself and how did gender, sex, race/ethnicity and class make part of that activism, unfolding the gendered aspect of this activism and formulating an understanding about a form of non-violent activism that worked toward the promotion social justice and equality.

Intersectionality is the methodology utilised to explore the multiple dimensions of the phenomenon and the coalition politics that emerge from it, whilst questioning canons. Hence, the theoretical framing initiates by acknowledging and analysing discourses and practices of racialisation/ethnicity, along with gendering, language, class differentiation, and religion regarding the Maya people in Guatemala, to understand how subjectivities and social differences are produced. The second part of the theoretical analysis concerns the structures of domination, such as patriarchy, racism or colonialism, and the power relations enmeshed in them. This theoretical framework is followed by the actual analysis of the data.

The data analysis shows that indigenous women's activism manifested itself at different levels; from activism towards the protection of Nature, the body-territory, the Maya identity symbolised by the corn and the indigenous people's right to food sovereignty. The research also reveals that gender, sex, race/ethnicity and class are all intermeshed in the activism of these women against the 'Monsanto law' in the same manner as they are intermeshed in the everyday lives of indigenous women in Guatemala. These aspects shape indigenous women's lives, collocating them both at the margins of the social system and in the front row of every struggle towards social justice simultaneously. One conclusion that emerges is that, even though indigenous women are leading the resistance to colonial structures and neoliberal policies, the level of awareness regarding their struggle is very low; it is diluted within indigenous people's activism as if it were a homogenous whole. A second important inference is that indigenous women's activism, as in the phenomenon at study, is what truly leads to the (return) to sustainability as a way of living.

Keywords: activism; Maya; indigenous women; social justice; gender; intersectionality; media analysis.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Currently, a central issue in Central America is the indigenous peoples' rights versus the extensive implementation of neoliberal politics. Although considerable research has been devoted to civil movements, activism and non-violent resistance by indigenous peoples in Abya Yala[1] in fields such as International Relations or Peace and Conflict studies, rather less attention has been paid to its gendered aspect. Within indigenous peoples, indigenous women are particularly dynamic in what regards activism toward human rights, land and food sovereignty. This is mostly recognised in the field of Women's studies, where we can find some research about the activism of specific groups of indigenous women's; however, it has yet to take the interdisciplinary leap. I have been interested in non-violent activism that promotes social justice, and it is my understanding that there is a lot to be learnt from indigenous women's action in that respect. The present work intends to shed some light over transdisciplinary dimensions of the activism of indigenous women by focusing on a specific historical event.

Being a former colony of the Spanish empire, Guatemala's society is structured over colonialism and is one of a particular complex linkage between gender and race, and language and class that result in marginalisation, exploitation and poverty of indigenous peoples. Adding to this, post-colonial foreign interests and economic influence largely contributed to the severe social, political and economic strife experienced during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. (Keen & Haynes, 2000; Booth et al., 2018). When I first learnt about a struggle led by indigenous women in Guatemala in the form of social activism against the 'Law for the Protection of New Plant Varieties' (better known as 'Monsanto law'), I immediately thought it would be an adequate topic for my research. Briefly, an indigenous-led social movement had claimed that the passage of 'Monsanto law' in June 2014 violated the Guatemalan Constitution and the Maya people's right to traditional cultivation of their land in their ancestral territories. In a country where more than half of the population subsides from small-scale agriculture, this law would have had a tremendous socio-economic and cultural impact, along with its toll on biodiversity. Eventually, the civil society organisations succeeded in getting 'Monsanto law' cancelled by September that same year.

I perceived this as a very interesting phenomenon to explore due to the multiplicity of dimensions that construct it – even a superficial assessment reveals how gender, sex, race/ethnicity and class

[1] Abya Yala is a decolonial term to refer Latin America and the Caribbean; it was the name given to this region by the Kuna ethnic groups of Panamá and Colombia before the arrival of Christopher Columbus. I refer to Abya Yala instead of Latin America as a means of decolonising my writing, since it appeals to the restoration of the knowledge of the peoples living in that region prior to the event of colonisation. It has been argued that utilising the term Abya Yala instead of Latin America is also a tool for denouncing the patriarchy and colonialism of the European gaze on the American continent.

are intermeshed in this Guatemalan grassroots movement situation and definition. Its analysis, therefore, had the potential to inform about the gendered aspect of activism that has been eluded in other research. I utilised scientific inquiry to analyse this social phenomenon via its associated discourses in the media, more specifically in news articles written about it and that are freely available online.

In this work, I intend to explore genealogies, those "deeply enmeshed networks" (Rowley, 2012) that refer to specific times and spaces. The analysis of genealogies means examining the conditions of emergence within the local feminist times and spaces to which they refer and asking what else was going on, what else informed local identities and politics. (Rowley, 2012; McCann & Seung-Kyun, 2016) This model should provide the best insights into contemporary feminist theoretical fundamental concepts, i.e., gender, difference, women's experiences, the personal is political and intersectionality, which are all about power relations and their articulation (Lykke, 2010; McCann & Seung-Kyun, 2016). It is my understanding that, by means of addressing such concepts, this model offers an appropriate basis for a proper feminist knowledge systematisation about the phenomenon at stake.

For the research work, I utilised the intersectionality tool to question canons, as well as to explore the multiple dimensions imbricated in the phenomenon and the coalition politics that emerge from it. As a methodology, intersectionality permits to bring together theory and activism and analyse what is at their junction, because it comprehends the complexity of interactions at several levels, such as lived experiences, social practices, institutions, representations and symbols. For this purpose, I briefly analysed the discourses and practices of racialisation/ethnicity, along with gendering, language, class differentiation, and religion regarding the Maya people in Guatemala. That analysis permitted me to acknowledge how subjectivities and social differences are produced there. The second part of the theoretical analysis concerned the structures of domination, such as patriarchy, racism or colonialism, and the power relations enmeshed in them.

Following the feminist epistemological tradition of knowledge production that pursues social transformation, the principal purpose of this paper is to formulate an understanding about some of the ways in which non-violent activism can work toward promoting social justice and equality. Hence the focus on the practices of indigenous women's activism against 'Monsanto law' in Guatemala, and the gender, sex, race/ethnicity and class manifestations and implications within those practices. The referred criteria for analysis underlie the research questions

formulated: (1) How did indigenous women's activism against 'Monsanto law' in Guatemala manifest itself? and (2) How did gender, sex, race/ethnicity and class make part of this civil action/ activism manifestation/ movement? From here, the analysis taps different layers of non-violent activism that contributed to the event in an attempt to unfold them: from activism about food and the environment and how it relates to gender, to activism regarding ethnicity/race, sex and social class.

The thesis proceeds as follows. Chapter two unveils the emergence of indigenous resistance in Guatemala, contextualising historical- and socially the movement against the 'Monsanto law'. This is followed by the literature review, in chapter three, which initiates by addressing theoretically feminist knowledge production, moving from there to the specificities of Maya women's activism, and finalising by presenting, in large strokes, a feminist decolonial approach to this movement. Chapter four presents the research data, providing detail about its collection, location and limits, and advances both the methodological considerations from the previous chapter and the methods utilised for the data analysis. Importantly, it also comprehends the ethical reflection about the research process. Chapter five introduces the reader to the analysed data and presents the analysis results; this results section includes some excerpts of the data and considerations about their linkages to the theoretical framework of the present research. Finally, chapter six discusses the main findings and advances some ideas for future research.

Audrey Lorde said that "There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives."[2], which is something that deeply resonates with my intention of embracing the complexity of this phenomenon. My hope was that a theoretical systematisation of knowledge about the movement against 'Monsanto law' would contribute to informing other non-violent forms of activism, positively impacting their outcomes, whilst conveying a feminist understanding of the specificities of indigenous women's activism for the field of Social Sciences.

[2] Lorde made this statement when delivering the address "Learning from the 60s" as part of the Malcolm X weekend celebration at Harvard University in February 1982. (source: BlackPast.org)

2 INDIGENOUS RESISTANCE IN GUATEMALA

This chapter presents a brief account of the indigenous resistance in Guatemala with the objective of contextualising it historical- and socially. Contextualisation is a key component of the analytical work for the present research; therefore, the following summary is both an introduction and a critical element of the analysis of indigenous women's activism against the 'Monsanto law'.

Guatemala[3] is a country of Abya Yala[4], located in the centre of what has been the Maya civilisation, or the civilisation of the Maya peoples. Maya civilisation reportedly extended from there to Belize, southeast of Mexico and, partially, to Honduras and El Salvador. This pre-Columbian society is estimated to have emerged in 2000 BC and to have expanded until the colonisation by the Spanish, in the 16th century. Guatemala attained independence from Spain in the 1820s, and the country has been under political, economic and social instability ever since, experiencing civil strife, military dictatorship regimens, political coups and a bloody civil war.

After achieving independence, the country experienced alternating governments by authoritarian rule and military regimes, coming under democratic rule in 1985. From 1954 onwards, guerrillas fiercely opposed to the non-democratic regimes, eventually leading to a 36 years-long civil war that only came to an end in 1996 via a peace accord negotiated by the UN[5]. (Booth et al., 2018; Encyclopædia Britannica, 2019; Keen & Haynes, 2000) During the civil war, government forces committed genocide against the Maya population, for which they have later been condemned in courts. Nonetheless, indigenous people in Guatemala continue their seek for justice regarding the many violations of human rights that happened during wartime. Currently, there is an ongoing trial of former civil defence patrollers accused of sexual violence against more than thirty Maya women between 1981 and 1985, known as the 'Maya Achí Sexual Violence Case'[6] (for an overview, refer to International Justice Monitor[7])

Before the Civil War, in 1945, women were conferred the right to suffrage, which they exercised to the extent of its constitutional limitations. This newly acquired right gave oxygen to other forms of political mobilisation and social action. (Rodríguez de Ita, 2011) Guatemalan women organised

[3] The official name is República de Guatemala (Republic of Guatemala).
[4] Abya Yala corresponds to what is commonly known as Latin/Central America and the Caribbean (cf. footnote 1 on page 1).
[5] The Guatemalan Civil War took place between the 13th of November 1960 and the 29th of December 1996.
[6] Evidentiary Phase of Maya Achí Sexual Violence Trial Set to Commence, by Jo-Marie Burt and Paulo Estrada. International Justice Monitor. The 22nd of April, 2019. https://www.ijmonitor.org/2019/04/evidentiary-phase-of-maya-achi-sexual-violence-trial-set-to-commence/
[7] International Justice Monitor: https://www.ijmonitor.org/?s=guatemala

to push for the recognition of women's civil rights; the Unión Democrática de Mujeres[8] (UMD), that emerged in 1946, and the Alianza Femenina Guatemalteca[9] (AFG), formed in 1947, are two examples of organisations that promoted solidarity, women's rights and overall human rights during the revolutionary period. (Keen & Keith, 2000; Rodríguez de Ita, 2011)

With respect to the Guatemalan economy, since the independence from Spain and Mexico (1821 and 1823, respectively), the U.S.A. started to take over. In a crescendo, the U.S.' influence over the Guatemalan economy accentuated after World War I and deepened after the democratic revolution of 1944, when a government pro-capitalism emerged. Regardless of the favourable government, the U.S. backed the bloody counter-revolution of 1953 motivated by further economic interests. The United States of America also provided the Guatemalan military government with arms and military aid for the scorched earth tactics that initiated in 1982 against the areas that allegedly supported the guerrillas, hence contributing to genocide of Maya people (also known as Silent Holocaust) that occurred between 1981 and 1983, during the civil war. Keen & Keith (2000) observe that providing counterinsurgency support to the Guatemalan government was a way of exerting pressure to the implementation of the "agrarian transformation" programs that would benefit the U.S., while collocating indigenous populations and peasants in a market dependency situation. The long civil war and the genocide led to a situation where, by 1985, 38% of urban wives and 56% of rural wives had widowed (Keen & Keith, 2000).

Along those turbulent years, the guerrilla movements survived and had their picks of activity. One of those moments, that also marked the advance of combined efforts of guerrilla movements, peasant organisations and trade unions, was in the early 1970s when the Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres[10] (EGP) was formed. EGP was later part of Unidad Revolucionária Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG), the coalition that proposed peace talks in 1989 and signed the peace accord with the Guatemalan government and army in 1996. The 1980s, with their dramatically high rates of poverty and a severe drop in the quality of life of Guatemalans, were another significant moment of cooperation for resistance, mobilising a coalition of different social groups to demand for change:

[8] Democratic Union of Women, in English.
[9] Guatemalan Women's Alliance, in English.
[10] Guerrilla Army of the Poor, in English.

> Led by United Guatemalan Workers[11] (UNSITRAGUA)… students, teachers, workers, shantytown dwellers, human rights activists, peasants, women's groups, and indigenous rights organisations joined together to form a cross-class coalition that called for nationwide general strikes to protest neoliberal policies that produce greater unemployment and higher prices for food basics and transportation - they were a civilian front for the rural guerrilla insurgency. (Keen & Keith, 2000, p. 466)

While it is clear that there were many actors and factors contributing to the end of the rampant violence in Guatemala, I would still like to highlight another significant event for the purpose of this thesis. In 1992, Maya activist Rigoberta Menchú was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her efforts on behalf of reconciliation and the rights of indigenous peoples and women (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2019). The international recognition of Menchú's "work for social justice and ethno-cultural reconciliation based on respect for the rights of indigenous peoples" (The Norwegian Nobel Institute, s.d.) provided international visibility both to the indigenous peoples' struggle for political and social rights and to the severe repression by the Guatemalan government. This collocated a fair amount of pressure on the government to engage in the peace talks that would lead to the reaching of an agreement between guerrillas and government forces in 1996. (Booth et al., 2018; Keen & Haynes, 2000)

Nevertheless, Guatemala is a country where violations of human rights, oppression of minorities, violence and crime flourish until today (IWGIA, 2019). The distribution of wealth among the population is very uneven, and poverty, especially rural poverty, is very high; in 2000, more than half of Guatemala's population, 6,4 million out of 11,65 million people, lived in poverty (World Bank report, 2003). According to the World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples[12], there are 21 different Maya communities in Guatemala, accounting for about 51% of the Guatemalan population, i.e., constituting a majority of the population, which makes this country a unique case in Central America. The majority of the indigenous people are those living in poor rural areas, subsiding from agriculture; therefore, indigenous peoples account for the country's poorer (IWGIA, 2019; World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples, 2018). Within this group, indigenous women face the greater challenges, including violence, economic

[11] Unidad Sindical de Trabajadores de Guatemala
[12] Guatemala. Updated January 2018. https://minorityrights.org/country/guatemala/

disempowerment, political underrepresentation and climate change (Mlambo-Ngcuka for UN Women, 2017).

There are many forms of activism, though some are perceived as more politically legitimate than others, and some are even questioned with regards to their identification as activism. Regardless of the form that activism might assume, a common trait is the political agency in activists' action. Since the 1990s, women's activism in Latin America and the Caribbean has been under the umbrella of identity politics, organising as indigenous feminist activism, but also as activism from other groups that affirm their identities, amongst them Afro-Latin, rural and lesbian (Maier & Lebon, 2010; Ferree & Mueller, 2004). Guatemala is no exception to the turn to identity-related politics of resistance in that area of the globe: indigenous women, one of the country's most vulnerable groups, have been taking action to effect political and social change in specific manners, investing themselves with political agency. I am interested in analysing this phenomenon and its specificities, utilising the event of indigenous women's activism against the 'Monsanto law' for that purpose.

2.1 The 'Monsanto law' and the social movement that had it repealed

In 2014, indigenous grassroots organisations in Guatemala protested against the 'Law for the Protection of New Plant Varieties'[13], which was a provision of a U.S.-Central American trade agreement that granted exclusive ownership rights of genetically modified seeds to some transnational biotech companies. Signed in 2004, the Central American-Dominican Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR)[14] eliminates tariffs and fees on trade between the U.S. and the other six countries that are part of the treaty, Guatemala being one of them. Its implementation dates are different for the Central American countries involved, but all trade should be duty-free by January 1, 2025. Currently, agricultural, industrial and consumer exports are tariff-free for the products that have been certified with regards to the country of origin.

Under this free trade agreement, the 2014 'Law for the Protection of New Plant Varieties' provided intellectual property rights over new varieties of plants, protecting them with copyright patents

[13] Ley 19-2014, 'Ley para la Protección de Obtenciones Vegetales'.
[14] CAFTA-DR is a multilateral free trade agreement between the United States and six countries in the Central American region: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic. The trade of goods between the countries has been steadily increasing under this agreement; nonetheless, Guatemala's economic growth is still quite low when compared to other countries of Abya Yala. According to the numbers presented on the U.S. Census Bureau website (https://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/balance/c0017.html), from 2005 to 2020, the U.S.A. has consistently been exporting more than it imports.

that would last between 20 and 25 years. This means that transnational biotech companies – like Monsanto, DuPont, Dow Chemical, or Bayer, to name a few – would be allowed to develop and patent new varieties of traditional crops, such as corn or beans, and the peasants would need to purchase the seeds for each and every crop. In case the peasants, either acknowledging it or not, would make use of the so-called new plant varieties without paying for the licence, they would face prison and exceptionally heavy fines. In Guatemala, the people who work the land are mostly indigenous people, and they utilise seeds that have been conditioned by traditional methods during long periods of time (hundreds or perhaps even thousands of years), and which are often passed from generation to generation. In case one of these traditional crops would be cross contaminated with seeds from a neighbour farm utilising the patented seed varieties, the peasants would either have to pay for the right to use the patented seeds or be sentenced to jail and subjected to the referred hefty fines. It would be a severe issue since the cross-contamination is very frequent between crops with airborne seeds such as grains, corn included; therefore, this law could have severe consequences on the food systems and lives of the people subsisting from agriculture, as it has happened in other countries[15]. The 'Law for the Protection of New Plant Varieties' got dubbed 'Monsanto law' precisely due to the fact that it largely favoured the economic interests of the transnational biotech companies like Monsanto over the interests of the Guatemalan peasants and farmers.

The 'Monsanto law' was passed by the Guatemalan Congress in June 2014 and was supposed to come in force by the end of September that same year. However, soon after the passage of the law, voices started to rise against it. Peasants and indigenous organisations accused the government of taking advantage of the fact that public attention was focused on the Football's World Cup held in Brazil at the time (June-July 2014) to swiftly pass the bill without observing the necessary procedures, which should include a broader debate in the Congress and the consultation of the indigenous peoples, the latter being mandatory as per the Guatemalan Constitution. The movement against the 'Monsanto law' grew increasingly stronger between July and September 2014. The mobilisation included women's rights activists, indigenous' rights organisations, farmers and peasants' associations, and local and international organisations for human rights and the

[15] One of the most extreme examples of the disruptive impact of government-backed GMO patented seeds dissemination is India, where Monsanto's cotton GMO seed monopoly has had a terrible impact, leading many farmers who were in debt to commit suicide. These suicides have happened in the cotton areas to such an extent that those areas were named "suicide belt" (https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1082559/The-GM-genocide-Thousands-Indian-farmers-committing-suicide-using-genetically-modified-crops.html). Nonetheless, Monsanto and the Indian government have been denying the correlation by presenting manipulated data, as Vandana Shiva voiced out in some of her articles https://www.countercurrents.org/shiva100114.htm

environment, amongst others. There were a series of street protests directed at Government institutions in indigenous communities' rural areas and Guatemala-City. The arguments of the law's opponents ranged from economic and food sovereignty concerns to the protection of the indigenous peoples' and Nature. This passage from one of the analysed news articles briefly sums up the grounds of the activism against 'Monsanto law':

> "Instead of promoting development, this law will only promote poverty", argued Mario Itzep, coordinator of the national Indigenous Peoples' Observatory, in an interview with Spanish news agency *Efe*. The Rural Studies Collective (Cer-Ixim), in the meanwhile, warned that the law would monopolise agriculture processes, severely threaten rural and indigenous communities' food sovereignty, and sacrifice national biodiversity "under the control of domestic and foreign companies", according to *RT*. Antonio Gonzalez of the National Network in Defence of Food Sovereignty in Guatemala said that the law "risks biodiversity, native seed varieties that are over 7,000 years old and that never required patents or labs, but have been able to sustain the lives of the Guatemalan people." (Eye on Latin America, 2014)

Besides the street protests, indigenous and peasants organised a formal appeal to the law to be presented to the Guatemalan Constitutional Court. The appeal, submitted by the Indigenous and Peasant Union Movement of Guatemala[16], elaborated on the negative impact that 'Monsanto law' would have on the lives of more than half of Guatemalans. The court decided in favour of the appeal. The President of Guatemala at that time, Pérez Molina, also interceded with the Guatemalan Congress to review the law. As a consequence of this huge, indigenous-led mobilisation of the civil society with the support from Government institutions as the Constitutional Court and the country's president, on the 4th of September 2014, the Guatemalan congress cancelled the 'Monsanto law'.

Indigenous women were at the front line of resistance and some, like Guatemalan indigenous feminist and political activist Lolita Chávez[17] and Nobel prize winner Rigoberta Menchú, have made the issue visible internationally, at least to some extent. Despite the success achieved in

[16] Movimiento Sindical Indígena y Campesino Guatemalteco, in Spanish.
[17] a leader of the Council of K'iche Peoples for the Defense of Life, Mother Nature, Land and Territory (CPK).

cancelling the law, the conflict between Maya peoples' rights and Guatemalan government's neoliberal policies is an ongoing struggle up to this day.

In brief, this succinct overview of Guatemalan history intends at contextualising the event of indigenous activism against 'Monsanto law', exposing the roots of indigenous resistance in that specific geographical location. Despite the fact that Guatemala's indigenous activism is not an isolated phenomenon in Abya Yala, and that it could not be fully understood without relating it to the overall situation of that region of the globe post four hundred years of colonialism, these are the main elements that are further explored in the data analysis and discussion section, in chapter five. Nonetheless, and before proceeding to the case study findings, the next section, i.e., the literature review, discusses the theories that are at the basis of the analysis, and the section that follows, which is the chapter dedicated to methodology, data collection and ethical concerns, describes the methodological approach/ methods utilised to analyse the data.

3 LITERATURE REVIEW

In the introduction, the activism against the 'Monsanto law' by indigenous women is presented as a multi-dimensional phenomenon. It is so, in my perspective, because it is activism about food and the environment and how it relates to gender, but also to ethnicity/race, sex and social class. Indigenous women have unique knowledge and skills regarding food production, including knowledge and environmental practices that are ecological, as per opposition to industrial food production, which is an issue that has been extensively debated by feminist and eco-feminist researchers. These are some of the aspects that are explored and discussed in this theoretical section, as they constitute fundaments to the analysis. The literature review is divided in three subchapters, following a general introduction to the theoretical framework that is at the core of the present research. The first subchapter concerns the production of knowledge from a feminist perspective; hence, it is where I situate myself as a researcher toward the research work. The second subchapter brings an account of Maya women's activism. Finally, in the third subchapter, I discuss the postcolonial approach that was undertaken in the analysis process in an attempt to decolonise the research work.

Though I do not ignore the 'feminist waves' metaphor, which is addressed in the first subchapter of this section, I have discarded it in what concerns my research, preferring instead to explore genealogies, those "deeply enmeshed networks" that refer to specific times and spaces (c.f. Rowley, 2012). McCann and Seung-Kyun (2016) also point towards the analysis of genealogies, as it means examining the conditions of emergence within the local feminist times and spaces to which they refer and asking what else was going on, what else informed local identities and politics. This model should provide the best insights into contemporary feminist theoretical fundamental concepts, i.e., gender, difference, women's experiences, the personal is political and intersectionality. Such key concepts are nothing short of complexity in themselves, which is why debates about their definitions and scope are ongoing discussions. Nonetheless, I would like to succinctly address them, as they are all part of the analysis that was made.

Gender, the critical concept of feminist scholarship, is defined by historian Joan Scott as "a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power" (1986, p. 1067). Thus, gender can refer to sex differences in the bodies and identities, at an individual level; it can refer to processes by which sex difference is battled for, enacted in cultural practices, engraved in and utilised by social institutions. Other times, gender refers to cultural performances in everyday life and cultural

symbols. Noticeably, regardless of what gender refers to in a given context, it is always about power relations and their articulation. (Lykke, 2010; McCann and Seung-Kyun, 2016) Likewise, gender is also about difference, which is the second concept that is transversal to feminist scholarship. In her 1972's article *La Chicana*, Elizabeth Martinez unveiled layers of difference between the revolutionary Chicanas' and the U.S. women's liberation movements' goals. Although some of the demands of the latter meet Chicanas' concerns, often Western middle-class white feminists ignored that sexism, racism and class were all part of the same system of oppression. Martinez (1972) pointed out that if Chicanas focused solely on oppression in their familiar lives, they would have to put aside the solidarity between Chicanas and Chicanos in the fight against racism and imperialism. However, analyses and theorisations of difference were excluded from the mainstream feminist theories for long, which means that early feminist scholars were not addressing the ways in which women's lives are shaped by gender, race, class, sexuality, nationality and dis/ability. Later, those scholars would come to understand that the question is how to analyse the systems of difference. The *Black Feminist Statement* published in 1977 by The Combahee River Collective already expressed the concern with what they named "interlocking systems of oppression". The crescent fragmentation of identity politics would go full-fledged in the 1980s. Identity politics have grown out of the assumption that the people who experience specific forms of oppression are the ones in the best position to both understand it and advance strategies for change. (Martinez, 1972; The Combahee River Collective's, 1977) Contrasting with "Black women", the term "women of colour", first used in 1981 at the National Women's Studies Association Conference in Storrs, Connecticut, was an outcome of identity politics which endeavoured to be more inclusive of different racial identities and lived experiences of racism by women. Nevertheless, it has been evident since the term started to be utilised that while it highlights race as the grounds of common oppression and politics of solidarity, it can conceal differences between women such as ethnicity, class, language, religion, race and sex, amidst others. Therefore, though "women of colour" is still very present in multiracial feminist dialogues, other terms such as "Third World women", "multiracial feminists" and "transnational feminists" joined in feminist debates globally to convey the message of antiracist and anti-patriarchal activisms that are politically committed, strategically united and building strong communities. At the basis of all these terms are women's experiences, which is another fundamental concept for contemporary feminist theories. Academics have been exploring and discussing whose and which experiences should be taken into account in order to produce knowledge and, furthermore, how can experience serve that purpose. Deniz Kandiyoti developed an analytical tool that can be applied to the analysis of lived experiences to unfold strategies of compliance and the conditions of emergence of

resistance in specific locations with specific constraints and named it "patriarchal bargain" (Kandiyoti, 1998). Her analytical lens is one that could be very useful in exploring the strategies of compliance and the conditions of emergence of indigenous women's resistance in Guatemala.

Amrita Basu also contributed with important research work to women's studies field by observing the local and global dimensions of feminism. Basu (2000) explores how transnational women's networks, organisations and ideas impact women's movements in the South. Basu notes that for feminists in the Global South, poverty and lack of access to basic resources, such as food, are the issues that must be addressed to foment economic justice and sustainable development, which contrasts with Global North feminist concerns with sexual issues. Furthermore, multiracial feminists argue that the concept 'the personal is political' should also be considered the other way around, i.e., 'the political is personal'. (Basu, 2000; McCann and Seung-Kyun, 2016) Feminists from the Global South, feminists of colour, multiracial and transnational feminists have promoted dialogues within and outside academia, which has led to many of these concerns being incorporated into feminist politics. Shedding light on the myriad of power relations that shape women's lives was what made visible the necessity of both situating knowledge and theorising intersectionality. McCann and Seung-Kyun cite Dill et al. (2007) to provide an understanding of intersectional feminist theory, which is a theory that "locates its analysis within systems of ideological, political, and economic power as they are shaped by historical patterns of race, class, gender, sexuality, nation, ethnicity, and age" (2016, p. 28). Women from the Global South were already working with analysis frameworks that allowed them to tackle the multiple forms of oppression they experienced before intersectionality emerged conceptually within the academic environment. Thus, intersectionality was already closely linked to feminism long before the term was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 (Lykke, 2010). Nevertheless, it was Crenshaw who developed the concept of intersectionality, and she did so to tackle the complex interactions of racism and sexism that are specific to the discrimination of African American women. As a lawyer, she witnessed how legal processes raised by African American women complaining about the racist and sexist treatments would fail because the specificity of the violence these women experienced would not fit the legal categories of racism or sexism, the first being devised with a generic masculine subject, the second with a generic white subject. Crenshaw's analysis (1989) revealed how the specific interacting racialised sexism and gendered racism could not be accommodated within the existing categories of the law (McCann & Kim, 2016, 164).

> In the context of violence against women, this elision of difference in identity politics is problematic, fundamentally because the violence that many women experience is often shaped by other dimensions of their identities, such as race and class. (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1242)

Crenshaw created awareness about these structures of difference by systematising the concept of intersectionality and unveiling the power relations intertwined in the lived experiences of the marginalised. Hence, her work was at the basis of the interdisciplinary approach that would bring focus to counterhegemonic narratives, which was largely adopted and further developed by feminist scholars.

Black feminists and Third World feminists had critiqued the white feminist discourse on the experiences of women of colour, emphasising the need for a more comprehensive and complex account of the multiplicity of identities and sources of oppression. Intersectionality became a crucial analytical tool for researchers who wanted to go past essentialising identities, reiterating categories and strengthening the status quo. I would even argue that it was intersectional analysis that permitted feminist postcolonial theories to materialise as such. With regards to the research work that I undertook, the intersectionality tool was utilised to question canons and to explore the multiple dimensions imbricated in the phenomenon and the coalition politics that emerge from it. As a methodology, intersectionality permits to bring together theory and activism and analyse what is at their junction, because it comprehends the complexity of interactions at several levels, such as lived experiences, social practices, institutions, representations and symbols. Correspondingly, I briefly analysed the discourses and practices of racialisation/ethnicity, along with gendering, language, class differentiation and religion regarding the Maya people in Guatemala. This analysis permitted me to acknowledge how subjectivities and social differences are produced there. The third part of this theoretical analysis concerns the structures of domination, such as patriarchy, racism or colonialism, and the power relations that are enmeshed in them.

3.1 Feminist knowledge production

There are different approaches from within the field that enhance critical thinking about philosophical, methodological and ethical aspects of knowledge production. In this subchapter, I pretend to point to some of the main aspects of feminist theory, while reflecting about the contribute of feminist theories to my thesis research, following the feminist epistemological tradition. As Ann Braithwaite (2004) collocated it:

> … feminist theory or theorising … is not a matter (only) of learning and using terms and concepts that have been passed on from elsewhere. It is also… the necessity— to put it in other words— to always 'think about how we think about' whatever term or concept is being used (Braithwaite, as cited in Rowley, 2012, p. 83)

It is vital to keep present a critical assessment while making research work within the field of feminist studies. Soon after choosing my research subject, indigenous women's activism against the 'Monsanto law' in Guatemala, I understood that I would have to situate myself as a researcher doing this specific work, explore the multiple dimensions (gender, sex, race/ethnicity and class) intermeshed in this Guatemalan grassroots movement situation and definition, and decolonise the knowledge systematisation I proposed myself to do. As referred earlier, I consider that to produce an understanding about some of the ways in which non-violent activism might work towards the promotion of social justice and equality is an earnest exercise within the feminist epistemological tradition of knowledge systematisation that envisages social transformation. An intersectional analysis of the perspectives and layers of non-violent activism that are part of the phenomenon – from activism about food and the environment and how it relates to gender, to activism regarding ethnicity/race, sex and social class – envisages critical thinking about the phenomenon and its potentialities.

As mentioned at the beginning of the literature review, McCann and Seung-Kyun (2016) question the prevailing conceptualisation about feminist genealogies, namely the representation of feminist movements as first, second and third waves of feminism. They point to the need of rethinking feminist genealogies by focusing on core feminist concepts to contextualise feminist times and spaces. By 1960s-1970s in the U.S., feminists found the wave metaphor useful to describe feminist activism's rises and falls; they named themselves the "second wave" and put all previous feminist activism from mid-nineteenth century and early twentieth century under the label "first wave". The baseline argument was that first wave feminists had not achieved the goal of women's liberation; therefore, the second wave movement would have to take up the fight against patriarchy. McCann and Seung-Kyun contend that, despite the strategic value that the wave metaphor might have had for feminists in the 1970's, it is very limited in what refers to explain multiplicities and simultaneities, as well as ruptures and coalescences, in feminist movements. Linda Nicholson questions directly the use of the wave metaphor in feminist theories contemporarily. While still acknowledging its historical and contextual relevance, Nicholson

suggests that not only the wave metaphor "has outlived its usefulness" but also "tends to have built into it an important metaphorical implication that is historically misleading and not helpful politically" (2010, p. 44). Hence, on the one hand, the relevance of nineteenth-century movements is well known by now and feminists are very aware of the fact that the 1960's activism is not the beginning of the struggle for women's liberation. On the other hand, the wave metaphor casts a shadow on the differences between different kinds of activism and political goals at different moments in time, conveying the illusion that feminism has been historically organised around one specific set of ideas, configuring a single story about white, middle-class, heterosexual feminists from the Global North, disregarding the "different kinds of activism around gender" that have taken place in the U.S. and elsewhere (Nicholson, 2010). Therefore, the idea that we are living a third wave in feminism is very reductionist at several levels; instead, we should always aim at questioning "what else was/is going on then, there, and elsewhere whenever we engage accounts of women's and social justice movements" (McCann & Seung-Kyun, 2016, p. 12).

In *Re-Rooting American Women's Activism: Global Perspectives on 1848* (2001) essay, Nancy A. Hewitt re-situates first wave feminism by retelling the story of its foundational moment, Seneca Falls Convention of 1848. She does so while accounting for both the myriad of perspectives and movements that were present in that specific site and time and for what was happening elsewhere in the world in that same year. This is not to say, as Hewitt emphasises, that Seneca Falls was not a turning point from where an important movement based on liberal ideals of suffrage, individual rights and ownership emerged. However, it is important to acknowledge that concurrently "the vision held by the largest and most active contingent of feminist foremothers was rooted in communitarian values and organic conceptions of both oppression and liberation" such as those of African American, Mexican and Native American. These women lived in communities "founded on extended kinship networks, communal labour and collective rights" (Hewitt, 2001, p. 40). Reclaiming the legacy of women's rights radicals broadens the perceived scope of the foundations of feminism, and permits to incorporate race and class, critiques of colonialism, socialism and global perspectives. In the same line of thought, Becky Thompson names the history about second wave feminism as it accounted for for the most part as "hegemonic feminism" (Thompson, 2002). Thompson demonstrates how recasting the chronology of second wave feminism from the point of view of women of colour and white antiracist women enlightens the inception of multiracial feminism, the "liberation movement spearheaded by women of color in the United States in the 1970s that was characterised by its international perspective, its attention to interlocking oppressions, and its support of coalition politics" (Thompson, 2002, p. 51), thus

exceeding greatly the liberal values attributed to second wave feminist activism. During the 1970s, women of colour were involved with white feminist groups, forming workgroups in mixed-gender organisations and developing their own feminist organisations – Black, Latina, Native American and Asian. Amongst others, The Combahee River Collective, an organisation formed in 1974 in Boston, U.S.A., actively fought racism while providing a framework for the development of Black feminism. Thompson points to one of the most inclusive definitions of feminism up to today, written by Barbara Smith, a former member of this collective:

> feminism is the political theory and practice to free all women: women of color, working-class women, poor women, physically challenged women, lesbians, old women, as well as white economically privileged heterosexual women. Anything less than this is not feminism, but merely female self-aggrandisement (2002, p. 54)

For these feminist activists, racism is a feminist issue, as are all forms of social inequality (The Combahee River Collective, 1977; Thompson, 2002). Similarly, for achieving an understanding of feminist activism, it is important to note that the idea of women of colour feminism being a side-effect of white feminism is a misconception, one that has been perpetuated by the most commons accounts of second wave feminism, producing the "female self-aggrandisement" that Smith refers, thus not providing a real contribute to women's liberation. Taking this into account for the research process, I considered it essential to foster a critique of the universalisation of Third World women as a homogeneous category and try to unfold the historical and cultural specificities of Guatemalan indigenous women in order to understand their complex agency as situated objects. For that purpose, I draw upon Chandra Talpade Mohanty's postcolonial and antiracist feminist work (1998; 2003; 2013).

Mohanty's article *Under Western Eyes* (1988) is a fundamental text that opened the way for "a space for critical analysis of intersections of gender, race, ethnicity and geopolitical position" (Lykke, 2010, p. 53) in academia by substantiating a critique of hegemonic white feminism and its claims for universalism. The articulation of the feminist 'We' by white Western feminists as universal ignored difference with regards to non-Western women: in geopolitical situation, in political goals, in class structures and in ethnic and racial mechanisms of exclusion and oppression. Not acknowledging political agency to women different from the white, Western, middle-class women constructs them as the Other, reproducing the cultural essentialism that is a trait of colonialism. To prevent this, white Westerns feminists, such as myself, should acknowledge that there is no

one political identity that fits all women, and we should critically reflect about modernity's ideas of progress, social development and cultural essentialism that converge into the dichotomy between the *enlightened Us* and the *underdeveloped Other*. Feminist postcolonial theories, politics and analyses recognise how global hegemonies, social inequality and exclusionary practices produce power differentials among women, conveying a frame for white, Western feminists to situate ourselves globally in an intersectional perspective, in order to support the fight against the patriarchal powers structures of inequality. (Lykke, 2010; Mohanty, 1998)

By developing key concepts such as interlocking oppressions, the politics of location, and coalition politics, multiracial feminist theory implies deeper levels of awareness, offering a broader understanding of feminist activism and an opportunity for coalition work toward social justice. Michelle V. Rowley utilises the term "politics and conditions of emergence" to address feminist literacy beyond the limits of the wave analytic and defines politics and conditions of emergence as "a praxis that … attends to the locally specific ways in which feminists have responded and contributed to a wider body of feminist knowledge through the naming of their locally specific realities, and acknowledges the ways in which feminists in the North have structured their own theoretical formulations as a result of these contributions" (Rowley, 2012, p. 84). Rowley's proposal is to use the politics and conditions of emergence as guidance through the power dynamics and contexts of feminist issues as per opposition to historical narratives that are attached to geopolitical locations. By revealing different points of departure for the various feminist histories, even when they might be surprising or unexpected, this analytical model allows for an analysis of all elements that might have made part of a given genealogy (gender, race, class, sex, abilities, nationalities). That is not to say that history is not significant; instead, it challenges the idea of a single narrative or manner of recounting history. Rowley's argument is that only the perception of the diversity, multiplicity and shifting possibilities of the feminist past can convey proper guidance to a similar future within feminist studies, one that takes us to "our disciplinary whereabouts unknown" (Rowley, 2012). Following the discussion on the relevance of politics and conditions of emergence of the feminist action for feminist studies, the next subchapter addresses specifically the activism of Maya women to provide an overall perspective of its genealogy.

3.2 The Maya identity and the space for Maya women's activism

I have been referring to indigenous women in Guatemala in general, and Maya women in particular; therefore, it is important to define what are these groups that I am writing about. For

that reason, it is appropriate to introduce the concept of Pan-Maya Movement[18] in Guatemala. The Pan-Maya Movement originated as a response to the 36-year-long civil war in Guatemala and to the deeply embedded racism it uncovered. Victor Montejo, an academic Jakaltek Maya from Guatemala and one of the movement's leading activists, describes it as "a cultural movement of self-understanding and valuation of the Maya heritage" (Harvey, 2008, p. 2; Montejo, 2005, p. 31). The movement's purpose is to promote union via recognition of common Maya ancestry, working toward the preservation and revitalisation of the Maya culture. Hence, the Pan-Maya movement advocates for governmental restructuration in accordance with the Guatemalan constitution, peace accords and international law. (Harvey, 2008, p. 2; Fischer & Brown, 1996, p. 13). There is a good deal of scholarly articles and books written about indigenous self-representation and the Pan-Maya Movement (cf. Warren & Jackson, 2003; Warren, 1998) including work that supports and work that critiques its action, the latter asserting that the movement's ideology and aims are not in line with those for whom it claims to give voice, i.e., the Maya people. Specifically, the critique to 'El Movimiento Maya' refutes the assumption of unique Maya identity and union in its discourse, which is at the basis of the movement's advocacy for the Maya people rights. Detractors see the Maya not as one people, but as smaller groups unified by their loyalty to their local communities; the critique is directed at the very core of the movement as it sustains that there is no such entity as the *Maya culture.* (Harvey, 2008; for an overview, see Warren, 1998).

Who are the Maya is, therefore, a central question to this dispute, as well as to the present research. While doing fieldwork in San Andrés Xecul, a Maya town in highland Guatemala, Hope Harvey (2008) observed that the use of the term Maya was not consensual amongst its inhabitants. While for some 'Maya' was the same as 'indigenous', for others 'Maya' added yet another layer to their self-representation and political agency. Harvey observed that there were layers of identity for each of the people with whom she interacted in San Andrés Xecul; while describing and analysing her observations, she elaborated on what she considered to be the most relevant four layers for the self-identification of these people. The first is the religious identity: people in that town actively engaged and defined themselves and others by their religion – Evangelical, Catholic, Maya religion. This means that they regularly attended church services; children/youngsters spent a good part of their time with people from their churches (Evangelic and Catholic), participated in catechist classes, sang in the church choir; and adults made part of church groups to pray and do social work. Harvey (2008) highlights that those who did not practice the Maya religion often utilised the term 'brujos' (witches) to refer to the ones that did. Some of the practitioners of the Maya religion

[18] El Movimiento Maya, in Spanish.

in San Andrés considered that those who attended other churches were not Maya because the Maya do not believe in those faiths. She notes that "this separation of religious groups was so prominent that it overshadowed ethnic identity for many people." (Harvey, 2008, p. 7), thus impacting the unity of the community and of the Maya people. The second layer pointed out by Harvey is municipality, which was considered by the *Xeculenses* (people from San Andrés Xecul) as a commonality. *Trajes* (the traditional customs worn by the women), food and traditions are different from municipality to municipality, and the clothing is often seen "as a major division and form of identity" (Harvey, 2008, p. 8). A third layer is the language, because there are different Maya linguistic groups[19]. In San Andrés, the language is the K'iche and the K'iche Maya from surrounding areas come to San Andrés Xecul to participate in ceremonies and festivals. Communicating in the same language informs about a common culture and creates a group bond. K'iche is, inclusively, part of the religious system, as Evangelicals and Catholics utilise it along with Spanish in their religious services. (Harvey, 2008) The fourth layer of identity for these people is the Maya identity, which Harvey defines as "a feeling of peoplehood with other Maya groups that eclipses languages and location." (2008, p. 9). The wearing of the *traje* by women marks the universality of Maya identity, especially because they can adopt different *trajes* regardless of their regions – in this aspect, identifying as Maya overcame identifying with the region/municipality. Nonetheless, what was highlighted by the people of San Andrés as the strongest similarity between Maya groups, i.e., what they consider that actually unites all Maya, is the same experience of discrimination and inequality in Guatemala (Harvey, 2008).

To further explore the referred experience of discrimination and inequality by the Maya in Guatemala, I made use of Betsy Konefal's work in *For Every Indio Who Falls* (2010). There, Konefal portrays the event that made the front cover of Guatemalan daily newspaper *El Gráfico* on July 30, 1978, a time of civil war in the country. The related news article informs about the union between Maya against discrimination, and how Maya women represent that union. The news headline read "Reinas Indígenas Repudiate This Year's Folklore Festival", and it was followed by a photograph of twenty-two Maya people, half of them being Maya women dressed in the traditional dresses, the *trajes* (Image 1). These Maya were actively protesting against the violence exerted on the Maya communities by boycotting the Folklore Festival, an annual event featuring Maya culture. The article included their opinions about the festival, which they considered to be an instrument of propaganda by Guatemala's government.

[19] The different Maya linguistic groups are the following: Achi', Akateco, Awakateco, Chalchiteco, Ch'ort", Chuj, Itza', Ixil, Jacalteco, Kaqchikel, K'iche', Mam, Mopan, Po- qomam, Poqomchi', Q'anjob'al, Q'eqchi', Sakapulteco, Sipakapense, Tektiteko, Tz'utujil, Uspanteko, Xinka.

Image 1. *Reinas indígenas* and supporters protest a massacre of Mayas by the Guatemalan army in Panzós. Source: El Gráfico, July 30, 1978. (retrieved from Konefal, 2010, p. 10)

It is visible from the photograph that the young people posing belong to different Maya communities that have different languages and are located in diverse regions of Guatemala due to the *trajes* worn by the women. These women were the pageant queens (*reinas indígenas*) that represented their specific Maya communities. It is also noticeable that, regardless of the diverse origins, these Maya were symbolically united in their protest. Leading to this moment was the massacre of Q'eqchi' Maya *campesinos* (peasants) in the community of Panzós, in Alta Verapaz – the first of many attacks specifically directed toward Maya communities, and one that marks the beginning the Maya genocide in Guatemala. Coincidently, the annual Folklore Festival was also taking place in Alta Verapaz, hence the pageant queens and their supporters seeing it as an opportunity to speak out about the violence against the Maya, denouncing a state that promoted Maya folklore while killing Maya *campesinos*. Konefal observes that "the group's racialised imagery and the way they combined Maya symbolism with their pointed and confrontational message to the national government and army were unprecedented" (2010, p. 11). This example of activism in a time of war in the late seventies is coincident with the much more recent discourse of the people of San Andrés Xecul about the union of the Maya people being, at its core, founded upon the same experience of discrimination, inequality and oppression. On the other hand, it also reveals

how women have been at the frontline of resistance, representing both the different Maya communities and the Maya peoplehood.

As clear as it is that Maya identity and representation are intrinsically related to Maya women, defining Maya identity is not short of complexity. In the discourse of the Pan-Maya Movement, there is the representation of Maya as common peoplehood that shares Maya culture core values inherited from their ancestors, *essentialising* Maya; on the other hand, a constructionist view is that there is "no essential… Maya, but rather, in the face of discrimination, a complex, ever changing self-authorship, which sometimes reweaves and sometimes rejects the past" (Warren, 1998, p. 74). Harvey's (2008) analysis reveals the most significant aspects of the Maya culture for the people from San Andrés Xecul, their link to the ancient Maya, and, importantly, the mutability of Maya identity. Interestingly, when asked what they understood by Maya, almost all of her interviewees referred to the ancient Maya, not to the modern people. A part of the interviewees considered that the identity of the Maya today should be considered more broadly as indigenous identity, not Maya, due to the cultural differences from the ancient people; others conferred to Maya two different meanings, one regarding the ancient people and the other regarding the Maya of today. Furthermore, "like Pan-Maya Movement leaders, most of the people contacted recognised the ancient Maya as the source of their culture, a link in which they take pride" (Harvey 2008, p. 12). The term 'indigenous' has ethnic connotations based on birth and cultural traits, while 'Maya' is a term that has a strong religious connotation. Hence, many of the *Xeculenses* consider that someone who does not practice the Maya religion is not Maya, identifying that person as indigenous. Per contrast, the Pan-Maya Movement does not consider religion to be a relevant element of Maya identity, while the women's *traje* and language are seen as very relevant markers of that identity. The other cultural aspect that is not commonly found in the literature but that was pointed out by Harvey's interviewees as a very relevant trait of Maya identity is a common respect for others. What the Pan-Maya Movement and the people from San Andrés Xecul share is a common perception of culture loss, but while the implementation of national programs could enhance the use of Maya languages and traditional customs, they could hardly be effective with regards to enhancing respect for others. Comparing the essentialist claims of the Pan-Maya Movement and the lived experience of the people of this small Maya town, Harvey finally asked if a person could deny their Maya identity. None of her interviewees agreed to deny the Maya identity, though they utilised terms such as *indígena* (indigenous) and *mestizaje* (miscegenation) for people who reject the Maya culture. Therefore, Harvey argues, these statements of fixedness reveal that the community

of San Andrés Xecul has an essentialist perception of their Maya identity, which aligns with Pan-Maya Movement's ethnic claims. (Harvey, 2008)

In their book *Mayaización y vida cotidiana*, Bastos et al. (2007) present ethnic identity, 'Mayaization', emancipation, and multiculturalism in Guatemala through a series of cases, pointing to the Pan-Maya Movement as the engine of the *Mayaization* of the country. According to Victor Montejo, the movement focuses on "self-determination as the right of indigenous people to freely express themselves by using their knowledge system and cultural values" (2005, p. 196). Within the frame of the Pan-Maya Movement, the *Mayaization* of Guatemala and the unification of the Maya peoples should be at the basis of Maya activism, including activism regarding the rights to produce food. Interestingly, this is what happened in the event of activism against the 'Monsanto law' in Guatemala in 2014. Chapter 5 will further explore the manifestation of this activism that has brought Maya women to the front line of resistance towards indigenous people's rights, including the right to food sovereignty, even when this was a social movement that included several other actors of the society.

Before closing this brief discussion about Maya identity and Maya activism, I would like to point out that there is yet another indigenous group in Guatemala, which is the Garifuna. The Garifuna are a people of African and Amerindian descent whose presence in the Caribbean was tracked back to 1635 in the Island of St. Vincent when, allegedly, West-African slaves managed to get to the shore after the shipwreck of two Spanish vessels loaded with African slaves heading to the New World. Garifuna people have kept their Arawakan language and mixed cultural traditions of their West African and Carib-Arawak ancestors up to this day. Currently, the Garifuna live mostly in the Caribbean coastal towns of Belize, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Honduras. Keri Vacanti Brondo (2013) analyses Garifuna activism in Honduras and considers the emergence of transnational indigenous, environmental, and feminist organisations from there. Nevertheless, I did not find any specific information regarding Garifuna people's participation in the activism against 'Monsanto law' in Guatemala. Not knowing to what extent, if at all, the Garifuna participated in this specific event, constitutes one limitation of this study.

3.3 A postcolonial approach to this movement

As previously indicated, to appropriately explore how indigenous women's activism against 'Monsanto law' in Guatemala manifested itself, and how did gender, sex, race/ethnicity and class

make part of this movement, I utilise postcolonial feminist theories. I am aware that these are quite comprehensive criteria; however, I chose not to narrow down my focus and try to briefly address them all, not conferring primacy to one criterion over another. Regarding postcolonial feminist theories, I use the plural because there is not one postcolonial feminist theory but many strands with different epistemologies and contexts under the same umbrella, such as indigenous feminisms, Black feminism, Chicana feminism and postcolonial theories. Therefore, literature on theoretical approaches and dimensions of gendered concepts and issues, as well as cultural identities, race/ethnicity, multiculturalism, nationalism, Third World feminism, gender and decolonisation is at the basis of my research.

Addressing the historical and cultural specificities of Guatemalan indigenous women conveys an understanding of the complexity of their agency as situated objects (Mohanty, 2013). It also permits to avoid the universalisation of Third World women as a homogeneous category and its consequent reductionisms. According to Mohanty (2003), proper feminist research is research that draws on the relation between women's materiality and their representations, enabling the deconstruction of the monolithic image of women from the Third World that reduces women's definition to their materiality as subjects. A second point by this author, also relevant for this study, is the conceptualisation of the 'politics of solidarity'. Mohanty defines solidarity in terms of support, responsibility and common interests amidst communities (2003, 2013). She notes that "rather than assuming an enforced commonality of oppression, the practice of solidarity foregrounds communities of people who have chosen to work and fight together" (Mohanty, 2003, p. 7).

Grupo de Mujeres Ixchel[20] is an example of a collective of indigenous women in Guatemala. Indigenous women have been organising themselves for long to resist the oppression to which they are subject. *Feminismo comunitario* (communitarian feminism) was originated in Guatemala by Maya-Xinka indigenous women. As Pillar Villanueva expounds in her article, communitarian feminism is a decolonial feminism that was born out of the life experiences of indigenous women, not in academia (Villanueva, 2019). Present at the inception of this feminist project was Lorena Cabnal, who defines herself as a Maya Kekchi and Xinca woman while specifying this is a non-

[20] The Ixchel women group is very active in online communication, conveying important information and promoting cyberfeminism. Their blog links to their social media platforms: http://grupodemujeresixchel.blogspot.com/

essentialist definition but a political one (Falquet, 2015, p. 76)[21]. There are historical bonds between women and Nature, with many traditional cosmogonies collocating women at the epicentre of life. For Cabnal, only by acknowledging this liaison and defending the body and the Earth can emancipation be achieved.[22] (Falquet, 2015, p. 80).

This signifies defending the territory-body in the face of different specific forms of violence that indigenous women experience, such as sexual violence and femicides. The fight became particularly important for communitarian feminists from 2008-2009, when the Guatemalan government granted a series of operating licenses to transnationals, triggering large mobilisations of women and other actors that opposed to the unsustainable exploration of Guatemala's natural resources. A key slogan for the future of communitarian feminism – "recovery and defence of the territory-Earth" – emerged as a consequence of these events (Falquet, 2015, p. 80).

Nonetheless, defending the land if there were to be found abused children and women would be an inconsistency. Hence, indigenous women denounce the violence against them so that their feminist struggles are as visible as the defence of the land. For communitarian feminists, neither socialism nor feminism will be emancipatory if they do not link the body and the Earth. They criticise capitalism and neoliberalism while simultaneously criticising ethnic fundamentalisms. Communitarian feminists create spaces of affectivity, of healing (which they call "sanation"[23]), in connection with Nature, in community. The work they do has the clear political intent to strengthen the resistance of the indigenous peoples in Guatemala. These politics of solidarity and strategies of resistance are observable in the indigenous women's lead of the activism in Guatemala against the 'Monsanto law', which is explored in the analysis section of the thesis. (Falquet, 2015)

The previously exposed highlights the importance of a careful examination of the power relations between all involved in the phenomenon at the centre of this analysis, in an attempt not to slither into taking in consideration simplistic, non-valid binary structures of powerful versus powerless people. As mentioned already, women in the third world are not a homogeneous category of oppressed people. I wish to make this very clear in my analysis to side-step from Western feminism

[21] Reinforcing the relevance of the oral tradition in her culture, as per opposition to academic work, Cabnal declined to produce an academic article about communitarian feminism in Guatemala, preferring to be interviewed for the journal Cahiers du Genre. The interview was made and translated by Jules Falquet.
[22] The moto of the communitarian feminist association of women Amixmasaj of the mountain of Xalapánwas that Lorena Cabnal co-founded in 2003 was "Defense of the body-territory and of the territory-Earth" (Falquet, 2015, p. 79).
[23] "sanación", in Spanish.

tradition of colonialisation and appropriation of the multiplicity of women's class and racial/ethnic situations, i.e., of measuring all women's struggles as per the women's struggles in the Western world. The idea is to decolonise the discourses about the historical and material heterogeneities of women in the third world, in general, and indigenous women in Guatemala, more specifically.

Therefore, an effort has been made to put together a theoretical analyse of the production of Maya women as a socio-economic, political group within the Guatemalan particular context, whilst assuming the inherently political nature of my feminist research and taking account of gender and sex, but also race/ethnicity and social class. This endeavour was taken because, as Mohanty observes in her well-known article *Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses*, "it is only by understanding the *contradictions* inherent in women's location within various structures that effective political action and challenges can be devised" (italics by the author, 1997, p. 267). In order to make such an analysis, I intended to focus on tackling the politics of colonialism in Guatemala and on the struggle of the Maya people towards social and economic justice.

Similarly, to scrutinise Guatemalan indigenous women's action, I initiated by addressing the shades of imperialism in Guatemala, both in the form of the Spanish colonisation legacy and the U.S.A.'s multilateral free trade agreement with smaller developing economies in Central America (CAFTA-DR) in the second chapter, meant at providing the necessary contextualisation. In *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context*, Anne McClintock's formulates the idea of race, gender and class as "articulated categories", considering that these are not independent categories of experience, rather constituting themselves "*in and through relation* to each other" (McClintock, 1995, p. 5). From this conceptualisation, McClintock elaborates a thorough critique of imperialism by considering the power relations and negotiations that involve class, sex, race and gender, and highlights the fact that imperialism has been a different experience for women and for men. Her concern regarding not privileging one category over the others, since they co-exist and are co-constituted in intricate social relations, deeply resonated with my objective of doing intersectional research. Notably, McClintock argues, power flows were not unilaterally flowing from the European colonisers towards the colonised; there was a hard clash between pre-existing hierarchies of power and gendered dynamics of the colonised cultures and the European imperialism that transformed both parts, which is the reason why also imperialism assumed different shapes in different places of the colonised world. Therefore, a gender power theory is necessary to achieve a true understanding of imperialism. Drawing upon this, I explore the specificities of imperialism

and gender power relations that might have influenced the formation and action of the indigenous women in Guatemala in their struggle against the 'Law for the Protection of New Plant Varieties'. Another aspect of McClintock's work that I utilise for my own is her dismantling of the term postcolonialism perceived as the binary opposition between colonial and postcolonial, which situates imperialism not in the making, but as something that is part of history and has already had its definitive effects. At stake is not the substance of postcolonial theory, but the use that is sometimes made of the term and its concomitant theories. As mentioned earlier, the free trade agreement between the U.S.A. and some of the less wealthy countries of Central America constitutes an expression of neoliberal capitalism. It can also be seen as a manifestation of the imperial power of the U.S.A., as it imposes structural and strategic changes to the smaller, 'underdeveloped' countries of Central America, bringing them 'progress' and promising economic advantage. Therefore, I acknowledge the importance of McClintock's critique in this context, especially her warning against missing the *continuities* in international imbalances in imperial power as they are necessary to account for when theorising about imperialism.

Moreover, another relevant theoretical approach to the present research is that of feminist politics of food. The politics of food are a complex subject; nonetheless, I will not attempt at tackling ongoing feminist discussions about the multiple layers of this subject. My focus is on the way food production and consumption impact peoples' lives and the environment. Marja Vehviläinen (2017) observed that all around the globe women have been bringing forward their everyday lives' experiences to engage in the particularities of food production, conducting action to connect food and environmental issues to the well-being and justice of their communities. Vehviläinen points to eco-feminism and to the work of Vandana Shiva (1989, 2008) on global food production and local feminist politics, since the latter contends that multinational food companies damage local food production and the access to food by local people. Shiva highlights the ways in which industrial food production affects women in particular as it impacts traditional food production and access to water, whilst the peasant women do not possess the financial means to buy the food that is produced industrially. If the 'Monsanto law' would not have been repealed, people living from agriculture in Guatemala would have been in this situation; hence, indigenous women's mobilisation implicitly comprehends eco-feminist concerns. Though I did not thoroughly explore this facet of the issue, it was interesting to find strong evidence of eco-feminism being embedded in the phenomenon emerging from the data.

This section has attempted to provide a brief summary of the literature utilised to frame the research. The chapter that follows moves on to consider the methodological aspects of this study, including data collection, method of analysis and the ethics of the research.

4 METHODOLOGY, DATA COLLECTION AND ETHICAL CONCERNS

Based on the theories and concepts that were presented in the previous sections, from this point onwards, we move to the actual research that was conducted. I will also briefly address the 'why' and 'how' of the research work done to maintain its situatedness.

When I first heard about how the grassroots movement against the 'Law for the Protection of New Plant Varieties' in Guatemala was activism led, in great part, by women, I felt the urge to learn more about it: what was at stake? what happened? who were the women at the front of the movement? how did they succeed in pressuring the Guatemalan Congress to cancel the law? I started to look for information regarding this subject on the Internet and found multiple news articles and blog posts written about it. Hence, the set of data I am primarily utilising for the present research is constituted by online news articles referring to the phenomenon. I opted for analysing news articles from online media because they constitute an important site of production and reproduction of discourses that are widely available, though its access is not without limits. Alongside, as a secondary set of data, I use journal articles that touch the topics of indigenous activism in Guatemala and indigenous women's activism in Guatemala and in Abya Yala plus the original text of the law that triggered this social phenomenon, named 'Ley 19-2014, Ley para la Protección de Obtenciones Vegetales'[24].

4.1 Data collection, location and limits

I chose Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the research method to lead me from the theoretical assumptions to the observations. CDA does not forebode any specific ways to collect data and some authors do not even address data collection methods when writing about it. Though data collection and data analysis are seen as separate activities, they are not considered sequential, i.e., it is not required that data collection is completed before the analysis starts: data collection and data analysis can both be ongoing while the research work is in its analytical phase. (Wodak & Meyer, 2001)

To gather the research materials, I used Ecosia search engine[25] and the keywords referred to in Table 1 in different combinations, in both English and Spanish languages. After reading through

[24] Available for download in the website of the Ministry of Public Finances of the Government of Guatemala: https://www.minfin.gob.gt/index.php/decretos-del-congreso-de-la-republica/2014-02-21-15-24-05/1853-decreto-no-19-2014-ley-para-la-proteccion-de-obtenciones-vegetales

[25] https://www.ecosia.org/

the online search results, I made a pre-selection of materials, followed by a more thorough selection, until I gathered a total of eight articles that met the selection criteria previously delineated for analysis. Thus, all of the news articles were retrieved from web pages on the Internet.

Order	Process	Outcome
First step Online search	I used Ecosia search engine. Keywords: Guatemala, Monsanto law, indigenous women, peasants, activism, grassroots movement and Maya (EN/ES)	About 50 news articles and blog posts about the movement against 'Monsanto law'.
Second step Pre-selection of materials	Criteria for the pre-selection: discarded opinion posts and articles written based on articles from other media, to avoid biases and repetition.	Narrowed down to 15 news articles from different media.
Third (and final step) Selection of the data for analysis	Selection criteria: 1. independent or mainstream media 2. from countries where Spanish and English are official languages 3. media exclusively available online and/or media with parallel print versions	A total of 8 articles for analysis, in English and Spanish languages.

Table 1. Data collection and selection

The data collection and selection were initiated by an online search with the keywords above listed. The keywords were chosen for their straightforwardness and neutrality, i.e., the fact that they refer directly to the phenomenon of indigenous women's activism against the 'Monsanto law' in Guatemala while not enunciating feminism(s), gender, capitalism and neoliberalism, the problematics of free trade agreements, and so forth. The intention was to obtain results from a diversity of news outlets, instead of limiting the scope of the results to news articles produced within a particular framing of the phenomenon. In a second moment, I went through all the results and discarded both the opinion articles, mostly written as blog posts, and the articles written based on other articles that were also part of my results. This pre-selection was performed to narrow down the number of articles, that from the initial 50 came down to 15, as well as to avoid biases and repetition of contents. In a third phase, I selected eight from those news articles, for the reasons I henceforth detail alongside the perceived limits of my research.

The eight articles primarily selected for analysis were all available online when I made the data collection, between August and September 2018. From the initial eight, I came to analyse seven[26].

[26] The access to the article "Protestas por la 'Ley Monsanto' en Guatemala" from El Nuevo Día online was limited to users that pay a subscription from January 2019. As I had not printed the article before this restriction took place, I could not access it after that date. I wrote to the sub-director of the newspaper requesting access to the article for the purpose of the present thesis; however, my email messages were never responded. For that reason, I had to

The articles' media sources are both independent and mainstream media from the U.S.A., Puerto Rico, Spain, Argentina and Guatemala, and they were originally published in either Spanish or English; some of the media have a print version and some are exclusively available online (see Appendix I for more detail on the media sources).

The articles that are dated were written and published in 2014, the year of the law's approval and repeal, between August 25 and November 10. There are, however, two articles that do not display the publishing date[27]. I made all the searches from either my home or the university's library, both situated in Tampere, Finland. The online search results are determined by the IP address location, which means that my geographical situation has also influenced the results. Therefore, my research is limited by the source of the materials, i.e., the Internet. If, on the one hand, the Internet provides access to articles from all over the world, on the other hand, it makes it difficult to situate them in a time and a place, as they can be written and published from any geographical position at any time, lack information about these markers and, furthermore, be edited and/or updated whenever, from wherever. Though I can point to the countries where the media behind the web pages that published the articles are based (please refer to Appendix II), the articles do not have a specific country of publication; they are all located in the World Wide Web. This constitutes one of the limits of my research. A second research limit concerns the media sources and the languages of the research materials. Within the global network of contents available on the Internet, I only searched for news articles in English and Spanish languages because those are the languages of CAFTA-DR, but also due my own boundaries concerning language skills. Guatemala and the U.S.A. are the countries directly involved, as the 'Monsanto law' was a provision of the FTA between these two countries and, derived from the commonness of events, issues and shared language, most of the articles I found were from media sources in Latin/Central America. Moreover, there was a considerable number of results from U.S. independent media and international organisations' webpages and blogs written in English and Spanish languages. I would like to note that there were also some articles from Spanish media sources, from which I selected one. In this last case, I find that both the language and the colonial bonds between Spain and Guatemala are likely at the basis of the news-value for a Spanish audience, especially when considering that Guatemalan immigration is not very expressive in Spain[28]. The third limit that I

renounce to the piece by a high-circulation newspaper with an online version from Puerto Rico, and could not substitute it for another article from a similar news outlet.

[27] The two non-dated articles are the following: *La derogación de la 'ley Monsanto'*, Magazine Entremundos; *Activists prompt Guatemala U-turn on GM crops*, Eye on Latin America.

[28] There are 11,928 Guatemalans living in Spain according to the provisional data of the 1st January 2019 from the Spanish Institute of Statistics

admit to my research process, since its commencement, is my feminist stance. After collecting and selecting the articles, it became evident that most of the chosen articles recognise the role of indigenous women in the movement against 'Monsanto law' and that, furthermore, many of them include images of the women at the frontline of activist protests. I concede, nonetheless, that these were not features present in all news articles gathered in a first moment, for which I have to consider that my feminist perspective influenced the data selection.

4.2 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a research pathway

As pointed in the methodological chapter's introduction, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was the method selected for the data analysis. Applying CDA as the research pathway implies a number of assumptions. For instance, that the 'critical' standpoint in Critical Discourse Analysis emerges from the focus on a social problem and on the role of discourse in the production and reproduction of power differentials. CDA usually takes the perspective of the oppressed to support their struggle towards equality, and it does so explicitly. (Fairclough, 2010; Wodak & Meyer, 2001, 2009). Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer's concede that this means that "CDA is biased – and proud of it" (2001, p. 97). Assuming the bias accentuates the importance of presenting a rigorous methodology, as critical knowledge production is often the most exposed to fierce critique. The pressure against critical analysis is, in itself, a device of the power structures that cause the social marginalisation and exclusion unveiled by critical knowledge production. In such critical analysis, theorisation has to address the complexities of the relationships between the structures of discourse and the social structures of the phenomena. Thus, CDA requires a strong theoretical framework, empirically verifiable observations, adequate problem formulation, and a practical application, which signifies that the analysis *should* be relevant. These are the principles that guided me through the analysis, that was made tridimensionally, as Wodak and Meyer define it, "within the domain defined by the theoretical discourse-cognition-society triangle" (2001, p. 98). In CDA, 'discourse' means all 'communicative events', including written text and its associated images, layouts and other multimedia dimensions of signification, also including conversational interactions. Relatedly, 'cognition' refers to the constitution of the discourse, for which it accounts for representations and/or processes involved in the discourse, whereas 'society' involves movements, institutions, social processes, political structures, and cultural specificities at a macro level, that is to say, the power relations between and within groups, not disregarding the

(http://www.ine.es/jaxi/Datos.htm?path=/t20/e245/p04/provi/l0/&file=00000006.px), in a population of 6,324,075 immigrants (1 July 2018 http://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Datos.htm?t=9675).

microstructures of power present, for example, in a one-on-one interaction. Therefore, the cognitive and social dimensions define the context of discourse, both locally and globally, which is necessary to theorise the relationship between text and context. (Wodak & Meyer, 2001) This theorisation is pivotal to attain an articulated critical analysis of the social issue at stake, i.e., grassroots activism against the 'Monsanto law' in Guatemala.

To structuralise the analysis, the first step was to formulate the research questions I am looking to answer with the present research considering the methodological concepts that inform it, which are postcolonialism, intersectionality and decolonisation of knowledge. The actual analysis of the data that utilises the referred methodological tools along with critical discourse analysis (CDA) followed the definition of the research questions. In practice, the methods applied were chosen according to the construction of the research object, which, as Norman Fairclough (2010) notes, makes the process of selecting methods also a theoretical one, not something apart.

Furthermore, Fairclough (2010) concedes that CDA is not an analysis of the discourse *in itself*; instead it is the analysis of dialectical relations between discourse and what it affects and is affected by, including *in-discourse* relations such as the relations of communication between the people who produced the discourse. Subsequently, he contends, CDA is also transdisciplinary, as it needs to exceed the limits of more traditional disciplines such as sociology, linguistics, politics, biology, and so forth, navigating across them, in order to analyse the relations that produce and reproduce the discourse. Critical discourse analysis is, therefore, nothing short of complexity. It is essential to understand that CDA is not a strict realist approach but a *critical realist* approach (Fairclough, 2010), one that requires grasping the world as something real that exists independently of our knowledge or understanding of it, in line with epistemological realism, yet acknowledging that the social world only exists via human action and that it is socially constructed. As Fairclough defined it, "CDA is a 'moderate' or 'contingent' form of social constructivism" (2010, p. 5).

As previously referred, Critical Discourse Analysis assumes that discourses are to be understood within a context, due to their historical character (Wodak & Meyer, 2001). Therefore, this method of analysis implies a correlation between social events, social practices and social structures. For that reason, I have carefully contextualised the indigenous resistance in Guatemala historically, detailing the emergence and conditions of indigenous women's resistance in chapter 2[29].

[29] refer to Chapter 2, Indigenous Resistance in Guatemala.

Constructing indigenous women's activism in Guatemala against 'Monsanto law' as an object of analysis and theorising it in a transdisciplinary manner required, therefore, to focus on different aspects of the phenomenon, accounting for theories originated in different fields of knowledge. The assumption is that discourse is not isolated, it is situated within the *relations*. A first immersion in the data revealed straightaway that the textual analysis should be twofold: on the one hand, I had to disclose the discourses, genres and styles in the texts and understand how they were articulated together; on the other, and very importantly for the present research work, was the analysis of the visual images that accompany the texts and their articulation with the texts. This falls under what Fairclough (2010, p. 234) considers to be a general method of analysis for CDA, one that is both interdiscursive and multimodal. In CDA, the analysis of images makes part of the overall analysis of a text, falling under the multimodal analysis of the semiotic *modes* intertwined in a text. The multimodal analysis should be accompanied by an interdiscursive analysis of discourses, genres and styles present in the same text. (Fairclough, 2010, p. 7). Texts of the Internet or television, for example, should be assumed as *multimodal* in their mixing of language and visual images (Fairclough, 2010, p. 233). The data at the basis of this thesis is constituted by online articles that were assumed and analysed as multimodal; thus, the images were considered as part of the discourse, not as illustrative of the text.

Nonetheless, Fairclough argues that regardless of the multidisciplinary character of CDA, a detailed textual analysis strengthens the discourse analysis (1995, p. 187). He contends that textual analysis is very relevant for social scientific research, presenting four arguments – theoretical, methodological, historical and political – to ground his claim. The theoretical argument is that texts constitute social action, and that language produces, reproduces and transforms social structures, relations and identities. The methodological reason is that texts are a significant source of evidence for assertions made about those social structures, relations and identities. A third argument, referred to as historical, is that textual analysis provides a good deal of insight about social and cultural change, as texts can depict ongoing social movements and processes as they are occurring. The political reason refers to the critical analysis embedded in textual analysis as part of CDA, which is utterly important to create awareness about social control and domination. (Fairclough, 1995, p. 208-209).

Another key aspect of critical discourse analysis is the actual critique it implies or, in other words, its normative character. Focusing on the dialectical relations between discourse and power and their effects, CDA produces a critique of the social relations that are affected and in effect,

highlighting the discursive social wrongs and conceiving means of lessening them. Nonetheless, it is relevant to acknowledge that while disassembling and interpreting discourse about social life, we are also producing discourse about it. Hence, great effort must be put into justifying the analysis and critique produced by CDA, to achieve a constructive, value-driven, ethical outcome. Fairclough presents CDA as a type of research that "seeks to understand how contemporary capitalism in some respects enables but in other respects prevents or limits human well-being and flourishing, with a view to overcoming or mitigating these obstacles and limits" (2010, p. 11). This, again, is a very relevant concept for the present research work, as it addresses a grassroots movement opposition to a law that was a requirement of a free-trade agreement, which is a common instrument of neoliberal capitalism. Amidst other consequences, global capitalism and its focus on economic growth have led to the reduction of the protection of people against the effects of markets, augmenting poverty and inequality, and increased the threats to the environment at a larger-than-ever scale; these are all issues addressed in the articles about the action of the social movements opposed to the ratification of the 'Monsanto law' by the Guatemalan congress.

4.2 The methodological framework

Given the transdisciplinary character of CDA, making use of a transdisciplinary methodology enhances the analysis of the discourse. The transdisciplinary methodology I opted for utilising is intersectionality. In their book *Intersectionality*, Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge define intersectionality as a means of understanding and analysing complexity in human experience, in people, and in the world. The organisation of power within a society, social inequalities, and people's lives are shaped by multiple factors that work together and constitute each other. (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 11) This means that, in a specific society and at a particular time, gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, dis/ability, religion and age, for example, build on each other and dynamically develop interactions that create particular social divisions. Intersectionality as an analytic tool conveys access to the multidimensionality at the basis of the organisation of power relations within different social contexts, which is what I tried to unveil.

Parallelly, intersectionality is part of feminist thought that looks for "dynamic ways to conceptualise how socially constructed differences and structures of power work at the level of individual experiences, social practices, institutional arrangements, symbolic representations and cultural imaginaries" (Davis, 2014, p. 17). Kathy Davis notes that intersectionality became a

necessary analytical tool for feminist scholars who wanted to find alternatives to static conceptualisations of identity, which includes critical perspectives that had emerged from poststructuralism, for instance, postcolonial theory. Since I framed my research within postcolonial feminist theories, I considered that intersectionality was needed in order to bring the necessary critique to my research. This signifies, therefore, that postcolonial theories are part of the intersectional analysis that was done.

I educed from Davis' (2014) proposals with regards to the process of making creative and critical feminist analysis and applied it to my research, from theorisation to analysis and conclusions. Therefore, I (1) analysed my own positioning as a researcher, not by listing my multiple social identities, but via developing a narrative about how my specific location shapes my research in very particular ways and situating my epistemological stance; (2) complicated gender, relating it to the other markers of difference at stake – such as race/ ethnicity, class and sexuality –, accessing the complexity of the case in analysis; and, relatedly, (3) I consciously tried to avoid the blind-spots and other myopias that Davis (2014) mentions, being aware that they could annihilate my best efforts to make academic critical feminist research. In what concerns this last aspect, I kept in mind that I needed to re-examine my considerations and categorisations, as well as my geopolitically located assumptions and methods along the process of analysis.

With regards to the politics of research, traditionally, knowledge production and knowledge distribution are political products of colonialism and imperialism. Consequently, decolonising the methodology constitutes an ethical exercise, besides being an ontological and political one. My intention was to use postcolonial, decolonial and southern theories to evaluate the ethics of my methodology or methodologies and be conscious about the limits of the methods I utilised.

In brief, intersectionality is the tool I relied upon to question canons, examining the many dimensions imbricated in the phenomenon and the coalition politics that emerge from it. Plus, utilising intersectionality permits to bring together theory and activism and analyse what is at their junction. Intersectionality is a useful methodology for my research, because it confers me with an understanding of the mechanisms of power at stake, allowing the construction of a matrix of meaning-making (discarding reductionist binarisms) and comprehend the complexity of interactions at several levels, such as lived experiences, social practices, institutions, representations and symbols. My main ethical concerns concern the colonisation of my knowledge production, and I address them with my effort of decolonising both theories and methods.

5 STUDY FINDINGS: DESCRIPTION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter comprehends the findings, their analysis and discussion. The chapter was divided into two parts; the first subchapter provides an insight into the empirical data, and the second subchapter presents the results from the data analysis, further discussing them.
The selected news articles that are at the basis of this study are all available online, and their web addresses can be found in Appendix I. A brief summary about the media outlets that published them is also available in Appendix II.

5.1 An introduction to the empirical data

In this subchapter, I present the main data features and formats to enhance the comprehensibility of the analysis and the discussion that follows. I organised my observations in tables 2 and 3, codifying entries from the former to complete the latter.

A variety of forms of activism that have supported the movement and promoted mobilisation against the 'Monsanto law' emerge from the data. After reading the articles several times and highlighting interesting pieces of text that could be meaningful for the present research, I proceeded with systematising key ideas and broader categories that contain them. For that purpose, I organised the key ideas, or themes, as they were named, and grouped them per category, as shown in Table 2. The themes were identified according to the terms used in the data, and they were codified using letters from A to H with the purpose of simplifying their listing in Table 3 (pages 39-42).

This is by no means an exhaustive inventory of the thematic present in the data; I identified these categories because, to some extent, they all include answers to the research questions, i.e., (1) How did indigenous women's activism against 'Monsanto law' in Guatemala manifest itself? and (2) How did gender, sex, race/ethnicity and class make part of this civil action/ activism manifestation/ movement?

Themes	**Code** (letters A to H)	**Categories**
Coalitions between various organisations at a national level	A	Action for resistance
Direct action on the streets, such as protest marches, manifestations surrounding decision centres, roadblocks, others	B	
Jurisdictional action, under the form of an appeal to the unconstitutionality of the law on the grounds of it violating indigenous peoples' rights to being heard in every issue that affects them	C	
Indigenous peoples' participation in the protests	D	Bodies in resistance
Indigenous women at the front of the protests	E	
Indigenous peoples as promoters of the movement	F	Socio-economic and spiritual aspects of corn production for the Maya
Food sovereignty, economic prosperity and social aspect of corn production	G	
Spirituality and tradition: Maya are the people of the corn	H	

Table 2. Themes, their codification, and categories from the data.

These are all critical categories of analysis for the present research work; however, I chose to focus on 'bodies in resistance' and unwrap the remaining dimensions from that centre. When referring to bodies in resistance, my aim is to recognise that participation and resistance are always embodied. As previously referred, I follow the nomenclature in the data, which includes the utilisation of the term 'body'.

A data overview summary that includes the selected articles' titles, publishing media and language, publishing date, photos/photo captions, and theme occurrence is presented in Table 3. Therefore, Table 3 further informs about the contents of the data by identifying the themes that were found in each data segment, i.e., in each news article, codified using letters A to H, as per Table 2.

Title of the article	**Media / Language (EN / ES)**	**Publishing date**	**Photos and photo captions**	**Theme codes** (cf. Table 2)
March against "Monsanto law"	La Voz (ES)	August 25, 2014	n.a.	**A**, **C**, **D***, **F**
Activists prompt Guatemala U-turn on GM crops	Eye On Latin America (EN)	September 10, 2014	 Guatemalans at a protest against the proposed "Monsanto law", which has now been repealed, in Guatemala City.  A woman carries vegetables on a farm in rural Guatemala. Farmers who have developed their own seeds using traditional methods over hundreds or thousands of years would see their livelihoods threatened by the provisions in 'Monsanto Law'. 	**C**, **D**, **E**, **G**

			An anti-Monsanto crop circle created by farmers in the Philippines. Worldwide opposition to GM corporations and their impact on local farmers has grown in recent years.	
Maya people's movement defeats Monsanto law in Guatemala	Intercontinental Cry (EN)	September 15, 2014	 Nim Sanik, Maya Kaqchikel giving a press conference in Chimaltenango  Lolita Chávez, Maya Quiché, outside the Constitutional Court in Guatemala City	**A**, **B**, **D***, **E**, **G**, **H,**
Maya Women Fought Monsanto - and Won	Bitch Media (EN)	October 2, 2014	 Guatemalan feminist and political activist Lolita Chávez	**D***, **E***, **F**, **G**, **H**

			 Heirloom Glass corn seeds	
In Guatemala, indigenous communities prevail against Monsanto	Waging NonViolence (EN)	November 4, 2014	 In Sololá, hundreds of campesinos mobilised to oppose the "Monsanto Law", which would have opened Guatemala to the privatisation of seeds.	**A**, **B**, **D***, **E***, **F**, **G**, **H**
Guatemala: decree 19-2014 "Monsanto law" repealed: the fight for corn plants its seed today	Prensa Comunitaria Km. 169 (ES)	September 5, 2014		**A**, **B**, **C, D, E**, **F**

			 (no photo captions)	
The repeal of 'Monsanto law'	Entremundos (ES)	s.d.	 (no photo caption)  Indigenous march at Guatemala City, no date. EPG's collection, 1968-1996.	**B**, **C**, D, **E**, **F**, **G**

Table 3. Data overview summary: articles' titles, publishing media and language, publishing date, photos and photo captions, themes.

In Guatemala, indigenous women have been organising themselves to resist the effects of colonialism, described as the union of two patriarchies, European and autochthone (Cabnal, 2016)[30]. In 2003, the indigenous women that would create Amixmasaj Association, the indigenous women's Association of Santa Maria de Xalapán[31] developed the motto "Defence of the body-territory and of the territory-Earth" (Falquet, 2015, p. 79; Cabnal YouTube interviews 2016 and 2019). For these women, resistance is about defending their bodies and their territories-Nature, because they are intrinsically connected, and so is the violence and oppression exerted upon them. Thus, indigenous women often put their bodies at the front of the protests, and the manifestations against the 'Monsanto law' were no exception. Though in the data the fact that indigenous women were in the front line of the protests is often not very explicit at a textual level, it is unexpectedly self-evident in the photos published with the articles. The data overview summary in Table 3 illustrates this occurrence, showing how theme E, "Indigenous women at the front of the protests" is present in all but one of the analysed news articles. Nonetheless, while theme E is the second most frequent theme in the data, it is only explicitly referred to in two of the articles' texts; it is present mostly in the articles' photos.

Though the images speak louder about indigenous women's action against 'Monsanto law', exceptionally, one of the articles opens with a direct reference to this action:

> For months, indigenous women in Guatemala have been protesting against a tough foe: biotech giant Monsanto. (Maya Women Fought Monsanto – And Won, Bitch Media, October 2, 2014)

The media outlet that published the article in reference is an independent, U.S.-based feminist media organisation. Their correspondents do not deal with editorial censure or sponsors' pressure to produce text that is diplomatic and/or reinforcing of power structures. This might have had an effect on the fact that the article was written collocating indigenous women at the centre of the phenomenon very explicitly. The sentence is preceded by a medium close-up photo of Lolita Chávez, a Guatemalan feminist and political activist with international visibility (Image 4, page 48). Likewise, theme D, "Indigenous peoples' participation in the protests", is transversal to all analysed news articles, though it is only specified textually in four out of seven occurrences. The

[30] Interview to Lorena Cabnal, indigenous communitarian feminist Maya-Xinka (part 1) https://youtu.be/1Wo-JK4Uddk

[31] Asociación Amixmasaj, l'Asociación de mujeres indigenas de Santa María Xalapán, Jalapa, Guatemala, founded in 2004.

photos that collocate indigenous women at the front of the protests also inform about indigenous peoples' participation in the protests. Themes F and G, respectively, "Indigenous peoples as promoters of the movement" and "Food sovereignty, economic prosperity and social aspect of corn production" are quite frequent. In contrast, theme H, "Spirituality and tradition: Maya are the people of the corn" is the less recurrent of the eight systematised themes, with only three occurrences observed.

5.2 Study findings: what emerged from the data analysis and how it connects to the theoretical framework

This subchapter reveals the findings of the qualitative data analysis that was made utilising the methodological tools and methods described in the methodological section in Chapter 4. It also synthetises a brief discussion of its results under the theoretical framework that was presented in the literature review section in Chapter 3.

This section is divided into two parts, each related to one of the research questions that guided the research work.

5.2.1 Indigenous activist women

The first question in this study sought to determine how indigenous women's activism against the 'Monsanto law' in Guatemala manifested itself. As mentioned in subchapter 5.1., where the empirical data is presented, the images that illustrate the articles are essential elements for that disclosure. In this sub-section, I highlight some of the photos and their meanings to furnish an account of the manners in which these women's activism was manifested.

Image 2. Guatemalans at a protest against the proposed "Monsanto Law", which has now been repealed, in Guatemala City. Photo courtesy of Hoy (Nicaragua). Eye on Latin America.

Image 2 is a photo that illustrates an article from Eye on Latin America, a news website that published articles related to the environment, sustainable development and social issues on Abya Yala. The photo is credited to Hoy, a daily newspaper of Nicaragua that is only available in print version, and was taken during a street protest against the 'Monsanto law' in Guatemala City. It consists of a medium close-up shot that highlights two indigenous women carrying corn cobs. Visible in the background are other participants of the protest, from which two men faces are more noticeable, though blurred. Also detectable are parts of a few protest signs, which do not allow reading of the written messages, as well as more corn cobs and a raised hand. There is a façade of what seems to be a large building behind the people that are occupying the street. Although it is perceptible that there are non-indigenous people on the street, the photo was framed to capture these two women that are readily identifiable as indigenous, due to the fact that they are using traditional clothing. The caption that accompanied the photo in the article from Eye on Latin America does not mention "indigenous", "Maya" or "women". Nonetheless, as observed by Konefal (cf. sub-chapter 3.2. Maya women's activism), the depiction of indigenous women in their traditional *trajes* is part of racialised imagery that points towards Maya symbolism. Here, the corn cobs are also part of that Maya symbolism, while simultaneously relating to the food sovereignty

of the people. Therefore, the image tells about the bodies of indigenous women in action, how they offer resistance, and how corn production is both a spiritual and a socio-economical matter that is at stake with the passage of the 'Monsanto law'. Incorporating all the categories considered for the purpose of this analysis, it both situates the indigenous women in their activism and shows how that activism manifested itself on the street protests.

Image 3 displays a different aspect of the expression of indigenous women's lead in street protests against the 'Monsanto law'.

Image 3. Maya-Ixchel people in the manifestation of September 4, 2014, for the derogation of the law for the Protection of New Plant Varieties that had been approved by the Congress. Photo credits Cristina Chiquin. Prensa Comunitaria Km. 169.

The photo was originally published with the article on Prensa Comunitaria Km. 169 website, and it is an angled shot of some indigenous people in a street protest against the 'Monsanto law'. The photography in itself consists of a low angle shot, that is to say, it looks up on these people, conveying the impression of mighty and powerful. When looking at the photo, the eye of the viewer is immediately attracted to the image of the person at the front of the group, who is an indigenous woman in her traditional Maya-Ixchel clothing. She is looking at something ahead with a defying, severe look on her face, while standing on the street holding down a protest poster in

front of her legs. The poster reads partially "United … in fighting … seeds … Monsanto"[32]. On her right there is a second woman in the traditional *traje* holding a protest sign in front of her chest, and a third woman is behind them. We can only see the head of the third woman; therefore, we do not know if she is wearing the *traje*. However, the fact that she has a cap on her head seems to indicate otherwise. The fourth person is a man on the left side of the photo, holding a poster in front of his legs. The posters from both the woman on the right side and the man on the left side are not readable from the photo. The four people seem to be standing static while looking forward at something. They are not, however, looking at the camera, which is on a lower plane. This image is very powerful in the way it positions indigenous people as large, solid obstacles to the 'Monsanto law' against the backdrop of an open blue sky. It is almost as if they would be affirming that there is where it stops, that they will not allow this law to go further. And it is even more meaningful because it brings the indigenous women forward, to a place of power. This photo is not a random photo of the street protests happening in Guatemala against the 'Monsanto law'. It is a clear statement of intentions both from these participants in the protests and the woman behind the camera. The photo, as well as the text of the article, are authored by Cristina Chiquin. Chiquin is a Guatemalan freelance photojournalist who runs a project named *Nuestra Memoria, Nuestra Verdad* (Our Memory, Our Truth), which documents the lives and history of the Maya-Ixchel women in Guatemala, while also maintaining collaborations with various national and international media. Under her collaboration with Prensa Comunitaria Km. 169, Chiquin signs her articles as "Mujeres Ixchel" (Ixchel women), which is the name of a feminist Guatemalan collective whose objective is to revindicate the struggles and resistance of women in Guatemala and elsewhere. Her work as a photojournalist is part of her activism towards women's rights in general, and indigenous women's rights in particular; hence, it is unapologetically blatant in her photos and texts. Image 3 is no exception to that, being a manifestation of this activism upstream and downstream.

Decolonial feminists have been calling attention to the fact that oppression is built over colonialised women's bodies (cf. Mohanty 1998, 2003 and 2013, for example). Cabnal observes that indigenous women in Abya Yala have even developed parallel conceptualisations in what concerns colonisation, which they experience as the union of two patriarchies – one European and the other autochthone – over their bodies (Falquet, 2015, p. 86). As referred in the literature section, a unique form of feminist activism started to be weaved in 2004 by the Guatemalan Indigenous Women's Association Amixmasaj. Lorena Cabnal, a Maya Kekchi-Xinca woman that was one of the propellers of communitarian feminism, declared: "I am a communitarian feminist

[32] In Spanish, "Unidos … en lucha … semillas … Monsanto".

in the sense that I establish a link between my body, the territory and the Earth" (Falquet, 2015, p. 76). Showing up at the front of the protests (images 2 and 3) is a means for indigenous women to reclaim their rights over both their own bodies and their territories.

Image 4. Guatemalan feminist and political activist Lolita Chávez. Photo by Christin Sandberg. Bitch Media.

Image 4 is a photo of Bitch Media's article. It is a medium close-up shot of Aura Lolita Chávez Ixcaquic, a Guatemalan indigenous feminist and political activist known as Lolita Chávez, set against a background that comprehends an institutional building with a series of hoisted flags and some police vehicles. This image is powerful by itself since it brings together symbols of the social structures that were in opposition regarding 'Monsanto law': on the one side, the indigenous peoples and their traditions, the colours, the documented denounces of their infringed rights over their ancestral lands; on the other, the big governmental/international organisations, in a predominant white blur. The facial expression of Lolita Chávez, though not centred within the picture frame, is what immediately captures the eye of the viewer. Her determined look denotes strength and peaceful resolution, to which it is difficult to be indifferent.

Following a matriarchal pathway, Lolita Chávez explains that it was the example of communitarian organisation given by her mother during the civil war in Guatemala (1960 to 1996) that inspired her to dedicate her life to pursue the defence of indigenous territories (Arana, 2017). Being a leader

of the Council of Ki'che Peoples for the Defence of Life, Mother Nature, Land and Territory (CPK)[33], an organisation that fights against the expansion of mining, logging, hydroelectric and agroindustry megaprojects to protect natural resources and human rights in Guatemalan territory, Lolita Chávez gained international attention for her efforts towards women's rights and preservation of natural resources. Lolita Chávez work has seen international acknowledgement; her nomination to the Sakharov Human Rights Prize by the European Parliament in October 2017[34] being the exponent of that recognition. CPK was founded in 2008 to resist the exploitation of Nature and indigenous territories and peoples promoted by CAFTA-DR in Guatemala. Being the 'Monsanto law' one of the U.S. demands under this free-trade agreement, CPK took important action regarding the 2014's protests against the passage of the referred law. Lolita Chávez work at the front of this grassroots organisation has put her in the spotlight for the powerful antagonist interests, which made her, along with other members of CPK, a target of threats and violence. Having her life at risk, she fled to the Basque Country, Spain, where she lives since June 2017, and from where she keeps doing her work of resistance. For Lolita Chávez the defence of the rights of women and land are two indissociable struggles, for which she revendicates that "the territories, as our bodies, are not property"[35]. Her work intertwines indigenous rights with women's rights and the protection of Nature. Therefore, while being an internationally recognised leader of indigenous resistance to the government-backed usurpation of territory and environmental damage in favour of capitalist interests, her effort is in great part an attempt to find a way through a maze with such barriers as discrimination, exclusion and marginalisation based on gender, race/ethnicity and social class. In Guatemala, one of the layers of oppression and marginalisation is the violence against women. This is as much a consequence of the patriarchal system brought about by colonialism as it is embedded in the autochthone patriarchal system – the occidental patriarchy and the original ancestral patriarchy, as referred to by the communitarian feminists. It is at their junction that we find indigenous women. As Lolita Chávez has collocated it:

> Women in our community have focused on recreating our individual and collective identities and what it means to be a Maya woman… This has been a process of healing, where we have talked about the autonomy of our peoples, but

[33] In Spanish, Consejo de Pueblos K'iche's por la Defensa de la Vida, Madre Naturaleza, Tierra y Territorio (CPK).
[34] In European Parliament News, Sakharov Prize 2017: meet the finalists https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/eu-affairs/20171009STO85654/sakharov-prize-2017-meet-the-finalists
[35] "Los territórios, como nuestros cuerpo, no son propriedad", interview with Lolita Chávez for elDiario.es, published on November, 10 2018: https://www.eldiario.es/sociedad/lolita-chavez-territorios-cuerpo-propiedad_1_1848461.html

> also **autonomy within autonomy**. Because in my nation, there's patriarchy, and sometimes it's worse than other barriers because it is so intimate. (JASS, 2017)

A second relevant feature of image 4 is the fact that, unlike the previously analysed photos, it has an institutional setting. As per the photo description, there is a noticeable white blur occupying the background, which contrasts with the vivid, colourful clothes of Lolita Chávez. The background objects such as the police vehicles, the grid-like façade of the large building, and the long flagpoles that resemble a protecting fence in front of the building are all objects that point towards surveillance and control tools. Though these institutional power tools are on display, they are softened by the photographic technique utilised. In other words, the photo was taken with an intentional focus on the subject while blurring the background, which is a technique utilised to emphasise the subject in the photo. Interestingly, it is a technique very commonly used for sports' photos; however, in those cases, the subject is moving on his way to the finishing line and is frozen on the photo against a blurry background. This led me to consider a symbolic significance of what is embedded both in the making of the photo and its posterior selection for publishing because, though the subject on image 4 is not in physical motion, Lolita Chávez was actually moving towards or following a trajectory of resistance against the institutional powers, here represented on the image's background.

A third aspect of image 4 that differentiates it from the previous images is that only one subject is visible on the photo, while both images 2 and 3 are group shots. Nonetheless, the contrasting dimensions of the oppositional elements in the image direct towards a more comprehensive contextualisation the event of resistance against the 'Monsanto law'. This wide-ranging depiction is one that includes the representations of the power structures at a macro level, displaying symbols of the movement, socio-cultural and political structures, institutions, at a micro-level, translated into the one-on-one interaction the viewer has with Lolita Chávez' resolute expression, and the power relations between groups. As referred to in Chapter 2, where indigenous resistance in Guatemala is contextualised, the event of activism against 'Monsanto law' uncovers many layers of the Guatemalan reality, such as social structures and power flows between them, revealing practices of discrimination and marginalisation based on race/ethnicity, but also gender, social class, religion and language. Interestingly, power differentials are also captured in image 4, as the big institutional building and apparatus versus Lolita Chávez standing all by herself in front of it even allude to a David and Goliath type of fight.

I reckon that image 4 is a data sample rich in symbolic representations of socio-cultural structures and practices and the power flows between them, and how they work together at the level of individual experiences. The intersectional lens as elaborated in the literature review is what permits the exploration of the multidimensionality of the phenomenon.

Indigenous women like Lolita Chávez and the more or less anonymous women that take part in the everyday struggle against the oppression of their bodies and their territories are the drivers of indigenous resistance. Thus, their organisation, mobilisation and leadership are objective manifestations of indigenous activism.

5.2.2 Gender, sex, race/ethnicity and class – all intermeshed in the activism against 'Monsanto law'

As formulated in the second research question, the study was also set out with the aim of assessing how gender, sex, race/ethnicity and class made part of this specific activism manifestation. Unquestionably, feminist postcolonial and decolonial theories and action are what allows me as a white Western researcher to recognise power differentials amongst women and situate my research within an intersectional methodology. Socio-economic inequalities and marginalisation are at stake when economic interests are favoured over the rights to self-determination and food sovereignty of the indigenous peoples. The fight against the patriarchal power structures of inequality is a fight against social injustice and exclusionary practices, at local and global levels (cf. sub-chapter 3.2. The Maya identity and the space for Maya women's activism). In Guatemala, indigenous *women and men of corn* utilised their bodies to resist the implementation of a law that menaces their right to exist on their own terms. The following excerpt from a news article published on Prensa Comunitaria Km. 169 website unravels some of the dimensions imbricated in indigenous resistance against systemic exclusion:

> The effort of the peoples Q'eqchi`, Kaqchiquel, Q'anjobal, amongst others, the struggle of the 'women and men of corn' (sic) to protect not only the seed but the millenary culture that it represents and safeguard the food sovereignty of the country, had an outcome that is the result of this effort and this struggle.
>
> In hoping that this law will not be placed again in the national legislation, likewise, the struggle of the peoples continues in the face of the threat of megaprojects

> such as mining, hydroelectric power plants, among others that threaten the life and the territory of the peoples. (Prensa Comunitaria Km. 169, 2014)[36]

However, while there is an explicit reference to the Maya resistance, the indigenous *women and men of corn*, and like almost all articles' texts, the extract is mostly gender blind. It is easy to assume that men, women and non-binary people participated in the movement as equals when the discourse does not differentiate between their struggles and efforts. In other words, it is as though the structural inequality would have the same effect on all marginalised people, as a great, cohesive group. Nonetheless, as addressed in the literature review chapter, more specifically in the sub-chapter about Maya women's activism, indigenous women are at the intersection of two patriarchal systems, one ancestral and the other occidental, brought about by colonialism. Therefore, these women's experience of oppression and their struggle varies significantly from that of men. In Guatemala, as in many other countries of Abya Yala, women have been organising themselves and fighting against domestic and sexual violence and femicide[37], as well as for their right to safe abortion, for example. From these, the women that are most vulnerable to violence and femicide are indigenous women. Still, while the articles raise ethnicity and class to some extent, they do not address the gender issue. Most texts refer to "indigenous peoples", "peasants" or "campesinos", and even "citizens" in general, as per the following extracts:

> Guatemala – A group of indigenous people and peasants manifested today in front of the Guatemalan Congress to demand from the deputies the repeal of the controversial "Law Monsanto" before its entry into force, which concerns the property rights regarding the seeds of the new vegetable species that are cultivated in the country. (El Nuevo Día 2014, August 2014)[38]

> Late in the afternoon of September 4, after nearly 10 days of protests by a coalition of labor, indigenous rights groups and farmers, the indigenous peoples

[36] Excerpt in the original: "El esfuerzo del pueblo Q`eqchi`, Kaqchiquel, Q`anjobal, entre otros, la lucha de las mujeres y hombres de maíz por resguardar no solo la semilla si no la cultura milenaria de lo que esté representa y resguardar la soberanía alimentaria del país , tuvo un desenlace que es fruto de este esfuerzo y de esta lucha. Queda esperar que está ley no quiera ser nuevamente colocada en la legislación nacional, así mismo la lucha de los pueblos sigue ante la amenaza de megaproyectos como la minería, las hidroeléctricas, entre otras que atentan contra la vida y el territorio de los pueblos." (Prensa Comunitaria Km. 169, 2014)

[37] **Ni Una a Menos** is a good example of a movement that fights violence against women that spread extensively in Abya Yala.

[38] Excerpt in the original: "Guatemala - Un grupo de indígenas y campesinos se manifestó hoy frente al Congreso de Guatemala para pedir a los diputados que deroguen antes de su entrada en vigor la polémica "Ley Monsanto", relativa a los derechos de propiedad de las semillas de las nuevas variedades vegetales que se cultivan en el país." (El Nuevo Día, agosto 2014)

> and campesinos of Guatemala won are rare victory. Under the pressure of massive mobilisations, the Guatemala legislature repealed Decree 19-2014, commonly referred to as the "Monsanto Law," which would have given the transnational chemical and seed producer a foothold into the country's seed market. (Waging Non-Violence, November 2014)
>
> Undoubtedly the peaceful demonstrations that took place throughout the country, for more than a week, were key to the deputies of Congress repealing the decree. The repeal of the law thanks to social media campaigns, the strong media presence and above all the peaceful demonstrations with great participation of citizens that took place in the main roads of the country represent a model for our next struggles. (Entremundos, s.d.)[39]

Perceptibly, there was much going on that is occluded or partly veiled in what has been written about it. Actually, if it were not for photos, the overall discourse would not communicate that indigenous women were at the front of the protests even in the independent media. This is one of the most interesting findings of the analysis, the paradox within the discourse in the analysed data. While indigenous women are clearly visible in their action against the law's approval in the images, they mostly absent are from the texts. There are only two exceptions: one full article, from a feminist magazine, that informs about the activism of indigenous women[40]; and two brief sentences in another article that directly refer to indigenous women's role in this phenomenon:

> As the protests mounted, women took the lead in organising for the defence of maize. In Sololá, women created a seed bank to archive and protect the various varieties of heirloom corn for future generations. (Waging Non-Violence, November 2014)

Interestingly, in this brief excerpt, we can not only read about (Maya) women's activism but about their role in the preservation of the ancestral seeds of the different varieties of corn. If the Maya are the people of the corn, spiritual- and materially, and women are the guardians of the heirloom

[39] Excerpt in the original: "Sin duda alguna las manifestaciones pacíficas que se dieron en todo el país, por más de una semana, fueron clave para que los diputados y diputadas del Congreso derogaran el decreto. La derogación de la ley gracias a las campañas en redes sociales, la fuerte presencia mediática, y sobre todo a las manifestaciones pacíficas con gran participación ciudadana que se hicieron en las vías principales del país, representa un modelo para nuestras próximas luchas." (Entremundos, s.d.)

[40] Maya Women Fought Monsanto - and Won, Bitch Media, 2014.

corn, that collocates them in a position of defence *a priori*. Lorena Cabnal (cf. sub-section 5.2.1.) observes the socio-historical bonding between women and Nature, and between women's bodies and territory, arguing that defending one implies defending the other. It is part of these women's experiences. Not surprising, therefore, is to acknowledge indigenous women as drivers of the activism against 'Monsanto law', since it was part of the struggle to protect Nature, territory and food sovereignty, as well as tradition and spirituality.

Relatedly, as previously highlighted, though race/ethnicity and class are not erased in the discourse, they are not specified or questioned for the most part. Nonetheless, when contextualising indigenous resistance in Guatemala social- and historically since the event of independence in the 19th century (from Spain, and then Mexico), U.S.A.'s economic policies influencing agrarian reforms' under the cover of government backups, military, civil war, sexual violence and genocide of indigenous peoples were at stake (cf. chapter 2). All of this implied violence and oppression of the indigenous peoples, acquiring specific contours with respect to indigenous women, notably due to sexual violence[41]. And, as the inhabitants of San Andrés Xecul expressed, it is the experience of oppression, discrimination and inequality that unites the Maya (cf. the literature review, subchapter 3.2.). Hence, race/ethnicity and class are aspects of indigenous women's activism against the 'Monsanto law', along with gender and sex. However, only by analysing the data from an intersectional perspective is it visible. The data shows that the discourse about this phenomenon tends to amalgamate identities and experiences in large groups, "indigenous peoples", "campesinos", "human rights organisations", "coalitions", naming a few, in what I would call a *drone-view* of the event. I could see the peaceful action, such as the protests on the streets, the manifestations in front of institutional buildings, the formal appeal to the unconstitutionality of the law on the grounds of it violating indigenous peoples' rights, but all from afar. Here are two more examples of that general overview that is recurrent in the data:

> Meanwhile, demonstration pickets surrounded the Congress for a week. To the capital came commissions from Alta Verapaz, Quiché, Totonicapán and Sololá, including members of several organisations such as the CUC[42], to accord the social actions that were carried out in front of the legislative body. And to participate in press conferences and meetings with other sectors of organised civil society and plan new pressures to Congress. Also, before the media, CUC argued

[41] Sexual violence is part of the life experience of indigenous women and transgender people in Guatemala, which is addressed by communitarian feminists' activism.
[42] CUC (Comité de Unidad Campesina) is the Committee of Peasant Unity

> the negative of this law for the Guatemalan population. A virtual petition of 200,000 signatures also had its effect. Other sister organisations did their share by filing legal appeals in the courts against the LPOV[43].
>
> For the most part, social actions were massive, playful, above all peaceful, and effective. It is considered that the repeal of the 'Monsanto law' is a triumph of the organised civil population of the country that was pronounced against or that participated in social actions. (Entremundos, s.d.)[44]

> The Observatory of Indigenous Peoples, together with the national movement Alianza Por la Vida and more than 20 social, indigenous and human rights organisations, spoke yesterday at a press conference against the Law for the Protection of Plant Varieties. (La Voz, August 2014)[45]

This is another of the analysis findings, the drone-view of the media's discourse about the phenomenon. This type of overview is in stark contrast with the action taken by feminist movements in Guatemala and other countries of Abya Yala, as their approach is one that emerges from lived experiences, based on the stories of their women, their lives, following the feminist conception of the personal being political[46].

[43] LPOV (Ley para la Protección de Obtenciones Vegetales) is the 'Law for the Protection of New Plant Varieties'

[44] Excerpt in the original: "Mientras tanto, plantones rodearon el Congreso por una semana. A la capital llegaron comisiones provenientes de Alta Verapaz, Quiché, Totonicapán y Sololá, incluyendo miembros de varias organizaciones como el CUC, para acuerpar las acciones sociales que se realizaron frente al Organismo Legislativo. Y para participar en conferencias de prensa y reuniones con otros sectores de la sociedad civil organizada y planificar nuevas presiones al Congreso. Asimismo ante los medios de comunicación CUC argumentó lo negativo de dicha ley para la población guatemalteca. Una petición virtual de 200,000 firmas también tuvo su efecto. Otras organizaciones hermanas hicieron lo suyo interponiendo recursos legales en los tribunales en contra de la LPOV. En su mayoría las acciones sociales fueron masivas, lúdicas, sobre todo pacíficas, y efectivas. Se considera que la derogación de la 'ley Monsanto' es un triunfo de la población civil organizada del país que se pronunció en contra o que participó en las acciones sociales." (Entremundos, s.d.)

[45] Excerpt in the original: "El Observatorio de Pueblos Indígenas, junto al movimiento nacional Alianza Por la Vida y más de 20 organizaciones sociales, indígenas y de derechos humanos se pronunciaron ayer en una conferencia de prensa en contra de la Ley para la Protección de Obtenciones Vegetales." (La Voz, agosto 2014)

[46] Some examples have been highlighted in this thesis, such as the project named *Nuestra Memoria, Nuestra Verdad* that tells stories of resistance by women, or the work of the *Grupo de Mujeres Ixchel*, a collective of indigenous women in Guatemala led by Lorena Cabnal, or the transnational movement *Ni Una Menos*.

6 CONCLUSION

> The vibrancy and effectiveness of women's movements in the Global South have been hard to miss. Yet the recognition of how much Western feminism can learn from them has been slow. (Maier & Lebon, 2010, p. 5)

This research set out to investigate indigenous women's activism against the 'Law for the Protection of New Plant Varieties', also known as 'Monsanto law', in Guatemala. The subject was chosen mostly due to the fact that it was indigenous activism led by women, non-violent, and successful in its aim of having the law scrapped shortly after its approval by the Guatemalan parliament. The research was designed to investigate how indigenous women's activism against 'Monsanto law' in Guatemala manifested itself, and how gender, sex, race/ethnicity and class made part of that activism. For that purpose, an extensive theoretical framework was developed, which included the methodological design for the research work. In this section, the study's findings will be summarised and related to the theoretical framework. I will also reflect on the changes that were made to the initial research design and address the study's limitations. Relatedly, some further research possibilities will be suggested.

The analysis found out that indigenous women's activism manifested itself at different levels; from activism towards the protection of Nature, the body-territory, the Maya identity symbolised by the corn and the indigenous people's right to food sovereignty. The research has also shown that gender, sex, race/ethnicity and class are all intermeshed in the activism against 'Monsanto law'. These layers are, however, partially veiled in the data. It was the theoretical framing of decolonial feminisms and an intersectional methodology that permitted to tap into them. Being part of the qualitative analysis method utilised in the study, Critical Discourse Analysis, the socio-historical contextualisation of the effects of colonialism in Guatemala and the situation of Maya women's resistance were crucial for these findings. Notably, the understanding of communitarian feminism, a decolonial feminism that emerged from the life experiences of indigenous women in Guatemala, was key to identifying the manifestation of these women's activism and the aspects of their identities that partook in this phenomenon. We learnt from decolonial feminisms that oppression is built over the bodies of the colonialised women, as those are the bodies at the intersection of discrimination against race/ethnicity and gender, but also sex and class. The structural violence against indigenous women in Guatemala signifies that resistance is not an option for these women; it is a means of survival. When asked how indigenous women are participating concretely in the resistance to neo-liberal politics regarding Guatemalan natural resources, Cabnal stated: "As

women in struggle, we become one with territorial struggles" (Falquet, 2015, p. 82). Hence, indigenous women led the activism against the 'Law for the Protection of New Plant Varieties' to protect their land, their communities, themselves. This briefly sums up the findings of the study.

Importantly, and besides the limits to the study that have been pointed out throughout the text, there are some yet-to-refer limitations that also constitute opportunities for further research. One of these limitations is the fact that the study does not include interviews with indigenous women who have actively participated in the activism against 'Monsanto law'. The interviews were on the table in the initial phase of research planning, but they had to be set aside due to practical constraints: the scope of the study would broaden up so much that it would extravasate the limits of a master thesis work. Nonetheless, it would be interesting to have these women's own words about their resistance in the double patriarchal system that they live, which could become a set of data to analyse through Deniz Kandiyoti's "patriarchal bargain" (Kandiyoti, 1998) analytical tool, as referred to in the literature review section. Kandiyoti's analytical lens could provide a good insight into the strategies of compliance and the conditions of emergence of indigenous women's resistance regarding the 'Monsanto law' in Guatemala.

A second limitation that I acknowledge to the research is that it does not include more indigenous scholars and theoretical conceptualisations. This means that the attempt to decolonise the research work was not fully achieved, hence giving space to further research about indigenous women's activism that follows that an approach that is closer to the nature of the subject. Toward the final phase of the study, I began to ponder that I could have followed a more organic, more creative and less formal model for my thesis. I can see now that such an approach would be more appropriate for this study, as it would already constitute itself as a decolonial starting point.

A third limitation of the study is the lack of analysis of aspects embedded in indigenous women's activism, such as food sovereignty, environmentalism and spirituality. Again, this opens a space for further analysis that can create new knowledge in the field of Gender studies. A fourth limit that I would like to point out is that the study does not address the *transnationality* of the action of indigenous women in Guatemala against 'Monsanto law'. To tackle that aspect of the phenomenon at study, the lens of vernacular rights cultures as proposed by Dunford and Madhok (2015) could be applied to the analytical process. Vernacular rights cultures emerge when mobilisations transform rights by weaving them through their particular histories, cultures and political contexts (Dunford & Madhok, 2015). Guatemalan indigenous women activism demanded the right to have

rights to food and food production, which is embedded with a transformative effect, as demanding the right to have rights transforms the forms of citizenship through which rights are enacted and creates change in those rights. It would be very interesting if there would be a study that elaborated on how enacting these specific vernacular rights cultures affected ideas and practices of rights transnationally, to produce an understanding of this phenomenon.

At this point, I feel the need to come back to the considerations about my place as a researcher doing this research work. Reflecting back on the research process and the researcher's identity and impact is a key aspect of critical theories, especially those of feminist orientation. Being a white western feminist, I had read about the Global South and its feminist movements. I was, therefore, very aware of the impact of gender and race discrimination on the lives of indigenous women. What I did not understand, prior to realising this work, was how that marginalisation collocates them simultaneously in a more vulnerable situation and in the front row of every struggle towards social justice. Therefore, and regardless of the limitations of the study, it has brought me deep insight about indigenous women's everyday struggles, in general, and about the fight they undertake against the capitalistic savagery that has been happening in Guatemala as well as in most countries of Abya Yala, more specifically. I hope that that insight is also visible to the reader. The exploitation of the land and of the peoples, while alienating the indigenous people from their territories and interfering with their connection to the ancestral knowledge, also pushes them farther to the margins of society, fomenting inequity, inequality and social injustice. One of the most interesting discernments that I had along this process was that the resistance to colonial structures and neoliberal policies is what gives space to sustainability, which is, at its core, an indigenous system for living in peace with Nature. The second and most powerful insight that I had was that the level of awareness concerning indigenous women's struggle is considerably low. They are not seen in their political agency, but as part of the indigenous people's group. Indigenous women's activism is mostly acknowledged when it concerns specifically violence against women, which is why the movement *Ni Una Menos* has had international visibility, for example. Their presence is dissolved, however, when the issue is broadened. I used the expression "broadened" and not "other", because as in the activism against 'Monsanto law', there are many layers to indigenous women's fights, as these women stand at the intersection of different forms of discrimination, such as sexism, racism, classism and heterosexism. These are aspects of social marginalisation that are at the basis of indigenous women's vulnerability, whichever is the issue at stake. Nonetheless, indigenous women in Guatemala are a paradigm of resilience. And I could not be more humbled towards it.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Selected news articles

Activists prompt Guatemala U-turn on GM crops. Eye on Latin America. Retrieved from https://eyeonlatinamerica.com/2014/09/10/guatemala-gm-crops-u-turn/

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Appendix II: The articles' media sources

The articles that were selected for analysis are all available online. Their media sources are both independent and mainstream media from the U.S.A., Puerto Rico, Argentina and Guatemala, and they were originally published in either Spanish or English; some of the media have a print version and some are exclusively available online:

- **Bitch Media** is a non-profit feminist media organization based in Portland, Oregon, U.S.A., that has an online news platform at https://www.bitchmedia.org/ . It circulates as an independent quarterly magazine in print version under the title *Bitch: Feminist Response to Pop Culture*. Its articles are exclusively in English language. They are very active in social media, especially on Twitter and Facebook.

- **El Nuevo Día** is a high-circulation, Spanish-language daily newspaper in tabloid format from Puerto Rico. Currently, it is a subsidiary of GFR Media, the branch of the investment holding Grupo Ferré Rangel dedicated to media. It has a website https://www.elnuevodia.com/ , a digital daily edition (e-paper), and it is actively present on Twitter and Facebook. The website includes an English version with a translated selection of some articles from the original version.

- **Prensa Comunitaria Km. 169** is a Guatemalan news website that describes its output as a communitarian, human rights, feminist and independent press work, published http://www.prensacomunitaria.org/ . Many of the articles are written by collaborators such as collectives that work towards the defence of Nature, territories, human rights, feminism, culture and indigenous peoples. It is stated in their webpage that their aim is to document the voice of the peoples and their different struggles. They publish their news articles in Spanish and are active in different social media, from Twitter and Facebook to YouTube.

- **Eye On Latin America** is a news website that published news and analysis on Latin American environment, sustainable development and social issues news at http://eyeonlatinamerica.wordpress.com . It is present also on Twitter and Facebook, under the category Media/news company. Not active in any of the online platforms since November 2017.

- **Intercontinental Cry (**a.k.a. **IC Magazine)** defines itself as a non-profit newsroom producing public-interest journalism centred on Indigenous Peoples, climate change and international human rights. It is a project of the Centre for World Indigenous Studies (a U.S.-based think tank of activist scholars). The content is in American English and available online at https://intercontinentalcry.org/. It is present with daily updates on Twitter and Facebook, under the category Media/news company.

- **La Voz del Interior** is a daily Spanish-language newspaper from Córdoba, Argentina. La Voz is owned by the largest media conglomerate in Argentina, media Grupo Clarín. Its online version is at the address http://www.lavoz.com.ar/, and it is present in all social media, being very active in Twitter and Facebook.

- **Revista EntreMundos** is a bilingual (Spanish/English) Guatemalan magazine released every two months that publishes news and commentaries about human rights and development in Guatemala. It is also the communication medium for the activities of EntreMundos, a non-profit organization founded to provide support to the fight against poverty and the defence and promotion of human rights for the country's marginalized and vulnerable. The magazine's website is http://revista.entremundos.org/, and the magazine has a strong presence on Twitter and Facebook as well.

- **Waging Nonviolence** is an English-language online source for original news and analysis about struggles for justice and peace around the globe that can be found at https://wagingnonviolence.org/. It is based in Brooklyn, NY, United States of America. Waging Nonviolence claims that the content it produces is available to be widely shared and reused because it falls under a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 license, which permits reuse and adaptation. Their work has been featured in various well-known media outlets. It is active on Twitter and Facebook, under the category Media/news company.